



Airspeed's Rules of Engagement/FAQ

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Hey, I love your show!

Thanks! We're going to get along just fine.

Where do you fit in the aviation media world?

I do aviation inspiration and fist-pumping rhetoric as well as any human in media. And at least as well as several other sentient species. I also handle music and essays pretty well. I'm pretty good with relaying my own experiences from my own viewpoint.

I don't teach very well or, if I do, it's by accident.

I don't do news or anything so current that it's likely to be noticeably outdated within two years after I first post it. For that reason and others, I don't date or number shows. Ezra Pound said that "literature is news that stays news." I try (with infrequent but non-trivial success) to make "literature."

I was listening to Meat Loaf's "Paradise by the Dashboard Light" from *Bat out of Hell* a while back. Particularly to the production style and editing. I think it might be accurate to call me the Meat Loaf of aviation media. In fact, I like that. "Meat," for short, if you like.

What certificates, ratings, and endorsements do you hold?

Private Pilot Single Engine Land, Single Engine Sea, Multi-Engine Land, Instrument Airplane, and a type rating (SIC) in the Douglas DC-3. I also hold high-performance, complex, and tailwheel endorsements.

What aircraft are in your logbook?

In roughly ascending order of horsepower/thrust: C-152, PA-12 (on floats), American Champion Citabria Aurora, American Champion Super Decathlon, C-172, C-172RG, PA-28 (151, 161, and 181), PA-23-150, T-6A Texan II, Ford Tri-Motor, DC-3, and F-16D.

What do you want to fly?

Lots, but the following lead the list. Any Piper Cub, any airship, F-86, L-39, F-14, F/A-18D. And F-16D again. And again. And again.

Hey, I don't like this or that about the show. Will you change this or that?

Nope.

Hey, I'll listen to anything, but Airspeed is my media outlet. All mine. I am executive producer, host, engineer, and janitor.

I understand that what I like to put out and what people like to consume don't always match up. I reserve the right to go completely off the map, use profanity, address things outside the usual core subject matter, etc. If I go off on some tangent or offend some folks, I'll probably lose them. I might gain some in their place. Or not. But that's the tradeoff. I understand it and you should, too. If you don't like the show, just unsubscribe and we'll part friends. If you love it, stick around. You'll probably only love it more.

I do prefer having more consumers of this media than fewer and this fact does indeed influence what I decide to put in the feed, on the blog, etc. For instance, I decided long ago to avoid political discussion that doesn't bear directly on aviation (even though I hold a degree in political science and have very strong feelings on many divisive issues).

But nothing will keep me from pursuing stuff about aviation that I find compelling. If it's sufficiently compelling but the audience is only one person, that's fine with me. Better that than a huge audience, the price for which is shoveling drivel. I like to think that there are huge audiences for non-drivel, and this media endeavor is, in part, an experiment in defining the parameters of how long the long tail really is and how much of it will stop by, pull up a chair, and listen.

You suck! I can do better than this or that!

Good for you! Start up a show and, if it's good, I'll subscribe and be a loyal listener. Do a man a favor! Kick my ass! I adore good audio and I'm happy to be bested by better media.

But you'd better get up early and stay up late if you want to keep up.

Will you do a show about this or that?

Drop me an e-mail or call me. I might.

I'm most likely to do shows on stuff that I might actually do. This is mostly about hands-on experiences that the average listener is capable of doing himself or herself with the right training and opportunity.

I'm less likely to do shows on stuff that I can't do myself. Unless it's extraordinarily cool or it captures my imagination. Like the Shuttle Carrier Aircraft. Ooooooh. Aaaaaah.

And I might as well anger the RC community now and get it over with. I'm vanishingly unlikely to do anything on radio-controlled anything unless they let me actually fly a Predator with live weapons or surveillance systems. I appreciate the technical skill required to build and fly RC aircraft. But they're toys. They will never, ever, ever be as cool as airplanes that you can climb into and fly. Get over it.

Do you use profanity in your shows?

I generally don't. Damns and hells and anything else that the FCC permits on TV before 9:00 p.m. local are fine with me and they generally don't even get considered for editing. I let one F-bomb slip through in Instrument Rating Checkride Part 2, but I haven't gone back to kill it.

The English language is broad and beautiful and that characterization includes the language's curse words. I love the English language and I adore its curse words. But I get that they bother some people so I don't keep them in gratuitously.

If a curse word is necessary to express an important emotion or make a particular point, in it goes and there it stays. But I reserve them for especially deserving emotions and points. Note that I didn't use any curse words in my comment on the TSA's proposed Large Aircraft Security Program, which should tell you that I have a pretty high threshold for curse words. (But it makes them so much more effective when I do use them!)

How come you didn't do a show about such-and-such big aviation thing?

If it was a news event, the chances are excellent that any number of actual news organizations covered it better than I could. The Miracle on the Hudson, etc. You get the idea.

Additionally, most events like that don't generally deal with the kind of flying that the average person can or does do. I like to focus on the actual kinds of flying that most listeners either actually do (because they're pilots) or might do (because I might be able to talk them in to beginning flight training). So stuff that deals with airliners (DC-3 excepted) and similar elements of aviation usually doesn't make the show.

How on Earth did you obtain this or that opportunity?

Massively parallel begging. I ask a lot.

And I research thoroughly and come up with an angle that appeals to the target of my inquiry. This has to be a win-win for me and for the opportunity-giver and I bend over backward to make sure that I offer a good value proposition for the target.

And nobody, but nobody, writes a better proposal than I do.

Do you have an affiliation with the armed forces?

Other than being a captain in the US Civil Air Patrol (the civilian auxiliary of the US Air Force), no. I have never served in anything other than a civilian capacity.

If you gather from the show that I have a fondness for the armed forces, you're right. Especially with respect to armed forces that fly aircraft. And even more especially those who fly me in, or let me fly, their aircraft.

It's kind of interesting sometimes. I occasionally get a communication from a listener who's conflicted about how much (s)he loves noisy and fast military aircraft and how much (s)he is bothered about what those same aircraft do when employed for their stated purposes.

Look, there are times that I disagree with the nation's policies. I have a degree in political science and economics, another one in finance, and yet another one in law. In fact, I suspect that I'm the most (if not best) educated guy in my media space. I have well-formed opinions about many issues. Some of my nation's policies are simply wrong-headed and ill-advised.

But don't make the mistake of thinking that the personnel flying or maintaining the aircraft that we love get to make those decisions. Foreign policy (including the decisions that go into picking the fights and stating the terms of the fights) comes mostly from elected officials. If I disagree with a particular military endeavor, I'm never going to start pointing fingers at the pilots or the maintainers or anyone similar. I start with the executive branch and the congress, which is where that quibble belongs. I vote.

The important thing is this. You should never let misgivings about the assigned missions of the military get in the way of your pursuit of the sweet perfume of JP-8 and freshly-mown grass on a beautiful airshow Saturday. You are a pilot or other aviation enthusiast and it is fitting and proper that you do this. Render to the pilots and maintainers the respect that they're due for their skill and courage and pump your fist in the air and shout with wild abandon as they tear up the skies over the show line. If there's somebody standing next to you doing the same, it's probably me.

Then go home, read everything you can get your hands on, transcend the rhetoric, understand the core issues, and stay informed about the nation's politics – and particularly about those elected and appointed officials who would presume to lead such men and women as these pilots and maintainers. And, most of all, vote.

Thus will we best preserve our civil society. Further affiant sayeth not.

Can I give you money to help out with the show because I'm such a generous guy/gal?

Of course! There's a "Donate" button on the right-hand sidebar of the website. Be assured that I'll put the cash toward stuff that supports the show. I doubt that any amount that I receive will actually cover more than hosting, equipment, studio rental, etc. But, if it does, be assured that I will piss away the money on flight-related stuff and record as much of it as I can for broadcast.

In the unlikely event that donations exceed the amount that I could possibly spend on aviation-related activities (*vanishingly unlikely!*), I have no idea what I would do with the surplus and it would be disingenuous of me to speculate about it.

Can I offer you this or that experience?

Sure. I'll consider trying anything once. Maybe twice if it doesn't hurt or taste bad. But please don't take offense if I turn it down. I have two kids and I have a calculus of risk that is tortured and convoluted and I reserve the right to apply it in ways that might result in my boneheadedly foregoing an innocuous yet cool opportunity.

By the way, I don't skydive. I have a shoulder that dislocates and the arm position for even the most basic tandem belly-flying would almost certainly result in a very painful experience. I prefer flying skydivers. It's such a wonderful demonstration of fore-aft weight and balance change!

Where do you get your music and stuff?

Glad you asked. I write and record most of it myself. I play (to one degree or another) guitar, drums, mandolin, bass, sax, xaphoon, keyboards, etc. I also collaborate with others, most notably audio engineer par excellence Scott Cannizzaro (www.nycmixer.com).

Can I license some of your music or other stuff?

Sure. Let's talk.

I represent a branch of the US military or NASA. Can I use your stuff?

Heck, yeah. Especially if your organization gave me the opportunity that is the subject of the material. It's be nice if you attributed it with words to the effect of "[Audio/video/whatever] from Airspeed. www.airspeedonline.com. Used with permission."

Hey! You used my stuff without getting a license!

I use very little material that I don't write, record, or otherwise originate myself. (See above.) Where I use someone else's stuff, it's usually either under a PodSafe license, with express permission, or in the public domain. Alternatively, I claim fair use under 17 USC 107.

I use precious little stuff under a fair use theory and only when I have a rock-solid basis to claim fair use. If you disagree, please contact me and I'll be delighted to listen to your claim and work it out in a friendly and civilized manner. In the event that you're right and I'm wrong, I'll do everything I can to make it right.

On the other hand, if you want to be a jerk and have an unnecessary fistfight over fair use to prove your bad-assed-ness, please be advised that I make all this money that I spend on flying as the leader of the technology licensing practice for a positively huge law firm, I know my stuff,

and I will hand you your recently-extracted spleen in a pizza box at the hearing on the motion for summary judgment. If you seek a hard target and want a high-profile, unpleasant, and expensive brawl in which my lawyer is committed to the freedom of the podsphere, hates bullies, is regularly listed in Best Lawyers in America, and (unlike your lawyer(s)) works very cheap and loves his client dearly, please trundle your case in and have a seat. I'll get to you after I land and debrief. Make sure you bring towels and some gum.

Will you speak at our gathering?

Heck, yeah! If it's somewhere other than where I already plan to be, you'll need to get me there and back, feed me, shelter me, and give me enough free time and an Internet connection to juggle stuff from my day job. But the accommodations don't otherwise have to be top-notch or fancy. Honorarium is negotiable. It's usually pretty cheap.

I don't do religious or partisan political organizations of any kind. Don't ask.

Can I give you wheelbarrows of money and sponsor your show?

Of course! Park 'em over there. Your form of agreement or mine?

I'd love to have moe sponsorship. I won't compromise the content (much) or change the essential nature of the show unless you bring Fox Uniform money and, let's be honest, nobody's going to do that.

Note regarding headsets: I fly David Clark. I fly *only* David Clark. If you're not going to wear green cans on your head, why fly? Have I blown any overture from Bose, etc. in so saying? Probably. That's fine. I love David Clark stuff. It's iconic. It works. It's green. Enough said.

How do you record and edit audio?

I use the [M-Audio MicroTrack 24/96](#) (the most recent model of which is available from [Sweetwater Sound](#) and other places). I select the 1/4" input with low sensitivity and the levels cranked almost all the day down (to avoid overdriving). An attenuating cable would also work, but I just haven't gotten around to finding the right one (which would involve a lot of experimentation and, as long as this setup works and it's not hurting the MicroTrack, I'm good to go). I plug a 1/4" guitar cable into the intercom in the back seat of the C-172s that I fly and plug the other end into the left side input of the MicroTrack. At the lowest setting (MP3 format, 44.1 KHz and 96 Mbps), I can get 4-5 hours of audio onto a 512MB CF card (well beyond the roughly 2.5-hour battery capacity of the unit if you don't use external power). The MicroTrack has a mini-USB port, so you can get auxiliary power using lots of [devices](#) available on the net or [at your local electronics store or drug store](#).

Frankly, any recording device will work if you can get the 1/4" intercom to feed into the input of the device. But remember that there's enough juice there to drive a headset, so you'll need to turn the sensitivity way down or get an attenuating cable.

You're doing video now, too?

Yes. I use a Panasonic HDC-SD9 video camera (full 1920 x 1080p HD video) with a Raynox Pro 0.3x semi-fisheye lens, all on a really versatile and strong [mount from Pegasus Racing Supplies](#).

The whole rig, including the mount, weighs just 17 ounces. The camera records entirely on solid-state digital media, so there's no transport slip when you pull gees. And the screen flips over to face you so you can set up the shot perfectly with little or no guesswork.

I've had it up on five or six acro flights in the Super Decathlon and flown it out to about five gees. I clamped it in the T-6A Texan II for that flight and the camera worked beautifully and delivered spectacular images. I couldn't be happier with the rig.

Airspeed has been, and I suspect always will be, a primarily audio presentation. Some luminary from public radio once said that he preferred audio because "film is an insufficiently visual medium." I agree with that. The best visuals are the ones you conjure in the a listener or reader's own head. But sometimes video is appropriate to get the point across and I gleefully use it in those cases.

Who would you love to get on the show but despair of being able to do so?

Alex Lifeson (musician, pilot)

Neil Peart (musician)

Tom Hanks (actor, producer)

Ed Robertson (musician, pilot)

What audio do you love?

I live in a sixteenth-note rhythm. I suppose that's why I love mandolin (which I play) and banjo (which I don't play) so much.

Go get The Grand Valley State University New Music Ensemble's recording of Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* and listen. That's what it sounds like inside my head all the time. That music is almost transparent to me. It's just there and fits right in with whatever I'm doing, tweaking little neurons from time to time when it hits something sympathetic. I don't even have to pay attention to it. It just envelopes me and tells me that it's there. Ever read Louis Sarchar's *Sideways Stories from Wayside School*? There's a story in which Mrs. Jewels brings in Maurecia-flavored ice cream. Everyone thinks it tastes great, except that Maurecia can't taste it because it's – well – Maurecia-flavored. If I can take a liberty and say that Maurecia liked the ice cream a great deal because it was her best essence at some level and that it made her feel centered, balanced, creative, and ready for anything, then *Music for 18 Musicians* is Steve-flavored music.

I love music that requires motor skills to play. I admire Chris Thile, Edgar Meyer, Bela Fleck, Victor Wooton, Stewart Duncan, Jerry Douglas, Neil Peart, Alex Lifeson, and Joe Satriani more

than you can imagine. It's all about precision with impossible speed and beauty. The English language fails me.

I think that John Mayer's *Your Body Is a Wonderland*, The Spice Girls' *Wannabe*, and Michelle Branch's *A Thousand Miles* are perfect, or very nearly perfect, pop songs. I don't particularly admire them for their musical quality, but I recognize when a thing is perfect for what it is.

Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring*, *Hoedown*, *Lincoln Portrait* (especially with the James Earl Jones narration) and *Fanfare for the Common Man*, Gustav Holst's *Jupiter*, David Kneupper's *The Future of Space*, parts of James Horner's *Apollo 13* score, and parts of Michael Kamen's *From the Earth to the Moon* score are the grandest statements of the raw stuff of which humans ought to be proud. Play them at top volume and drive or fly fast while you listen. Quiet background music is for sissies and the unfocused.

Who are your heroes?

Joseph McConnel, Jr. (Korean War F-86 driver and subject of *Sabre Jet Ace*)

Tom Hanks (Film and television actor/producer)

Neil Peart (Musician)

Mary Buday (Lots of reasons)

Dave Scott, Al Worden, and Jim Irwin (Apollo 15 crew)

Tom Kelly (Grumman LEM project director)

John Houbolt (Early champion of lunar orbit rendezvous for the Apollo program)

Jim Henson (Muppeteer and entertainer)

Robert A. Heinlein (Author)