

The dream of flying

In 1992 Jim Sundstrom founded the first virtual airline called Sun Air in the CompuServe Forum. Other groups like Noble Air and America East Line (AEL) were to follow and the FS-Forum turned into an elitist community that allowed only few virtual airlines to participate. The US-American Bill Alderson became Vice-President of the AEA whose President was occupied as Windows-95-Beta-tester and was planning to transfer his complete virtual airline to the newly-founded MSN-network – which displeased many pilots including Bill Alderson.

Consequently, the founder of AEA was locked out from the FS-Forum and in October 1994 AEA pilots who were also still FS-Forum members founded Cyber Air Virtual Airlines under the leadership of Bill Alderson. Thus, Cyber Air can rightly so claim to be one of the oldest virtual airlines.

In 1996 some 40 pilots were registered at Cyber Air's US hubs as well as at its European hub. With the rising attractiveness of the Internet Cyber Air kept growing and can meanwhile be found in the web at www.cyber-air.org.

Right to the end of the 20th century Cyber Air was flying by the motto "If we don't build 'em, we don't fly 'em". Bill built the airplanes and distributed them free-of-charge to the VA pilots. These planes were amongst the best that could be had at that time. With the launch of FS2000 the first complex airliners came on the market and started to take over the position of Bill's planes. Today you can find lots of freeware-aircraft in fitting Cyber colours. You can also find specially created Cyber Air liveries for many payware aircraft.

With the time European hubs in Munich and London Heathrow came up beside the US hubs in San Francisco, Denver, Dallas, New York and Chicago. All hubs have their own, realistic flight plans although there is no obligation to fly only those. With a specifically designed tool for the FS or via a web-form the data of performed flights can be transferred to the management so that the flight hours can be counted which consecutively leads to the reporting pilots' promotions. The pilots can also use their favourite aircraft to make up charter flights to any airport and have those flight hours counted, too.

Beside the hubs, a SAR team and the fleetsupport you can also find the "Disaster Response Team" (DART) which quickly sets up flights delivering humanitarian aid material to areas hit by natural disasters like earthquakes, floods etc. Furthermore DART-members have financially supported the international fly-for-kids event at Christmas and we also regularly deliver Christmas letters to Santa Claus (who resides in Northern Lapland for the European kids and in Alaska for the Americans). These nights are always very funny for the pilots participating in this annual online-event.

Cyber Air has become an international venture of friends; politics, ethnic origin or religious denomination are not relevant for our peaceful hobby.

Bill Alderson handed over the leadership of the airline to Chris Schnaedelbach in December 2006. The various tasks in administering the airline are in international hands. The designer and administrator of the webpage lives in Houston, Texas; the

“Vice President for European Operations” lives in Bristol, UK and the boss of fleet support resides in New Zealand. Bill Alderson is still actively flying for “Cyber Air Fleet Support”, the subdivision helping pilots who ran into technical problems on their flights or had an especially hard landing, overshoot the runway or in any way damaged their planes. The official language is English, but the members of the German hub also speak German (when alone ☺) .

Unlike other airlines Cyber Air has never conducted any compulsory tests, check flights or the likes for their pilots. We are simply of the opinion that real life offers enough pressure and stress as it is.

There is also no obligation to fly a specific number of flights with specific aircraft in a specific timeframe. Since there is no “career system” where you have to work your way up to get permission for certain routes or aircraft there are not only young pilots but also lots of pilots 40 and up who are handling their everyday lives and jobs and can easily resist the temptation of happily accepting any additional constraints in their freetime.

Since it has always been a tradition for Cyber pilots to fly online we were chosen as partner airline for VATSIM’s SAG (www.vacc-sag.org), which is the department handling Germany, Austria and Switzerland for VATSIM (www.vatsim.net). Our experienced members help new pilots to get along in the online networks, especially since some Cyber pilots are also working as VATSIM air traffic controllers. However, it is of course also possible to perform Cyber Air flights with other networks like IVAO (www.ivoa.aero).

Cyber Air is interested in conducting the flights as closely to reality as is possible for the pilots regarding their experience, equipment and timeframe; i.e. we are happy if pilots use real weather and atc. Our pilots are rewarded for flying intensively: There is e.g. a Just Flight Tiger Moth for the “EDDM Pilot of the Year” (sponsored by the CEO), and Christoph Beck, the EDDM Hub Captain, invites this pilot to a barbecue with homebrewed beer, the so-called “CyBeer”. All flights to/from Munich count for that award and flights using atc count even more. Details can be found in the Cyber Air EDDM forum.

It’s not least due to this tolerant and casual approach that there are also some real-world airline pilots as well as hobby pilots flying virtually for Cyber Air and professional atc are members of our airline, too. It deserves mentioning that these real pilots and atc are especially proud to pass their knowledge on to their virtual friends who very often also have become their friends in real life.

The European pilots meet regularly on Monday nights for online group flights in the VATSIM network. Over the last years a group of up to 10 pilots flew around the world in 1 or 2 hour-long legs to discover all kinds of airports. Meanwhile, after flying around Africa we are now doing European capitals and use the spectacular Monday night atc services.

In our group flights you find a group of international European pilots: there are German, English, Polish and Scandinavian pilots having fun together. We communicate via MSN and Teamspeak in the background which has also led to many personal friendships, international meetings and excursions.

Anybody who would like to fly in a relaxed, enjoyable community is cordially invited to join Cyber Air and make his personal dream of flying come true.