

fun in the sun

FLYING . . .

John Tashjian of Redford Township, his wife, Penny, and their two children, Tammy, 10, and Randy, 8, can and do go to Owosso for breakfast, stop at mid-morning in Pontiac and then spend the rest of the day visiting friends in Traverse City.

It's all possible, of course, through the miracle of air travel. John, who has been a pilot since 1958, is the family's air chauffeur. "I enjoy it more than anything I can think of," he says with deep seated enthusiasm.

Other holiday air treats for the Tashjians might include rounding up three or four other planes for an evening's dinner in Toledo or Grand Rapids.

Randy's Indian Guide group recently enjoyed an airplane ride and Tammy's girl scout troop is looking forward to their own air trip.

A COLOR TOUR last autumn to Traverse City was especially memorable. With another couple, John and Penny flew along the sand dunes and then dropped parallel to the lake, taking movies of the brilliant foliage and outstanding scenic spots.

Often maligned from ground level, the Detroit metropolitan area is breathtakingly beautiful from above, according to those who have been there.

"We're able to see Detroit, Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor and the lights of Pontiac all at once," Penny explains. "The different areas and towns are seen as clusters. You can also get a better perspective from the air of such places as the River Rouge Plant, Grosse Ile and Belle Isle. It's very much like looking at a map."

Penny, who is completely comfortable in the air, would like to someday take a pinch hitter's course in flying, which would enable her to assist in case of any emergency. John has given her a couple of lessons, but they both agree that a husband and a wife do better when learning from a more objective third party.

John, who has a regular pilot's license, also holds a commercial pilot's license with ratings of instructor, instruments and multi-engine. He is currently working on an instrument instructor's license.

Tammy, too, would like to fly a plane, but Randy at 8 has made no definite plans.

WHILE PASSENGERS of large commercial airlines are often bored and jaded in regard to air travel, those who fly for fun are not. Flying at an altitude of 1,000 feet enables you to see people waving to you as well as providing the chance to see

familiar neighborhood landmarks.

And because there's usually no tight, strict schedule to adhere to, the journey with its sights and spectacles is every bit as important, if not more so, than the destination.

John, who works for the City Directory Division of the R.L. Polk Co., would never consider flying as a regular job. "It would just get to be a regular grind," he explains. "The pleasure of it would disappear."

Often regarded as an activity for extra red-blooded daredevils and danger lovers, flying is actually as safe, if not safer, than driving an automobile.

"There is a joke among pilots that the most dangerous thing about flying is driving to the airport," explains John, who admits to queasiness in anything faster than the ferris wheel at local carnivals.

"Airplanes don't make mistakes but pilots do," continues John, who has never had an engine fail or been forced to make an emergency landing in a cow pasture. As a matter of fact, he doesn't even have one hair-raising tale of mid-air disaster to relate in his 15 years as a pilot.

"SMALL PLANES are not dangerous," he says emphatically. "They are not equipped with parachutes and parachute jumping is not required for a pilot's license." He himself has never parachuted and he sees no necessity in ever having to do so.

Although flying can be an enormously budget draining hobby, it doesn't necessarily have to be. It's even possible to fly for fun without owning your own plane.

John belongs to an airplane club in which a four-passenger Cessna 172 -- "the most popular of its kind" -- is shared by 15 other people, all of whom have paid an initial \$1,000 as a membership fee. In existence for 12 years, John's club requires a yearly maintenance fee of about \$300 and a small cost for actual flying which includes both gas and oil.

Airport personnel are in charge of scheduling the plane, and throughout its 12 years of existence, John claims that the club has had little, if any problems, with schedule conflicts.

So successful has the group been, that it has just recently purchased an additional plane, a two-passenger model. All of the members are recreational flyers.

ONE OF JOHN'S biggest flying thrills comes in his role as a Sunday flight instructor at Plymouth Aero's Metetta Airport at Joy Road and Lilley. "Gee, I didn't realize it was so easy!" is the most frequent comment he hears when taking up a student for the first time.

His students come in all shapes and sizes. Eight women are currently working towards pilot's licenses and he instructs many retirees, looking for new horizons beyond their old nine to five worlds.

John also teaches a few 17-year-olds who are at the minimum age requirement for a license.

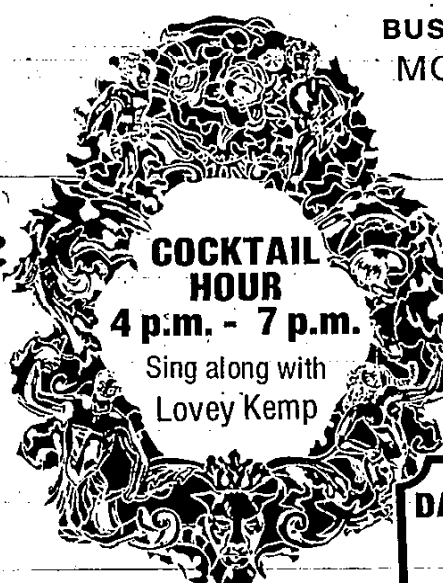
But doesn't a pilot have to be a Jack Armstrong type in perfect physical condition?

Again, old misconceptions are dissolved. John has successfully
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