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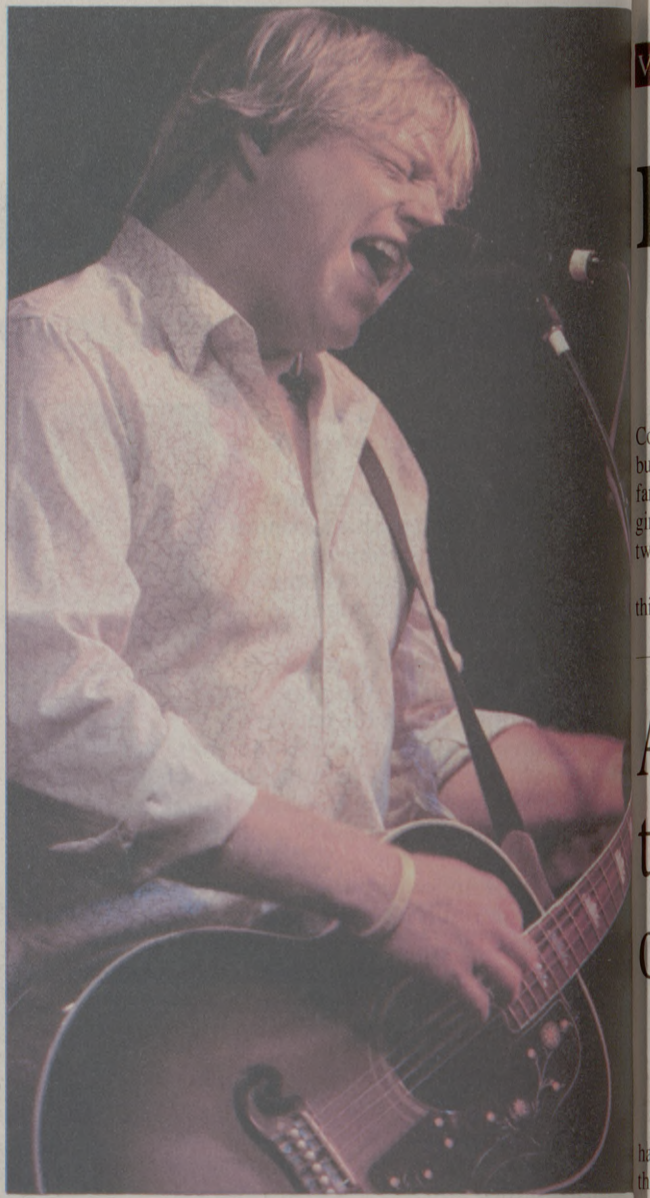
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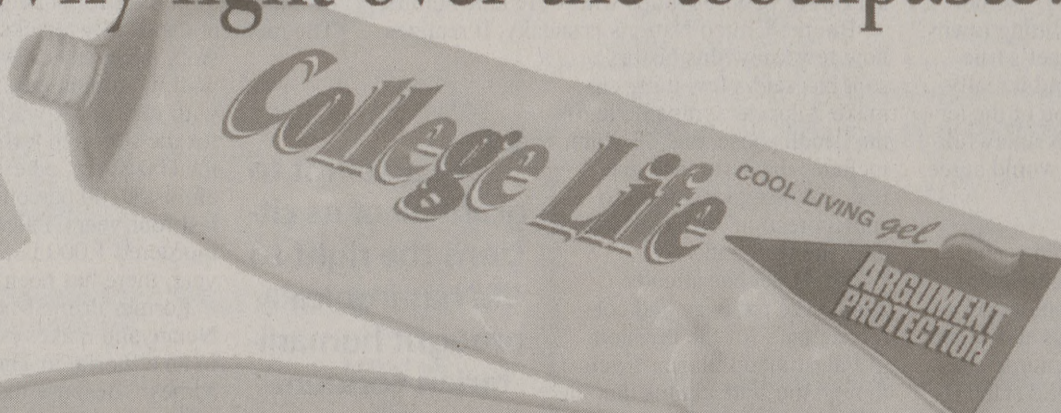
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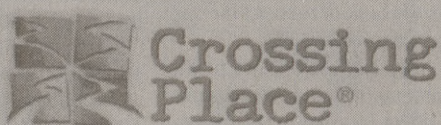
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Sport pilot's license will make it easier to fly low and slow

By Leslie Miller
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - New safety rules for light airplanes will soon take effect, a victory for private aviation groups that have long been encouraging them as a way to lower the hurdles to flying entry-level aircraft.

Under the rules, an aviation enthusiast will be able to obtain a sport pilot license, with lower training requirements than for a private pilot's license, The Associated Press has learned.

A candidate will need 20 hours of training and a valid driver's license to qualify for a sport pilot's license. Private pilots are required to have 40 hours of training and a medical certificate from the government.

Experimental Aircraft Association spokesman David Berkley said the new rules will make it cheaper and faster to get a license to fly.

"It really does promote access to the dream of flight," Berkley said.

Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Greg Martin said the agency would announce new flight standards on Tuesday that will balance two important objectives: "one, to increase the safety of recreational flying, and two, to introduce new enthusiasts to the sport." He declined to provide further details.

Earl Lawrence, the Executive vice president of regulatory affairs, said the rules also ease the regulatory requirements for manufacturers, opening a mass market for "low and slow" planes.

"It allows them to produce and bring into the marketplace less expensive airplanes that meet the weight limitations of sport aircraft," Lawrence said.

Most "low and slow" recreational aircraft are built by individuals from Lawrence said.

Currently, he said, certification accounts for about half the cost of bringing an airplane to market. It can take years for aircraft makers to prove to inspectors that every part of the plane works, Lawrence said.

FAA inspectors must certify manufacturing plant and component as it's being built. The new rules will require manufacturers to build the plane to a standard, develop quality control standards and establish ways to recall the plane. The rules will require an inspector or designee to inspect the plane at point of sale to ensure it will fly, he said.

The new regulations also allow people to buy, finance and register light aircraft, which in turn will enable the finance purchases of the plane, Lawrence said.

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