



SÓNDRA N. ROBBINS

Kevin Pate, a freshman aerospace engineering major from Houston, checks his plane before take off at the Easterwood Airport.

Flying high

A hobby that keeps students up in the air

By Terri Welch

All within a couple of seconds, the vibrations and booming jet sound grow so strong and loud that your heart is shaking and you cannot hear yourself think.

Like a flash of light, a stark white airforce jet "buzzes" Easterwood airport and disappears into the wild blue yonder.

Kevin Pate's words quickly fade into the noise and he makes every effort to catch a good look at the plane.

"A T-38," he says as soon as the jet passes.

For almost every plane that either landed or took off within the next hour or so, Pate could tell you its name.

A freshman aerospace engineering major from Houston and president of the Texas A&M Flying Club, Pate earned his private pilot's license two-and-a-half years ago and says only good things about the

steps it took to receive the license.

"I loved it," he says. "I didn't mind any of the testing either. When you are really interested in something, it's not hard.

"I've always been enthused with airplanes," Pate says. "My mom told me that when I was two years old we were in a hotel in Dallas and there were lots of toys around. But instead of playing with the toys, I was watching the planes out the window."

Pate started working on his private pilot's license when he was 14 years old and completed it on his 17th birthday. Federal regulations require anyone who applies for a license to be at least 17 years old.

"It took me three years to get my license because I was working and sometimes flew as little as once a month," he says. "I also took my time because you have to be 17 to get your license."

Pate says his parents have always

been supportive of his interest.

"My mom was scared, as any mom would be," he says. "But they knew that is what I really wanted to do, so they let me do it."

Pate says aside from his natural interest, his flying instructor influenced him the most.

"My instructor knew every single thing in the world, and he was serious about flying," Pate says.

Along with all of the good, Pate does mention a drawback that affects a lot of people interested in flying: money.

"It's expensive," he says. "Mostly my parents paid for my license."

For members of the flying club to rent a four-seater Cessna 172, the cost is \$40 per hour and a two-seater Cessna 152 is \$30 per hour.

In order to receive a private pilot's license, you must complete 40 hours of flight time and complete ground school. The money tends to

add up when you consider the additional cost of the instructor.

Once a person has received a private license, Pate says, a lot of people call it a "license to learn."

"I've learned a whole lot since I got my license, so I can't argue with that," he says.

Flying as a passenger with other pilots and hanging around the airport are two ways to learn a lot about flying and get the big picture, he says.

Pate encourages others to pursue their interests in flying.

"Go for it," he says. "It's fun! Even if you don't want to go all the way to get your commercial license, why not get your private license for fun?"

Another member of the flying club, Mary Walters from Dallas, agrees.

"Be aggressive and anybody can do it," the junior economics and political science major says. "All you