

Foreword

There is something magical about flying solo—or so I’ve been told. Two of my dear friends are pilots and another is a retired flight attendant. After months of studying books and hours of flight training with a teacher, the moment arrives for that first journey down the runway....alone. For one of them, it came unannounced - a surprise, which I find simply remarkable. Yet, he was ready because he was prepared.

That is the beauty of this book. You are holding in your hands an excellent flight plan to help you be successful during the next leg of your journey. Just as a trained pilot carefully puts together a flight plan, methodically inspects her plane and does a run-up prior to takeoff, the information in this book will allow you prepare for a smooth and turbulence-free transition.

Speaking of turbulence, life would be too boring without it. We all experience difficult and challenging times. Diane does a fantastic job of providing you with many safety nets – what I often refer to as “Plan B.” For pilots, it is the redundant systems built into their aircraft: the automatic backup systems for just about everything. We never know when life might toss us an interesting curve ball. Being organized gives you a greater chance of catching those balls.

One of the most important lessons I learned about organizing and the importance of managing my belongings actually did come from a “curve ball” experience I had while flying with our friends in northern Minnesota. We had to return on a smaller airplane than what we had traveled in originally, requiring a significant adjustment in the weight on the plane. We packed up many of our belongings and mailed them home, but I layered on clothes I wasn’t willing to risk losing if the box got lost.

For the sake of keeping this story short, I will share that we had a tree-skimming take off. You could smell the scent of pine trees. It was yours truly who took a great deal of ribbing for wearing enough clothes for an entire family.

As you create your new life, keep in mind two important things. One, life is all about maintaining weight and balance, just like an airplane needs to maintain appropriate weight and balance to remain airborne. And two, be cognizant of what matters most in life. I'll give you a hint....it isn't the extra layer of clothes.

Initially, you will find great pleasure in surrounding yourself with things—furniture, music, clothes, books and decorative items. Later, you'll begin to see the value in surrounding yourself only with the things that bring you great joy. On a wall in my home, I have painted the following words:

“Have nothing in your house
that you do not know to be useful,
or believe to be beautiful.”

This advice comes from William Morris, a late 19th century English craftsman, poet and designer. I embrace these words in my own life and I strive to teach their meaning to each of my clients.

Diane has many excellent suggestions and techniques to help you take control of your belongings rather than allowing your belongings to take control of you. She will teach you to be aware of your surroundings, much like a pilot who flies VFR, using visual flight rules. So often we stop seeing what is right in front of our eyes and rely too much on gadgets to guide our path. Take the time to truly look at everything around you because you may miss out on important chance encounters if you stop looking.

Life is full of chance encounters. Diane and I met by chance. We found ourselves sitting next to each other at a conference and I am so very grateful that our paths crossed. She has had a life full of flying and has valuable experience and expertise to share with you. Reading this book is an excellent way for you to prepare for your first journey alone down the runway. Diane has your best interests at heart – she is a mother, a professional organizer, and a seasoned traveler. She is, in my opinion, an expert on how to “fly the coop” successfully.

While flying solo is exciting, don't forget to invite trusted family members and friends to climb into the co-pilot seat when you need help. Relying on the help and guidance of others shows remarkable courage and maturity. And, it's always nice to have someone sitting in the right seat.

My best wishes to you as you embark on the next chapter of your life. Safe travels and enjoy the journey!

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