

A Girl, a plane and a slight hangover.

When asked if I would write a few words on my experiences of learning how to fly a radio control model plane, I had to smile. Most of my recollections, probably like many of you who have been through this, are of doing the same manoeuvre over and over, whilst attempting to move the sticks smoothly and gracefully, watching and quietly cursing as my model bounced around the sky like a demented ping-pong ball.

Thankfully I got better, but we all have to start somewhere. I started a couple of years ago, when Santa (aka my boyfriend Andy) brought me a nice shiny new high wing trainer. After spending the Christmas holidays putting it together, with a little help, she was ready to fly. All I needed was someone to teach me how.

Well, there was no shortage of offers and before long, I was getting lessons from everyone I knew who could fly. Sounds great, but I soon discovered that every good pilot does not a great teacher make. To cut a long story short, I wasn't progressing, I was overwhelmed with conflicting advice, and one sad day, my beloved trainer took a nose dive. Amazing how a model can be flying one minute, and sushi the next. Aah well. I had learned a valuable lesson though – find one good teacher and listen to him, and him only.

After an appropriate period of mourning, I took myself off to a hobby shop and bought model number two, my lovely Seagull kit PC9. This model certainly



wasn't designed as a trainer, but I learned how to fly on it. And it was fun! Thanks largely to the patience of the lovely Mr Cliff McIvor at the Doncaster Club field in Melbourne, I had improved to the point where I could fly a clean, rectangular circuit and do a few simple aerobatics.

The advantage of flying a slightly more advanced model became clear, less floating around and more direction. The model was also trimmed to perfection and, thanks to a reliable and well tuned OS .46FX engine, would handle a stiff breeze with relative ease. However, I still had one major hurdle yet to face - landing. I just couldn't bring myself to descend lower than fifty feet and I got stuck at shooting approaches.

My confidence also got stuck, and for a while, I just stopped going flying. Apparently, this plateau is not unusual, and for anyone reading this article who is at that point, don't give up. You're almost there.

Well, by this stage, Andy having had enough of my moping, decided some cheering up was in order. And so I was invited to come to a model jet fly-in at Williams AFB in Laverton. He also suggested I put my model in the car just in case. I vaguely remember muttering something about a hangover, and a headache, and

what about charging my transmitter but all had been taken care of, so no more excuses and off we went.

It was on this perfect flying day, with clear skies and light winds straight down the strip, that my breakthrough happened. Steve Green, having heard all about my woeful state, decided to take me under his wing and give me a flying lesson. In front of a dozen or so crusty, experienced model jet pilots, I tentatively taxied out, lined

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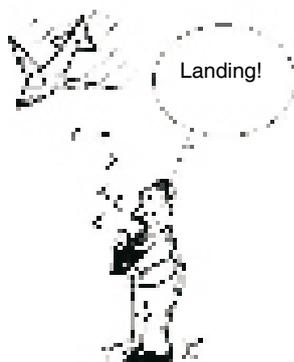
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My cute and lovely AeroSubaru. No mess, just charge and fly. Just what a girl needs.

up, hit full throttle and took off for the first time in months. I had forgotten how fantastic it felt to fly this plane, and for a few minutes I just lost myself in it. When it came time to land, I turned to Steve and asked him to take over. No such luck. He told me in no uncertain terms I was ready to land it, and he would talk me down, and that was that.

Well, there was no time to change my underwear, and the next thing I knew, it was happening. I was on the downwind leg, turning on to base, easing back on the

throttle, descending, turning on to final, keeping the wings level, cutting the power, left wing up, right wing up a bit, pull in a bit of elevator, level the wings, more elevator, and..... a little bumpy, but by God she was down safe and I DID IT! It doesn't get much better than that!

After a fair bit of squealing, jumping up and down and grinning like an idiot, I fuelled up again, and went on to fly some simple aerobatics, a few touch and go's, and a couple more landings, one of which could almost be classed as a greaser. All

in all, an absolutely fantastic day! I have since lost count of how many times I have touched wheels to runway. It never quite loses its thrill for me. But that first heart-stopping, bumpy, all-over-the-place landing - that was something special.

I have just experienced the wonders of electric power with a VMAR AeroSubaru which is a very relaxing way to fly and there are no messy oils to contend with. Now it's times to push extend the envelope some more maybe even landing my boyfriend's jet, hey Andy!



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