

Fly HighDear Pastor!

Today, October 18th 2013, I learned from my best friend that his Dad, our friend, and my childhood and adolescent pastor has been called home by our Lord. It was Pastor Jim Sweet's time and those close to him knew he was ready. His death has still hit me hard and has doused the wind from my sail. My mind and my heart are filled with a flood of emotions and memories. I do not believe there is a single Bible story or teaching that I can think of that Pastor didn't teach, talk about or share with me. Often times I think back at some of his favorite go-to principles that he wanted us as young people to understand and they come to mind. Having grown from those days into an older adult, most of the things that I now believe and hold dear were taught, reinforced and sealed in my heart by Pastor Jim. Yes, he was that influential to me.

In fact, Barb (my wife), told me today that it was under Jim's teaching that rumblings in her heart occurred that led her to personally profess Christ. So Pastor's influence lived on to affect our marriage and family years later. Interestingly enough he passed on the same day that Barb was born.

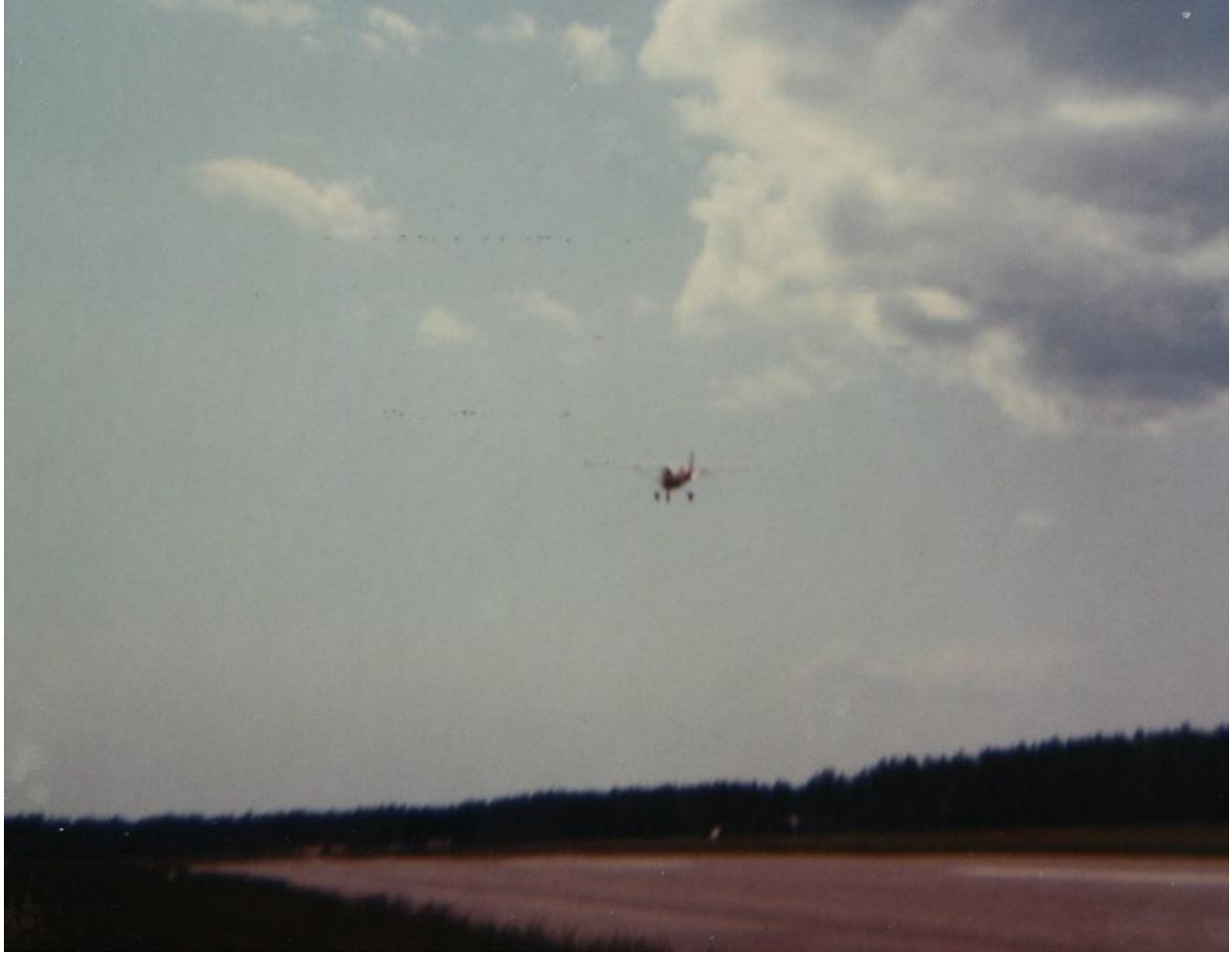


1st pic - 2004 in front of our Florence, KY home.
Pastor Jim, Margaret, and Tim Sweet

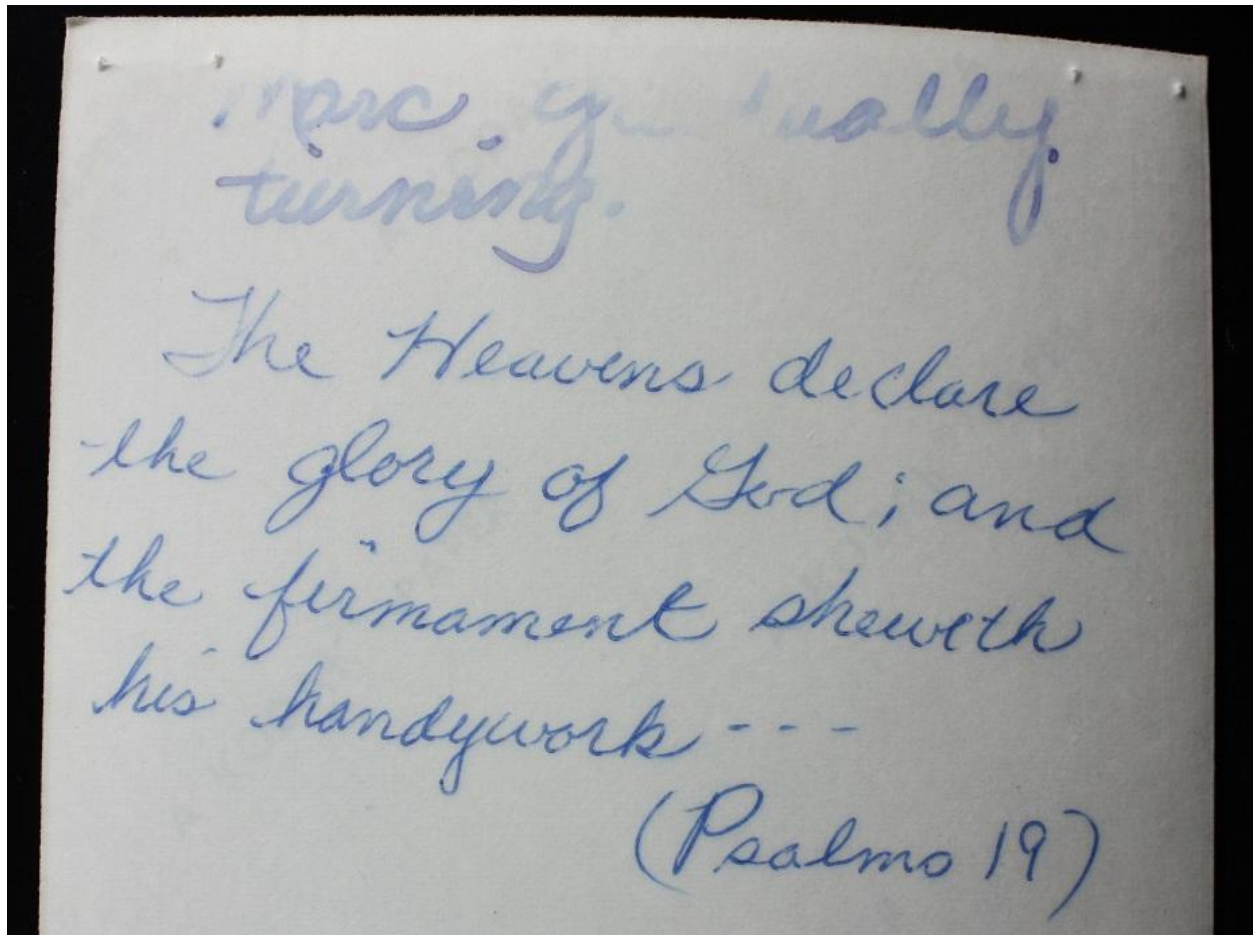


2nd pic - Backyard lunch in the gazebo.

Pastor had a love of flight. He often remembered with fondness the days when he flew a cub and that love never left him. That inward love probably was one of the factors that drove him to be out of sight but present, on my big day of 1st solo flight. The only picture memory that I have from that important day to me, came from Pastor. And I still cherish it.



3rd pic - This is that snapshot that Pastor took of me flying my 1st solo flight in a Cessna on October 27, 1969:



4th pic - Please see the note on the back of photo that Pastor added:

As indicated by this note, he was always pointing to God, always ministering, always encouraging us toward faith. He shared Psalm 19:1, which remains to this day as one of my favorite Bible verses.

Pastor Jim was a quiet man, but deeply principled and held strong personal beliefs which he spent his life trying to share with others. His life of faith, humor, and marital commitment were all an example to us. So what was it that I learned from this influential leader? What was so profound and so deep that has helped sustained me through peaks and valleys, through glad times or sad, through times of plenty or times of want? Just what truths have shaped, formed and changed my life that I learned from Pastor Jim? Well, here it is:

**"Jesus loves me this I know,
For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong,
we are weak but He is strong.....
Yes, Jesus loves me.....
The Bible tells me so."**

Simple isn't it? But also deep! Pastor believed that, lived it, and shared it! Now, partly because of him, I believe that. I now try to live it, and try to share this simple truth with others as well. That is the power of embracing this life changing gospel message and sharing it like Pastor did. Well, done thou good and faithful servant.....well done! As we sing "I'll Fly away"..... fly high Pastor Jim.....fly high! And smile knowing that one day we will meet again!

With love and admiration, your student, Mark Sztanyo