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Our future depends on GA passion

On countless occasions I've heard general aviation insiders spew a cynical quip about how this industry is on the decline, how it isn't as fun as it used to be and how the "glory days" are behind us. And I bet you've heard the oft-recited quote of how one can "get a million dollars in this business—start with 2 million!"

Unfortunately, this sort of negative outlook can be contagious and, even worse, if heard by an impressionable young person, can permanently influence their outlook on what could be an incredibly rewarding career. Certainly, this business is dramatically different than it was in the 70s when I entered it. And there's no denying the fact that there are more challenges ahead.

But my gosh, this is an exciting industry. As one of my astute industry colleagues pointed out to me recently, "After all, our products really take off!" We get the privilege of working with these magnificent aircraft that can provide a freedom incomprehensible to the vast majority of people on this planet.

And this industry desperately needs bright young talent. There are jobs out there for engineers, A&Ps, flight instructors, line technicians, aircraft salesmen, marketing managers and more. GA manufacturers are going to need strong leadership in the future and so are FBOs.

On occasion, I've spoken at various university aviation programs and been frustrated that so few young people even consider GA as a career choice, most targeting a job with the airlines. Not that airlines are a bad choice, but my belief is that young people should know about our exciting alternative. And, in my experience, recruiting and developing young people into skilled aviation leaders is the most rewarding job one can have in this business.

I am proud that both of my daughters are working in the GA industry despite the fact that I never really pushed them to do so. Perhaps they just saw the fun that I was having or how "cool" airplanes were and wanted in on the action.

So I think it's our job to take a moment to reflect on just how great this industry is and make sure that we are good ambassadors for general aviation. Be positive, be passionate and pass it on to the future.