

## Barry Densa: Age just a number, unless you're in the air

**By Barry Densa**  
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Astonishing! There are 3,451 active pilots registered with the Federal Aviation Administration who are 80 years of age, or older. This could mean that, on average, high above Palm Beach County there are two pilots more concerned with amending their revocable living trust than adjusting their flaps and maintaining altitude.

Now let's get one thing straight. I've got nothing against old people. I love old people. My mother is an old people. In fact, rather than using the term "old people," let's use the term "older people."

Only "things" are old. My car is old, my house is old, my underwear is old. Things can be called old, because things have no feelings. Will my jockey shorts become depressed and complain if I tell them straight to their fraying threads that they're old? No, of course not. Eventually, they'll just shred or rip, as they often do.

Would it make sense, on the other hand, to say my refrigerator, which has a continence problem (the freezer defrosts and leaks without warning) is older? Older than what? Another refrigerator? It's the only refrigerator I own. Why? Because there's no "old" money in my family and I'm in debt up to where I used to have hair.

But I digress.

So, when dealing with people one must be considerate. Would I tell my wife, for example, she's old? C'mon, be serious. That would be hurtful. And I'd never be so callous as to forget that every day she cooks my dinner in a hot kitchen while under the sink she has, within easy arm's reach, gallons of toxic chemicals.

### **'Old' is relative**

In the last analysis though old is a relative concept. So, for example, when inquiring about a relative, I will usually ask, "How's old So-and-So?" And then, when I'm told, I will typically say, "Sorry, I didn't know. When was the funeral?"

Returning to my original point. My mother, who is also a relative, is 89. So would I ever let my mother fly a plane? Let me put it this way -- have you ever met my mother?

My mother gets lost going from the kitchen to the living room. Her two favorite questions are: "Where am I?" and "Where was I?"

And usually, where she was -- is where she is, but you can't tell her that -- it mixes her up. And when she's mixed up she gets into a state. But, once she's in a state, she's relatively easy to find. Because she rarely leaves Florida.

Did you know that the FAA doesn't require older pilots to periodically "requalify" for a pilot's license?

A thorough physical exam though is regularly performed. And this is good. Especially if a pilot is required to sub as a baggage handler, change a tire, or lift his plane above his head. Which

begs another question: When was the last time you saw a pilot of any age jumpstarting his Cessna by pushing it down the runway?

### **Jet pilots sit at 60**

Commercial jet pilots of course get their wings clipped at age 60. Yet, on that very same day they turn 60, they can slip out the side door and run, or more probably walk, to their local used-plane dealer and buy a cute little prop-job and once again take off into the wild blue yonder.

Granted, older pilots may not run any red lights up there, or change lanes without signaling. But what if, all of sudden, they become a little disoriented, or really have to go to the bathroom because they didn't pack the Imodium in their flight bag?

Hey, I know, this can happen to all of us, at any age.

But all I can tell you is this: The next time my mother asks me for the airplane keys, I'm not giving them to her.

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