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The Psychology of Flying

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The psychology of flying



David Rozovski '05 in the cockpit of a Boeing 747-100. Rozovski had the opportunity to attend 747 ground school and help conduct evaluations of pilots and maintenance personnel during his internship at Evergreen International Airlines last summer.

David Rozovski's internship took him nearly around the world – 23,000 miles in six days to be exact.

Although he saw little more than the flight deck of a 747 on that particular trip, it's quite an accomplishment for someone who used to fear flying.

Rozovski '05, a Linfield College psychology major, spent the summer interning in the safety department at Evergreen International Airlines in McMinnville. The position involved a variety of projects, all related to his ultimate goal of working in aviation psychology. His senior thesis explores indicators to help pilots recognize instrument failures more quickly and help avert plane crashes.

"I am looking at human/machine interaction," he said. "If you look at the new aircraft, from a psychological and cognitive perspective, they are a lot better designed than they used to be. Aviation psychology focuses on the engineering and delivery of information in order to make the pilot's job easier while increasing safety."

Rozovski eventually hopes to put his knowledge to work for an airline or a plane manufacturer that is developing new aircraft designs.

"Planes are built by engineers, but pilots don't usually think like engineers," Rozovski said. "Maintenance personnel may say you don't need a specific instrument to fly a plane, but pilots may disagree. I'd like to focus on that, taking into account how pilots see things, how maintenance personnel see things and how the plane operates."

Rozovski's internship related to all of that. He sat

beside seasoned pilots during a 747 ground school, an annual requirement for them. He also helped develop an assistance program to aid friends and families of employees in the event of an accident.

Because of the need to maintain security and keep personnel around the world updated in the event of an incident, Rozovski has also helped develop a secure Web site that allows Evergreen employees access to information from any computer anywhere in the world via a password.

"David worked on all these different programs," said Bud Thompson, director of safety and security at Evergreen. "He saw the glorious side of flying as well as the menial side of it. He learned the importance of having all kinds of information available."

The six-day marathon journey, routine for Thompson but new to Rozovski, included stops in Alaska, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Diego Garcia to conduct routine safety evaluations of the pilots and maintenance personnel on the ground. The evaluations included observing in-flight operations and the ground logistics to make sure all procedures – both FAA and Evergreen – were properly followed.

During take-offs and landings, Rozovski or Thompson sat right behind the pilots, observing the process.

"The really high level of work occurs when the plane takes off, gets to cruising altitude and establishes a route," Rozovski said. "Then the workload drops off significantly until the plane begins its descent and lands."

Rozovski said his experience at Evergreen was invaluable.

"I've been able to look at why accidents occur and the details that go into investigating an accident," he said. "I've had a lot of freedom to learn as much as I want to learn."

"I've been able to see everything from systems operations to flight dispatch to flight operations," he added. "I've been able to interact with the chief pilots on all levels of the DC9s and 747s. I've been able to see how maintenance operates. We interacted with sales and marketing people because if there isn't a cargo or customer, we are not going to fly. All those factors interacting gave me a good understanding of everything that goes into the entire operation."

Rozovski got a glimpse of what pilots deal with in the air. He just got his license to fly single engine planes, is working toward his instrument license and ultimately plans to get a commercial license.

– Mardi Mileham