

Despite liberal news reports, American aviation is safe

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by [Randy Bright](#)



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Last week an article appeared in *USA Today* entitled “Unfit for Flight” that began by telling the story of the deaths of three people and the injury of a eight-year-old child and blaming the crash on the mechanical condition of the aircraft.

The authors of this article speculated that federal investigators and the companies that manufacture the aircraft will blame the pilot, when, according to the author, “company documents and government records pointed to a different cause: a faulty carburetor that the manufacturer later urged airplane owners to remove because it was causing engine failures.”

To someone who knows nothing about general aviation and who is willing to believe anything they read, this article would leave them believing that general aviation aircraft are unsafe in a way reminiscent of Ralph Nader’s *Unsafe at Any Speed* indictment of the Corvair.

The article is a long one, and in the space of this column I cannot make a case against all of the accusations and untruths in the story, and there is no need because the blogosphere is already refuting those things. But I will tell you specifically what I know is untrue.

The crash event that the article began with was a Piper Cherokee that apparently had crashed just after takeoff.

The Piper Cherokee is one of the most reliable, easy to fly and stable aircraft ever manufactured, and I know this because I own one and fly it on a regular basis.

I purchased the aircraft a little over two years ago, and not long after I saw that there was to be an AD – aircraft directive – that would be issued regarding the carburetor in some, not all, Piper Cherokees. The directive required that the carburetors be inspected by a licensed aircraft mechanic, and if found to be the type in the AD, to have certain parts replaced.

As it turned out, mine was not one that was covered by the directive. The directive I received did not require the carburetors to be replaced at the insistence of the manufacturer; it was issued by

the FAA to simply check and replace parts if found. There were no planes suddenly falling out of the sky, just the knowledge that a certain part had the potential to cause a problem.

The fact is that general aircraft in the United States are required to undergo an inspection each year, and if defects are found, the aircraft are not to be flown until repaired.

Not only that, after the engine has been run so long, typically about 2000 hours, it must be completely overhauled.

This keeps general aviation aircraft safe and is why most aircraft accidents are rightfully blamed on pilot error.

That is why the government and pilot associations are vigilant to keep pilots sharp and educated.

Now my opinion about why this article was written.

I referred earlier to Ralph Nader's *Unfit at Any Speed* book, which turned public opinion away from the Corvair and led to its demise. But it wasn't unsafe, as many Corvair fans who have driven them for many years now.

I believe this article was written to turn public tide against general aviation as a whole, making the public believe that the manufacturers of aircraft are simply evil capitalists who only care about profits and not about lives. In reality, one of the main reasons aircraft are so expensive is because of the maintenance that is required and the insurance that manufacturers must carry to protect them from lawsuits. When an aircraft crashes, attorneys typically file suit against the manufacturers of every part of the aircraft, whether they know what the cause is or not.

But why would anyone want to get rid of general aviation, when so many businesses depend on them to make their operations more efficient, emergency services need them to transport the sick and injured or to search for the lost, among just a few vital uses?

You need only to look to the left, to the liberals who want to get rid of cars, they say, because they pollute, they make people fat, they are socially inequitable, or any number of other excuses. This attack against general aviation comes with a purpose to not only demonize aircraft manufacturers, but to demonize it with lies and distortions.

The lack of integrity of the authors of this article demonstrates why our Founders embraced Judeo-Christian morals and insisted that our government could not work without them, and that there must be freedom of the press.

Should they be shut down? No, but it takes honest and knowledgeable people to expose them and to present the truth.

By the way – my Piper Cherokee is nearly 50 years old, and I am confident that it is as safe any aircraft can be.

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