

Barnstorming

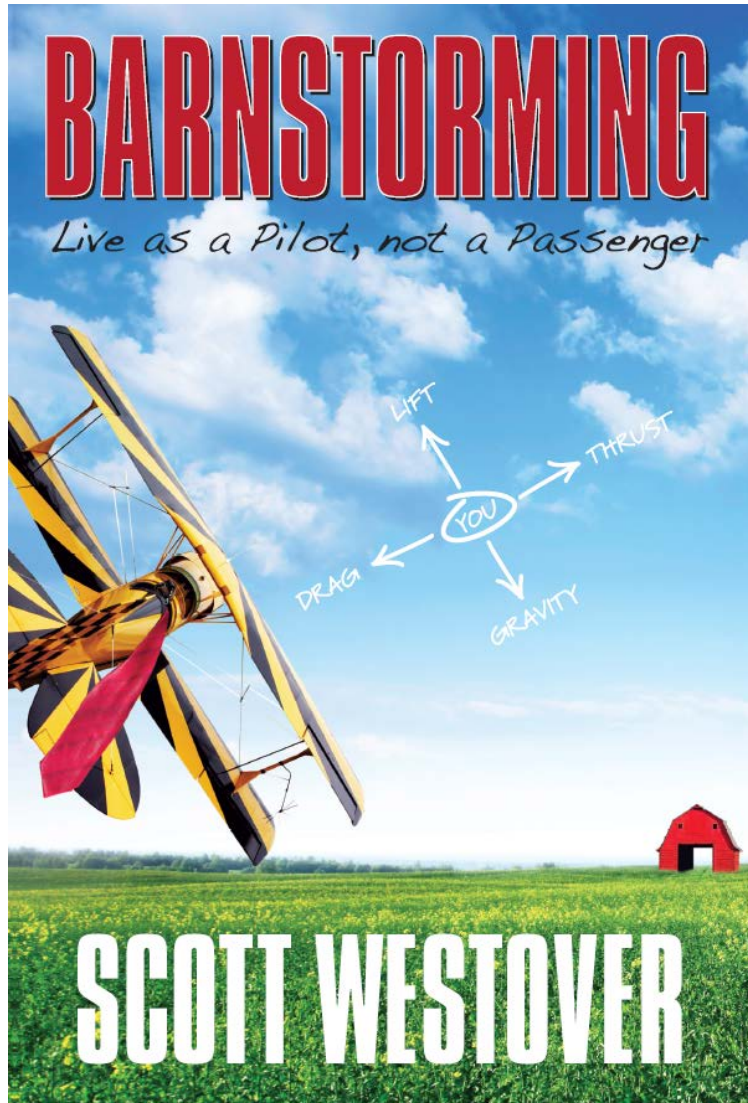
**Live as a Pilot,
Not a Passenger**

Sample: Chapter 1, including
Acknowledgements and Introduction

Courtesy of Scott Westover – Enjoy

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The complete book is available for purchase at
www.ScottWestover.com



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Acknowledgments

This short book has taken a long time to write; it was started three kids ago and now the oldest is well into first grade. I am dedicating this book to my wife, Lindsay. Without her support, a loose collection of notes and ideas would still be taunting me. She is all about getting things done and letting the important things be important. When the book was finally ready to take flight, she helped me clear the very busy decks of our life to dedicate the time needed to work out the pages. Thank you, Lindsay.

I also want to thank my father for choosing to be a pilot and my mom for supporting that choice. That decision gave me a view of the world that changed my life. Dad helped me grow wings, and when they got bent he helped me learn to trust them again.

Finally, I want to acknowledge that this book would not have happened without the friendship, talent, and coaxing of Joseph “Joebi” Bills, Jr. I met Joebi in kindergarten and we have been best friends for over 35 years. Over that time he has become a master of words and proven to me that the real pilots are the people with the guts to manage the energy shaping life here on the ground.

Introduction

Ever since the Wright Brothers took to the skies over Kitty Hawk for the first successful airplane flight in 1903, pilots have been perfecting their understanding and application of Energy Management. Energy Management is the science that directs the flight of an airplane, allowing pilots to achieve control.

Control comes from managing the four forces of energy that govern flight: gravity, lift, drag and thrust. For the airplane to fly, it must create enough lift to overcome gravity and generate more thrust than drag. When the four forces of energy are under control, a skilled pilot can make an airplane do amazing things.

Orville Wright is credited with saying, “Isn’t it astounding that all these secrets have been preserved for so many years just so we could discover them!” The science that allows airplanes to fly had existed since the beginning of time, but the energies had never before been managed in a way that allowed man to leave the runway. I’ve come to realize that those same forces of energy are at work in our daily lives right here on the ground, and that we can take a lesson from those pilots as we strive to get that energy to work for us rather than against us.

When we manage the forces of energy in our personal lives, we too will accomplish amazing things. Consider how your life is playing out right now. Because each of us faces gravity that threatens to crash us, we create lift so we don’t hit the ground prematurely. We have all felt the effects of drag as it holds us back from achieving our

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goals, so we work hard to overcome that resistance by producing thrust. With a little imagination, it is easy to see how lessons that were previously applied only in airplane cockpits can be applied to everyday life. We can all benefit from less drag, more thrust and greater lift. And today, it sure would be nice to have a plan to deal with the gravity we face, to have less distraction and fewer surprises that we need to react to.

I am a pilot, and my father was a crop duster when he was a young man; a genuine barnstormer. For the last decade I have had the opportunity to learn Energy Management technique from my dad. He has taught me Energy Management at the controls of the airplanes we have flown together and provided coaching and support as I've applied those same skills to the rest of my life at home and at work.

Any of us who have flown on an airplane for business or pleasure have already made the decision to trust Energy Management to deliver us safely to where we need to be. Energy Management controls an airplane and shapes a pilot's decision-making by organizing situations and challenges in four dimensions. Because of their facility with Energy Management, we trust pilots in the sky. Those same principles lend themselves to sound leadership and decision-making in all aspects of life.

I'd like to hear about how you apply Energy Management to your life and the actions you take to put you closer to your goals. These ideas are intended to introduce a fresh way of thinking that I believe will be helpful. I hope that is the case, and thank you for picking

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up this book. Enjoy it. I look forward to hearing from you through ScottWestover.com.

Chapter 1 – Finally Learning to Fly

I hope my parachute opens. I almost couldn't believe it as the thought flashed through my mind. How could I have lost control of my airplane so quickly? I was a newly minted aerobatic pilot and my enthusiasm had pulled dangerously ahead of my skill.

My father is a pilot, and not just the kind that flies on Saturdays when the weather is calm. In his prime, he was a rock star in the sky, the kind of daredevil that today would have his own show on the History Channel. Something like, *Wings of Courage*. Seriously, I should be able to fly better than this. It should be genetic. This was embarrassing.

As a kid, flying seemed like magic to me. As an adult, I came to realize that flight is accomplished not through magic and luck, but with an understanding of Energy Management, through which the pilot coordinates the forces that act on an airplane during every flight. Energy Management is first learned on the ground and then brought to life in the air. Pilots who participate in aerobatic contests – flying loops and rolls in front of the judges – obsess about managing energy, and for good reason. Their lives depend on it. I was proving that point even as my airplane was falling out of the sky.

The four primary forces of energy that a pilot needs to master in order to get an airplane to fly are gravity, lift, drag and thrust. Gravity constantly pulls all objects back toward Earth. Lift is the manipulation of airflow around the wings that keeps a plane in the sky. Drag pushes back

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on an aircraft, slowing progress. And thrust propels things forward, driving the plane toward a destination somewhere out in front of the nose. The relationships between these forces of energy shape the outcome of each and every flight.

I understood these principles. I had aced my ground school classroom work, and I had flown non-aerobatic flights many times. All of that, of course, was no consolation as I spiraled toward the trees.

Regardless of whether we are talking about people, government, businesses or communities, trouble develops in much the same way that an airplane crashes, through the mismanagement of gravity, lift, drag and thrust. Too often, we find ourselves doing what a pilot never should: reacting to those forces of energy rather than reining and directing them. It sounds simple, but as with most important things, the devil is in the details. The good news is that much of the time, trouble is avoidable. There is real power in believing you have the ability to take control of your life through the use of tools that you already possess.

The taking of control doesn't just happen. Effective piloting requires a willingness to see the "big picture" and the patience to understand how the parts you see relate to each other. That makes sense, at least on paper. But we're dealing with people here, not airplanes, and human nature challenges the implementation of sound Energy Management in ways that machines never do. We all tend to get consumed by "small picture" hassles and to

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underestimate the seriousness of gravity, at times sugar-coating those things that threaten to crash us. Without an accurate understanding of gravity, we are setting ourselves up to misjudge the amount of lift and thrust needed to be in control. And whether we overestimate or underestimate, the result is the same... energy is mismanaged, and that's when accidents happen.

This book presents a system for achieving a level of understanding that helps you take control of your life. That means something different to each of us, and that's a good thing. For example, my father, the bulletproof barnstormer, is now 77 years old and dealing with heart disease. Energy Management can't roll back the clock or unclog his pipes. It can, however, provide a framework that allows him to achieve the level of control that is still possible. It's still about facing gravity, creating lift, anticipating drag and investing in sources of thrust. It's not a miracle; it's living life to the full potential of that moment. When he was flying and icy weather dictated that he land his airplane at an alternative airport, Energy Management gave him the knowledge of what to do in order to fly another day. Many pilots in the same situation have mismanaged energy only to make their last "landing" as a result of losing control. Control is relative, and remains possible even when it seems that gravity, lift, drag and thrust are swirling all around you.

How will your life improve when you make the right decisions more of the time? How would that change help your family or company? Could your community benefit? Could government get unstuck? Regardless of the size or scope of the situation, the concepts are universal. It is

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time to make the decision to live life as pilots instead of passengers; to manage the energy shaping our world instead of reacting to it.

You know good Energy Management when you experience it. Your flight becomes smoother and more predictable. You feel secure, even through periods of turbulence. The number of surprises that distract us from what's really important is reduced. And on those occasions when a crash occurs, it isn't the result of apathy or neglect, and more often than not will be an experience we can learn from.

The flight had started out well. I flew the basic maneuvers just as I had practiced them over and over again. On those previous aerobatic practice flights, I had the security of a seasoned instructor right behind me, literally in the back seat. With an experienced pilot ready to back me up and a reassuring voice in my headset, I had learned fast. Today, flying solo, my focus was supposed to be on performing only two basic figures: the loop and the roll. Neither was particularly difficult and it had been fun getting good at them both during my training.

I experienced a rush as I worked the controls and made the little airplane dance through the sky. It's a good thing my instructor had not planned to fly with me that day, because my overstuffed carry-on bag full of confidence was hogging a lot of cockpit space. These simple maneuvers didn't provide much challenge. Not to a pilot who was so clearly channeling the long lineage of great flyers who had come before. Would Chuck Yeager,

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the man who broke the sound barrier in an airplane, settle for flying basic loops and rolls and calling that good enough? Certainly not!

As I exited the third or fourth loop, the airplane was moving fast. There was plenty of energy to play with. Gravity was a distant memory and drag, it seemed, had taken the day off. I felt untouchable as I set up for a more advanced maneuver called a Hammerhead.

The Hammerhead starts out with a steep vertical climb. When the airplane has clawed its way straight up as far as it can go, there is a blink of a pause before it starts to slide back toward Earth tail-first. At that precise moment, during the split second of transition, the pilot pivots the airplane around a wing tip, arching the outside wing perpendicular to the ground so that the aircraft gracefully descends in a path parallel to the climb. The figure resembles a candy cane. It is practical as well as beautiful. A version of the Hammerhead is used by crop dusters to reverse their flight path when they are working in a tight space while spraying fields. Airshow pilots use the same maneuver to keep their routine within sight of the crowd.

I had flown the Hammerhead before, but never without my instructor “on the stick” with me, his hands ready to take the controls at the first sign of trouble. With him talking me through, the maneuver was easy to fly. How much harder could it be now? Smiling broadly, I felt the confidence of a little boy, sitting in a box to which he had taped wings and a cardboard propeller. As my inner child jumped out of the hayloft, I pulled back on the stick.

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My attempt must have looked more like ribbon candy than a candy cane. Coming out of the climb, my airplane had entered a spin and was spiraling downward like a slow motion version of one of those cool “helicopter seeds” that were so much fun to throw in the air when I was a kid. In an airplane, a spin occurs when the wings are no longer capable of creating lift. One wing drops, increasing drag unevenly and prompting gravity to take over, immediately instituting a corkscrew flight path toward the ground. If not corrected and recovered, every spin ends in a crash. A controlled spin is often flown in aerobatic competitions. In that situation, the pilot creates the conditions that cause a spin by design, and then recovers at a precisely timed moment in the rotation toward the ground. This was no contest. It was a mistake.

Suddenly my co-conspirator, Mr. Yeager, was nowhere to be found and he seemed to have taken my confidence with him. Alone in the cockpit was a pale pilot with about ten hours of aerobatic experience, no longer in control and desperate to save his own bacon. In those moments, I was too busy giving up to fly the airplane. One hand hovered over the release of the five-point safety harness and the other found the emergency exit latch on the door, leaving no hands for the work of recovering the flight. I was done. It was time to bail out.

I scanned the cockpit for what seemed certain to be the last time. In that moment, my freshly trained gaze settled on the altimeter.

The altimeter is the instrument that tells a pilot how high an aircraft is flying above sea level. The needle was spinning backwards as my altitude decreased. But behind

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the drama of that spinning indicator of my doom were two bits of hopeful information that somehow sunk into my increasingly panicked brain. The first was that the needle wasn't moving quite as fast as I would have expected. The second was that the approaching ground remained several thousand feet away. There was no doubt I was in trouble, but there was still time to regain control.

I willed my hands away from their panic positions and refocused my mind on using the next several seconds to find a solution. With a little work and experimentation, I found the correct combination of control inputs and, when the spin had stopped, I rolled the airplane upright and allowed the airspeed to build before gently pulling back on the stick and re-investing in altitude. Looking at the altimeter, I calculated that I had recovered with under a minute to spare. Another few hundred feet and I would have been pulling a ripcord. Or worse.

I'll bet you have found yourself in a similar predicament. With both hands busy looking for the way out, you leave yourself none with which to "fly the airplane" of your life. There is a better way.

What got me into the mess to begin with, besides being a cocky pilot, was that I got caught up in the moment and neglected the relationships between gravity, lift, drag and thrust. The act of flying an airplane is really a series of interrelated decisions the pilot makes in order to manage the forces acting on the airplane moment by moment. In my hubris, I had stopped being a pilot and had become the most dangerous sort of passenger: one who happened to be sitting at the controls.

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And while several months would pass before I started jotting down words, that was the day this book was born. In telling the story of what had happened in the air, first to my flight instructor, then to my family and friends, I began to understand that the lessons learned in the cockpit have a much broader application. I began to think more deeply about what was going on in my life and, more importantly, in the lives of the people I am closest to. Suddenly it was crystal clear that Energy Management is as important on the ground as it is in the air.

It started casually, but as I played with the concept of applying the principles of Energy Management to non-flight related life situations, a funny thing happened. It worked.

Over time, I came to believe that Energy Management provides a model that can help people understand the major moving parts of the problems they face in everyday life. Seeing challenges in terms of gravity, lift, drag and thrust helps point the way toward solutions that will work. Those solutions make us more likely to fly our maneuvers correctly and less likely to be reliant on luck to bail us out. By keeping us out of trouble in the first place, those solutions reduce time wasted on recovery and keep us focused on our goals.

Learning to fly aerobatics was a personal challenge that I undertook in part to prove to both my father and myself that I too am an eagle, and I'm glad I did it. Learning to fly upside down and participating in a couple of competitions allowed me to experience the world differently. I learned to think about each flight as a real-time test in critical thinking, an Energy Management

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laboratory with a great view. I also began to realize that my thinking prior to my introduction to aerobatics had been stuck in two dimensions.

Instead of really thinking things through, I had settled for making decisions based on the traditional framework of “problem and solution.” That is like trying to fly an airplane using only gravity and lift. That can work, but even if you get off the ground, you won’t be in control. In that two-dimensional model, the “problem” is gravity and the “solution” is lift. By ignoring drag and thrust, I was overlooking things that could hold me back and neglecting people and opportunities that might provide momentum to propel me forward. Sometimes that worked and sometimes it didn’t. I was relying on luck.

After learning to see gravity, lift, drag and thrust at work in the sky, it became impossible to un-see those forces at work in my personal life, in the larger world and in the issues of our time. Still, too many of us are settling for a problem-and-solution approach.

***Thank you for reading Chapter 1 of
Barnstorming. If you enjoyed this chapter,
please consider ordering a copy of the
complete book.***