



Carol Cansdale looks out of the cockpit as she starts the engine.

Like father, like daughter

Carol Cansdale learned to fly the way many people learned to drive. By watching her father.

As a youngster, Cansdale often accompanied her father, a retired Hughes Air West pilot, when he took to the air. So it isn't shocking that she took her first flying lesson at the age of nine (from her father, of course) and soloed six years later.

Now, the 28-year-old Walla Walla is following in her father's footsteps. She's a co-pilot for Cascade Airways, the first woman to hold that position for the regional carrier.

And her father's reaction:

"He's... very pleased," says Cansdale. "I think I'm reliving his youth."

Cansdale didn't always aspire to be a commercial pilot.

After graduating from the University of Washington with a degree in business administration, she worked four years as a flight attendant for Hughes Air West (now part of Republic Airlines). She also taught private flying lessons at Seattle's Boeing Field, while building up her hours in the air.

She eventually decided to apply for a position with Cascade, thanks in part to the support of fellow workers.

"A lot of pilots at Hughes Air West kept encouraging me. It never occurred to me I could do it."

Two years ago, Cascade was hired by Cascade as a co-pilot, one of two women hired by the airline at that time.

While the airline has had four female co-pilots in the past 24 months, today Cansdale remains the only one still with Cascade, out of a total of 101 pilots.

Her colleagues, she says, have been good in accepting her, but acknowledges, "When you're the first woman, everybody's watching you."

"But they don't treat me any different. I don't want to be treated any different."

Cansdale is, however, subject to a lot of comments by passengers, all of which "get really old."

She'd be able to make a sizable down payment on a 747 if she received \$10 every time someone

said, upon landing, "Not bad for a woman."

As a co-pilot in Cascade's operation, Cansdale shares flying duties with the captain, the pilot in command. The captain and the co-pilot often trade off legs during their daily flights, but the captain retains ultimate responsibility and makes all major decisions.

"We (co-pilots) have all got the same licenses as them (pilots), but they have much more experience," Cansdale said, adding that many

people mistakenly think co-pilots are trainees.

Prior to a flight, the co-pilot checks the plane's weight and balance, obtains weather reports and, along with the captain, gives the plane a final look-over before departure.

In the air, the co-pilot assists the captain in flying; while one flies, the other talks on the radio with air traffic controllers. Each has his own set of instruments.

In her time with Cascade, Cansdale has been flying the airline's Beechcraft 99s, 15-passenger twin-engine prop jets. But with Cascade's scheduled expansion — most notably its new pressurized Swearingen Metro IIIs and British Aerospace HS-748s — she soon will have an opportunity to fly the 18-seat Embraer Bandeirantes, Brazilian twin-engine prop jets that are currently part of the airline's fleet.

While the jets are what she files for work, Cansdale owns her own J3 Cub, a small single-engine piston airplane. The plane was a college graduation present from her parents, and is the same one in which she soloed at the age of 15.

Cansdale generally works a 40-hour week, but her schedule varies every month — an appealing aspect of the job, she says. Her flights take her throughout the Northwest, to most of the 18 cities Cascade serves.

The overnight trips are not as glamorous as many would like to believe. "After eight hours of listening to those engines, I'm ready to go to bed," she says.

Besides, not counting the need for rest, there isn't that much to do in some of the places to which Cascade flies.

"People think we have time to sight-see. What's there to see in Pocatello, Idaho?"



Cansdale goes over the weather conditions prior to departure.

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