

# the flyer



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## Pilot Proficiency Classes Start This Month

by Susan Liebeler

The Ventura County 99s are pleased to announce a terrific array of 2013 Annual Pilot Proficiency Classes with some great new classes and instructors for their 13th annual season. The classes are open to all pilots, student pilots and instructors. We offer early bird pricing for those who register for season passes before February 9th. We also offer several discount pricing options and season passes for 99s and their immediate family members, active full-time military, CFIs with a current FAA flight instructor certificate, and those who want to attend multiple classes. Please visit our registration web site at [www.ennect.com/e2061](http://www.ennect.com/e2061) where you can get additional information and register for the classes. ✈



## NEXT MEETING TUESDAY, JANUARY 15

### Flying Idaho What I Did Last Summer

The VC99s' monthly General Business meeting will be Tuesday, January 15 at the Department of Airports, 555 Aviation Way at KCMA. Join us for a pizza dinner at 5:30 pm; meeting to begin by 6:30, and the presentation, "Flying Idaho" told by Linda Ehrlich, will start no later than 7:15 pm. Guests and 49½s are welcome to sit in on this session. Watch your email for a reminder of this event! ✈

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Happy  
New Year!

# Monika Petrillo

by Lindsey Bell

"If I hadn't gotten a pilot's license, decided to fly around Australia, and then decided to make a movie, my life would've been so different."

Within minutes of talking to Monika Petrillo, it is apparent that she rejects "I can't," and embraces a *carpe diem* attitude toward life. After leaving Munich, Germany at age 20, Monika found her way to Los Angeles where she began a career as a Script Supervisor in Hollywood, a career that called upon the employ of her second language. In Germany, flying only meant flying for an airline, so when 24 year-old Monika met a CFI at a party here, she was intrigued into a discovery flight. Although she had never considered becoming a pilot, she couldn't help but wonder, "What if?" and began to see the license as a way to prove that she was in charge of her life. Monika trained in Van Nuys with a young, female New Zealander, who "taught me without words that women could be good pilots." Monika earned her ticket in four weeks, by flying two times a day and studying in every available minute, even taking her second cross-country mere hours after returning from her first. She cites radio communication as the most challenging obstacle, and only due to the language barrier. Her DPE arrived in the form of an older man playing the macho intimidation card, but her instructor had so firmly instilled the notion that, "The calmer you get, the better you can think," Monika passed on her first try.

When she called her dad in Germany to tell him the good news, she'd presupposed every possible response, except the one she got: "Well, I'm really envious." That Christmas, Monika visited him and, "he asked about turning tendencies and gyroscopic procession, ...and if he could come to L.A. for six weeks to get his license."

"About a year later, we researched our common dream of visiting Australia. We found a tour group (11 people, 5 Cessna 172's) and circumnavigated the whole continent, counterclockwise, in four weeks. It was flying the way I'd always dreamt of it - low and slow, landing on dirt strips." Monika had always wanted to make her



own film, so she'd bought a handheld digital video camera and taken it along. As the trip unfurled, relations between she and her father grew tense. They were co-piloting a plane for the first time, he with just 70 hours under his belt. Monika is quick to mention that he, for his part, was flying the right seat, new territory unto itself. "Dad and I are extremely close. We never had one argument in life until then, which was hard because we didn't know how to deal with it." But she "shot everything," and came home with 25 hours of footage.

From there, Monika had to learn about film editing and figure out what story to tell from the experience as it'd played out, warts and all. "I'd thought, 'I'm gonna go on

this spiritual journey and find myself and all that other stuff a twenty-something thinks, but I don't have a story. It's a failure!" In time, Monika realized that "you don't always find what you're looking for, and maybe that's the story?" After seven years, *Flyabout* was released to glowing acclaim.

Monika continues to appear at screenings all over the country, and reports great fulfillment from the inspiration she has given to so many people. Her website is: [www.flyaboutmovie.com](http://www.flyaboutmovie.com). VC99, Susan Liebeler, invited her to present *Flyabout* at our pilot proficiency classes, and Monika, who lives in South Pasadena, loved our chapter so much, she joined.

Between work, a husband, and two children (aged 7 and 9), Monika laments that she doesn't get to fly as much as she'd like to. Looking ahead, she speaks of an IFR rating, tailwheel endorsement, and a desired peek into the EMT course. She admits to occasionally sneaking off to the airport after dropping her kids at school, and says she takes them up on the last day of the school year as a celebration. When she asked her nine year-old daughter, Louisa, if she wanted to become a pilot, Louisa replied, "Can I be two things?" Sound like anyone you know?

