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By Mike Jones

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You meet some awesome people in aviation, but Marine Sargeant Adam Kisielewski borders on amazing. He flew his Diamond DA42 from Washington, DC to Punta Gorda for the VAC event. This is unusual because Kisielewski is a combat-wounded vet himself, losing both an arm and a leg in the service of his country.

While he's a board member of the Veterans Airlift Command, "No Person Left Behind" is Kisielewski's own non-profit and his principal focus for veterans. He arranges outings for groups of four or five vets, with the goal of giving them a chance to bond, to work as a team, to tell their stories, and to get out of the house. The deep-sea fishing during the Punta Gorda trip was a NPLB event.

But Kisielewski dreams big: he's even taken vets to Mount Kilimanjaro. Think about that: a double-amputee has climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro twice. Fricke remembered one morning when Kisielewski texted him from 17,000 feet on the side of the mountain. He texted, "Man, I don't know if I can make the run to the top tomorrow, I'm really sick." But when Fricke heard from him the next day, Kisielewski was blasé: "Yeah, I did it."

Kisielewski has his instrument rating and is working on his multi-engine ticket. When he was deciding to fly, everybody questioned how he was going to

manage an airplane with only one arm. He connected with Able Flight, which aids people with disabilities to fly. In the air, he puts the stick between his knees and his hand on the throttle. Kisielewski actually has flown an entire instrument approach, landed, and taxied flying the plane only with his knees, just in case he had to copy a clearance or use his hand for something else.

Yep, that's amazing.



The whole team assembled for the five-plane fly-over of the Medal of Honor Memorial. (L to R) Walt Fricke, Adam Kisielewski, Joel Lonky (T-34 pilot), Grady Bendel, Marc Castleberry, Jim Ostrich (T-34 pilot), Don Tharp (T-34 pilot), Andrew Schillace, Rob Kilmartin, and Michael Grossmann (T-34 pilot).

About the Author



Dr. Mike Jones is based in Pinehurst, NC and consults with small airports to improve their performance and sustainability. He's got 4,000 hours in his logbook and usually flies his 1979 Cessna Centurion. You always can reach him at PilotMike2012@gmail.com.