‘I enjoy flying it (the 1933 open-cockpit plane) anytime. . . . Fewer gadgets to fool with.’

Flights of Fancy
It's the middle of the afternoon, and the sky is clear.

I take the opportunity to fly solo, keeping an eye on the clouds. The weather is perfect.

As I fly over the coastline, I notice a few scattered clouds, but the overall sky is blue.

I continue to enjoy the freedom of flying solo, feeling the wind in my hair and the sun on my face.

After a while, I decide to land at the local airport. The runway is clear, and the runway lights are on.

As I approach the airport, I see the control tower and the control tower lights.

I fly over the control tower, and I see the tower lights illuminated.

I land smoothly, and I see the control tower lights again.

I taxi to the parking area, and I see the tower lights again.

I feel a sense of accomplishment, knowing that I've flown solo again.

I think about the past and the future, and I feel grateful for the opportunity to fly.

As I exit the cockpit, I feel a sense of contentment.

I feel ready to tackle whatever comes next.
Tom Davis, who founded Piedmont Aviation, took his first solo flight in a 37-
horsepower plane 60 years ago (right). He now owns and flies that plane (above) after
spending decades trying to track it down.

selling shares on the New York Stock
Exchange. But Davis said that his prize
possession is the old single-engine Tay-
lor Cub, which must have someone spin the
propeller to start it.

Its red shell, made of Irish linen,
looked primitive next to the row of sleek
metal-skinned Pipers in the hangar yest-
terday.

The Taylor is actually the predecessor
of all Piper aircraft, Davis said.
He said that of all the planes he's
flown over the years, this is the one he's
sentimental about.

"It's special to me. I learned to fly in
it.""

The plane first flew over Winston-Sa-
AVIATOR

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lem in 1933, when it was delivered new to Camel City Flying Services, the company that taught Davis how to fly.

The company sold it just a few years later, shortly after he had learned to fly.

He wondered often over the years what had happened to the plane.

"I kept tracking it the best I could. But I was busy trying to keep my own company going," he said.

In 1960 he began to search for it in earnest. He found it in the late 1960s, disassembled in Wade Teague's basement in Aiken, S.C.

Teague, an antique airplane buff, was planning to restore the craft. It took Davis a couple years to persuade Teague to part with it.

Davis bought it and had it shipped to Winston-Salem in boxes in 1970.

His son, Tom Jr., and a few Piedmont Aviation mechanics rebuilt it.

It has most of its original parts, except for the fabric that covers most of the plane, and the tires and wooden propeller.

"I enjoy flying it anytime," he said. "You can see more of the countryside from it, than in modern planes. Fewer gadgets to fool with."

"It has a sophisticated gas gauge," he said wryly as he pulled a stick and cork out of the fuel tank.

"When the stick hit there, that's it, you're out of gas," he said. If that happened, he said, the plane glided well.

He didn't answer directly when asked if he ever ran out of fuel.

"Very seldom would I not be within gliding distance of a field," he said.