

Fresh Air Matters... with Capt. Yaw

I have just been looking through the photos from the recent air show, and found a particular picture that caught my imagination. It was not of an aircraft – nor of an engine. No, it was in fact the photo of the son of one of our students. This young Ghanaian child was there, eyes closed and smile wide, bright as the sun during a super-nova. The boy's face told a story like no other child's face in any of the pictures. He was, in his mind, I am sure, dreaming of flying. It is at this point we need to remind ourselves that "Every achievement begins as a dream, and the new achievements of every day bring the dream of tomorrow's adventures...".

In The World right now, there is a lot of dreaming going on, and not so many achievements! This is caused directly by the lack of 'dream-realisation matter' – also known as cash-flow. Boeing, Airbus, all of the airlines and most of the businesses in the world are experiencing extreme tightness feelings in their wallets! It is the time when the bank manager develops deep – very deep – pockets, and his arms get shorter – so very much shorter, and the cash is out of reach for all. Projects are slowed, pushed back and cancelled, and the dreams continue.

But the good news is that dreams do not actually require cash flow. During the time of dreams which cannot be realised in the short term, the need to innovate and dream a dream upon a dream, to make a realisation within the realms of possibilities, is necessary. This achievement changes the subsequent dreams, for those who choose the right path.

All a bit complicated but we can take it apart a little – and of course put it into aviation terms. So many people plan never to embark upon the realisation of their dream until they have enough cash to start. Consequently, they never start, never finish and always have shoulders slumped and a bitter tongue splashing acid liberally in conversations about 'missed opportunities'. On the other hand, having a dream and breaking it into bite-sized pieces - or 'dreaming upon the dream' to make it more achievable - is the work of the optimist, the conqueror and the encourager. As a little is achieved each day, the dream can reform itself and continue its diurnal path of realisation. Such a dreamer has a smile that can be more contagious than H1N1.

During World War II, there was a fantastic aircraft called the Spitfire. Powered by the mighty Merlin engine, with a noise on start-up that could freeze the breath in your throat for a few seconds of awe; the Spitfire is most-often referred to as the aircraft that won the famous 'Battle of Britain'. YET ... therein lies a mistake. Yes, the Spit' was - and still is - a great plane, but it had its challenges for a War-torn Britain. The Spit' needed lots of materials and cost a lot of money – it was a wonderful dream, and one that a lot of dream-realisation cash was dispensed liberally upon. But it was not the most successful part of the flock of war birds that strutted their stuff in those times of turmoil. The Spitfire took nearly three times longer to 'turn around' (re-arm, refuel, minor service and repairs and return to the theatre) as the Hurricane's mere nine minutes!

Due to financial constraints and the lack of metal availability, the dream of MORE Spitfires was impossible for the cash-strapped British Government to build. So they threw less money into more planes, such as the Hurricane. A simple cotton cloth-covered wing, a lighter and considerably less-expensive machine – that carried practically the same punch. There were those who complained and wanted more Spitfires, but it was the Hurricane's 'lower cost of production' that

led to its 'higher time in the air' – and you simply cannot have what you cannot afford!

Forced by the economy and political pressures of the day, the British Government re-dreamt their dream upon a dream and made a fantastic discovery. The very fact that the Hurricane had cloth wings meant that they could afford it. The same fact that meant that they could repair and maintain it. The time from returning from a mission, in need of a repair, to return to service was considerably shorter for the 'cheaper' cloth-covered hurricane than the 'preferred' metal-winged Spitfire.

I have had the privilege of flying at the same time as the Hurricane, Spitfire and Messerschmitt (the German equivalent). Sadly, I have not enjoyed the feeling of their cockpits and controls during manoeuvres; but that may happen – for I still dream of it! I have enjoyed their peacetime demonstrations. I have been awe-struck that men and women were asked to fly these machines after less than ten hours' flying instruction – some say 'on the basis that many of them would not survive long enough to land the machines'. I have run my fingers over the worn skins and coverings, and felt the shivers of the reality of the purpose of these flying fighters. I have also reconciled myself to the fact that, if the British had not opted for the 'affordable' solution (rather than the 'preferred' solution), the outcomes of the biggest conflict in the history of mankind may have been rather different.

Today I look at the airlines and, despite their preferences for certain things from their dreams, they too are dreaming upon the dream to find solutions – not to win a war, but simply to stay in business.

I have a simple rule about flying. Safety is NO accident. This means that some things cannot be economised upon. Fortunately, that same adage is tattooed onto the heart of the aviation authorities of the world! But it does not mean that we cannot grow – even if it is at a rate a little different to the one we originally dreamt about. The best thing is, as we make the realisation of our dreams and find new daily achievements - often in new areas and concepts from our 'original perfect dream-world' - we can truly re-design, re-dream, re-invent and re-assess, in order to move forward and to remain in the game in a stronger, more flexible position.

The young man that inspired this has no idea that his face, captured by a father in a moment during a family Day Out to the airfield, could possibly have led you to reassess your dreams today. This reminds us all that each moment, each minute is precious; we must not fail to look at the faces around us, to be in the places we should be, or we could miss that moment of inspiration that will readjust our reality for the better. I would love to paste on the wall of as many offices as I can, and especially the offices in the Ministries, the phrase "Every achievement begins as a dream, and the new achievements of every day bring the dream of tomorrow's adventures..." along with that young man's face... perhaps we can dream up a way to do that!

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