



Rev. Linton Scott (center) and two student pilots (Joel Winkler, left, and Franklin McDuffie) under the 'Flight Unlimited' scholarship program prepare for takeoff. Flight training for scholarship recipients is provided by Nelson-Ryan Flying School, Flying Cloud Airport, Minneapolis.

of, and chief fundraiser for, Flight Unlimited, Scott conducts inspirational radio sermons from his home studio. He still takes youngsters on plane rides, and tries to maintain daily contact with his flight students and the flying-school staff.

"Disadvantaged kids may have the ability to fly," he says, "but they need more encouragement and understanding than other kids. I call them or visit them as often as I can, just to keep in touch—to let them know I'm always concerned, always in their corner."

In addition to their pilot training, Flight Unlimited students get an introduction to the mainstream of society. Scott arranges tours of businesses, whether or not they are related to aviation, and hosts lunches for students and members of the business community so the communication gap between ghetto and "power structure" can be narrowed.

"It's all a part of developing a useful citizen out of somebody who might have been a potential candidate for drugs or prison," Scott says.

He takes no credit for motivating flying students. "If you offer a disadvantaged young person a real opportunity, that's all the motivation he needs. Our people are willing to make any reasonable sacrifice to succeed."

Scott tries to encourage the beginner to get his license within 90 days, but many complete training sooner. Mr. Scott points to one 23-year-old high-school dropout who began training last year on February 1, earned his private license by mid-March, and received his commercial license in July. He became an instructor by the end of October, and recently completed instrument training.

At Flying Cloud Airport, Rev. Linton Scott and a Cessna Skyhawk await their next passengers. Scott regularly gives rides to inner-city youngsters with an interest in aviation.



Ghetto Youth Learn To Fly

Scholarship program started by Minneapolis minister puts aviation careers within reach of inner-city youngsters

by MICHAEL W. FEDO

■ In the summer of 1967, anger and frustration came to a head in the Minneapolis inner city. Though a full-scale riot did not develop, and violence was minimal compared with other cities, concerned citizens sought to restore calm and order to that troubled area.

Many programs, funded privately and with government grants were initiated, and most floundered due to bureaucratic red tape or lack of interest. One—Flight Unlimited, started modestly by the Rev. Linton Scott (AOPA 242443)—survived and is now an unqualified success.

Scott felt that whatever assistance was rendered ghetto and other disadvantaged youth had to be more meaningful than neighborhood centers with ping-pong and pool tables. Those temporarily kept kids off the streets, but did nothing toward solving the problems of poverty and lack of skills.

"Ghetto kids need to see their way out of the ghetto and into something productive," he says.

By June 1968, with only a vague idea of what he might accomplish, Scott was spending one day a week taking young blacks on airplane rides in an effort to encourage them to become pilots. He also took them on tours of aircraft facilities and let them talk with other pilots and airport personnel.

A local businessman, hearing of the minister's work, offered to pay one

young person's way through flight school. When three equally well-qualified candidates were found, the anonymous donor agreed to sponsor all three.

Word spread about Scott's endeavors, and other donors indicated they, too, would be interested in supporting the program.

The purpose of Flight Unlimited is to aid those young men who want, but can't afford, training for aviation careers. Virtually the entire cost of flight school is paid by the nonprofit corporation.

"Aviation is one area where blacks have made no substantial inroads," says Scott. "There are only 51 black commercial pilots, out of 35,000 registered, in this country. But employment opportunities are good right now, if qualified blacks can fill them."

Scott, who came to Minneapolis from Jamaica in 1956, says it was his lifelong dream to fly. Recalling his own early interest, he assumed that other youngsters would be similarly fascinated with flying.

He received his pilot's license in 1959, while studying for the ministry, and was the first black graduate of the Nelson-Ryan Flying School at Flying Cloud Airport, Minneapolis. The school currently trains recipients of Flight Unlimited scholarships.

In addition to his duties as president

Though its primary emphasis is on inner-city youth, Flight Unlimited is not limited solely to blacks. Indians and a few whites are also involved, and are doing well.

The success of Flight Unlimited does not surprise its originator. "There's no reason why someone with aptitude shouldn't do well," he argues. "If a kid has what it takes to be a pilot, why should we make a skycap out of him?"

Though Scott independently solicited funds for his students until last year, a group of area residents urged him to form a corporation and undertake all-out fundraising drives. In April 1970, Flight Unlimited was incorporated.

"We're reaching more people this way, that's for sure," says Scott. Girls, too, have requested help from the organization and, though none of them have participated in flight training, Scott was able to talk one girl into applying for stewardess training. She was accepted and is now a stewardess for Northwest Airlines.

Since its incorporation, Flight Unlimited has gained new impetus. Its reputation is spreading nationally, and Scott is in the process of screening over 200 applicants.

He doesn't really worry about funding more though. "A lot of good people are helping us," he says, "from old ladies who save dimes and nickels, to businessmen who donate several thousand dollars. And evangelist Billy Graham also has sponsored one of the students, I'm proud to say."

Other money comes from honoraria given Scott when he speaks before church and civic groups in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. "But talking's easy for a preacher," he says, smiling.

To date, 14 young men have completed pilot training, and have become near-heroes in their community.

"Ghettos in this country just don't graduate pilots," says Scott. "It's one of the biggest things that's ever happened here. The whole community is proud of these fellows. Their success has a wholesome, inspiring effect on everyone around them. They always had aptitude and ability. What they needed, and eventually received, was the opportunity to prove it."

Twenty-two others are currently undergoing training, and, significantly, not one has dropped out.

Nor does Scott expect them to. "There is a tremendous desire on the part of these young men to succeed," he says, "and to know they have a chance for success."

"All we've done at Flight Unlimited is tap a new source of manpower, and we're finding fellows who have the ability and determination to make it." □

THE AUTHOR

Michael W. Fedo is a junior college teacher and a freelance writer. His home is at Champlin, Minn.
