

## Blue Sky Member News

Welcome new members Dave Butler and Jon Grushkin! Dave is working with Nick towards his tailwheel endorsement in the Citabria and some upside-down time in the Pitts! **CONGRATULATIONS** to Jon Grushkin (L), Dave Kennerly (C) and Mark Miller (R) on earning your tailwheel endorsement! Jon and Dave are both airline pilots that want some low and slow *fun* (and what better plane to do so than in Pretty Patches!) Mark is a longtime member and T34 owner!



**Congratulations to two Blue Sky members** who made their dreams come true in June! **Mike Winner** (below L) who flew his Maule M5-235C over 14 hours from Lewiston, Idaho to Morris (shown below at a stop in Bozeman, Montana), and **Gary Lowery** (below R) former gyrocopter owner, who bought **Nick Scholtes** Kitfox!



## How Difficult Is Basic Med? MEMBER BRIAN DePUNG DESCRIBES HIS (GREAT!) EXPERIENCE

As most of you probably know, last summer, the President signed third class medical reform into law as part of an FAA authorization extension. Section 2307 of the FAA Extension, Safety, and Security Act (FESSA) directed the FAA to issue or revise regulations to ensure that an individual may operate as pilot in command of certain aircraft without having to undergo the medical certification process, provided the pilot meets certain prescribed conditions. In January of this year, the FAA announced 14 CFR Part 68 and actually gave it name that's not an acronym!! The name it was given is "Basic Med" and it went into effect on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

Over the years, I only remotely paid attention to all the hype surrounding the fight for medical reform. I watched the Sport Pilot rating break ground with its "Driver's License Medical" and saw several ideas for 3<sup>rd</sup> Class medical reform come and go. I could envision many of the benefits that were hoped for and never doubted that safety would not be adversely affected. I did wonder how any changes might impact the growing Sport Pilot sector of aviation, but aside from that, I just kept tabs on all the discussions and never really gave it much thought.  
(continued pg 2)

Then, last summer, after the law was signed and “victory” was declared, I began to pay more attention, especially since I realized my 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Medical would lapse in less than a year. The law gave the FAA one full year to implement the regulations, and fortunately for me, they got it done sooner!

When May 1<sup>st</sup> arrived and a clear path to compliance had been established, I decided to give it a try. There was no reason to believe that I wouldn't be able to get a new 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Medical and my last one was still valid until the end of May, so I took a little time to study the material on the FAA and AOPA websites to see if Basic Med would work for me and if I would even qualify.

What I found was, that for the type of flying most of us do, Basic Med will work just fine and there will probably be no need to ever get a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Medical again. In a nutshell, under Basic Med you can fly day or night, VFR or IFR, up to 18,000 feet, in aircraft (certificated or experimental) up to 6,000 lbs that can carry not more than 6 occupants, at speeds less than 250 kts. You cannot fly for compensation or hire, however, flight instructor privileges are allowed.

As far as qualifying, basically, if you possess a valid U.S. driver's license, you've held at least a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class medical in the last 10 years (from July 2016) that hasn't been revoked, and you don't have one of several disqualifying conditions, you can go to your family doctor, instead of an AME for a physical exam. The doctor must sign off that he or she performed the physical exam using the Comprehensive Medical Examination Checklist.

After the exam, you take an approved online medical course from AOPA that includes a quiz at the end. At the end of the quiz, you have to input some of your and the doctor's info, including your pilot's certificate number and the doctor's medical license number, before the results of the course are finalized and sent to the FAA. The FAA only gets notification of the results along with the pilot's and doctor's information, not the completed checklist.

Once you pass the course and submit the results, you'll get a certificate to print out (or you can just save it electronically, provided you can produce later, upon request). This certificate and the signed Comprehensive Medical Examination Checklist need only to be kept with your logbook, not in your possession while acting as PIC, like a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Medical (or higher) still does. The online course is valid for two years and the medical exam is valid for four years. That's basically it! The decision of whether or not you are fit to fly then falls on you to determine before each and every flight, just as it always has.

Again, I'm not going into detail here, so make sure you research Basic Med for yourself to see if you qualify and if it works for you. I've talked to a couple of aircraft owners who's insurance carriers appear to be holding them to a “must carry at least a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Medical” clause in their policy, but I have a feeling that will not be an issue as more and more pilots begin using Basic Med. I've also read about issues with doctors who are not willing to perform the exam, though thankfully, that actually appears to be the exception, not the norm. My doctor said she had already read about it a few days before I dropped off the information. I also know of several pilots for whom Basic Med did not go far enough and it will not allow them to get back in the cockpit as PIC, as they had hoped. Unfortunately, I'm afraid that one will be the norm, not the exception.

Based on my experience, here's some recommendations, should you decide to try Basic Med. First, print out the Comprehensive Medical Examination Checklist with included instructions from the AOPA website. Study the instructions and forms for yourself, then drop it off with your doctor BEFORE you schedule an appointment. The information from AOPA tries to imply to the doctors that they are signing off only that they performed the exam and that the fit to fly decision is ultimately the pilot's responsibility. Give him or her a few days to look the information over and get back to you.

Then, if the doctor agrees do the exam, complete ALL of your portion of the checklist BEFORE the exam, since the doctor needs to review this info during the exam (I typed as much of the info into the .pdf file before I printed it out, which makes it much neater). Doctors have a short window of time per patient to perform an exam, so be respectful of their time by having everything filled out and in order for them. This is new to everyone, but the burden needs to fall on us, not the doctor! Unlike an AME, they will almost certainly not have any prior experience with FAA forms and procedures, so the more you have ready for them and the more educated you are, the better!

Taking the online course and quiz is easy. Leave yourself a couple hours, but you'll likely need less (you also don't have to finish the course all at once). Make sure you have the doctor's information, such as full name, office address and especially their medical license number handy for when you finish the quiz. The printed certificate you receive after completion includes a wallet sized copy, as well. I plan on keeping it with me when I fly, even though it is not required. If you are renting, like I am, sending a copy of the certificate to the club or FBO would probably be a good idea, as well.

Overall, Basic Med is definitely a step in the right direction. I truly hope this helps aviation grow and saves pilots and the FAA time and money. When compared to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Medical, I saw no limitations for the type of flying I do or would like to do in the future (though it's mostly not recognized internationally, yet).

The best part of the whole experience is that my doctor agreed to perform the exam as part of my FREE yearly wellness visit that's covered by my health insurance!!

14 CFR Part 68: <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=9425236723fa6658afc3da8ccc8e1ca8&mc=true&node=pt14.2.68&rgn=div5>  
Comprehensive Medical Checklist: [https://www.faa.gov/documentLibrary/media/Form/FAA\\_Form\\_8700-2\\_.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/documentLibrary/media/Form/FAA_Form_8700-2_.pdf)  
Advisory Circular AC 68-1: [https://www.faa.gov/documentLibrary/media/Advisory\\_Circular/AC\\_68-1.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/documentLibrary/media/Advisory_Circular/AC_68-1.pdf)  
AOPA's Fit to Fly: <https://www.aopa.org/advocacy/pilots/medical/fit-to-fly-pilots>