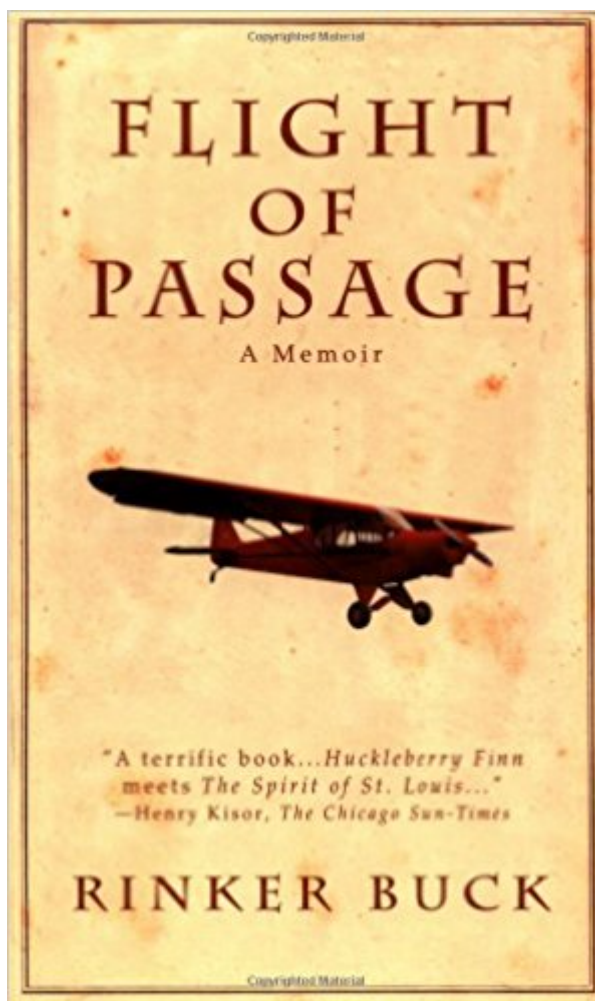


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# Flight Of Passage: A Memoir



## Synopsis

Writer Rinker Buck looks back more than 30 years to a summer when he and his brother, at ages 15 and 17 respectively, became the youngest duo to fly across America, from New Jersey to California. Having grown up in an aviation family, the two boys bought an old Piper Cub, restored it themselves, and set out on the grand journey. Buck is a great storyteller, and once you get airborne with the boys you find yourself absorbed in a story of adventure and family drama. *And Flight of Passage* is also an affecting look back to the summer of 1966, when the times seemed much less cynical and adventures much more enjoyable.

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## Customer Reviews

Writer Rinker Buck looks back more than 30 years to a summer when he and his brother, at ages 15 and 17 respectively, became the youngest duo to fly across America, from New Jersey to California. Having grown up in an aviation family, the two boys bought an old Piper Cub, restored it themselves, and set out on the grand journey. Buck is a great storyteller, and once you get airborne with the boys you find yourself absorbed in a story of adventure and family drama. *And Flight of Passage* is also an affecting look back to the summer of 1966, when the times seemed much less cynical and adventures much more enjoyable. --This text refers to the Audio Cassette edition.

In July 1966, Rinker and Kernahan Buck flew a Piper Cub from New Jersey to California, becoming at ages 15 and 18, respectively, the youngest pilots then to cross the country. This

abridged version of Rinker's memoirs discusses the flight in the context of the complex relationships between the two brothers and their father, Tom Buck. Tom, barnstormer, magazine editor, and political activist, taught both to fly. However, his strong personality overshadowed his sons. Kern, shy and sensitive, and Rink, rebellious and socially outgoing, learned to trust each other while facing harsh Pennsylvania weather, rough crop dusters, and a dangerous crossing of the Rocky Mountains. Appearing along the way are the population of tiny airports, small-town diners, and the underlying tension of Vietnam-era America. At the end, the brothers reach a greater understanding of each other and establish their own identities independent of their father. Rinker's narration of his own story is wonderful. This warm book will interest both aviation enthusiasts and listeners fascinated by the complex relationships between brothers and fathers and sons. For all audio collections. ?Stephen L. Hupp, Univ. of Pittsburgh at Johnstown Lib., Pa. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Audio Cassette edition.

Loved this book. It's well-written, and fun to read from the perspective of a teenager. It sure held my interest from beginning to end, especially the experience flying through Guadalupe Pass. Turbulence, strong headwinds and updrafts and downdrafts, I could sure relate! My father was a pilot with a similar background to Rinker and Kern Buck's father. My Dad was a Stearman man in that he was a flight instructor for the Navy during WWII. Immediately after the war, he flew a Ford Tri-motor for a mining company ferrying men and supplies into and out of the Sawtooth Mountains of Idaho. He ultimately ended up working for United Air Lines in their engineering department, but kept up his flying skills as the chief flight instructor for the United Air Lines Flying Club. Because of my experiences flying with my father and from the things he taught me (I never became a licensed pilot), I could really relate to this story. My flying days were back in the '50's and '60's before I graduated from college and went out on my own in 1967. Most of my experiences were in a Cessna 172 Skyhawk, my earliest experience being in a Stearman which my father told me about because I had no memory of it!

FLIGHT OF PASSAGE: A MEMOIR, by Rinker Buck. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. And that cover photo of an immaculately restored Piper Cub only tells half the story. Sure, there's plenty in here about that, and also a wonderful recreation of the young Buck brothers' news-making transcontinental flight in said aircraft; and Rinker Buck's journalistic background is evident in the fine writing displayed here. But the real story is about family. First, about an extrovert younger brother (Rinker) who had always overshadowed and outshone his introverted, geeky, highly intelligent older

sibling (Kern), and how their relationship changed in the months-long process of restoring the Cub and then flying it together coast-to-coast in the course of one adventure-filled and often dangerous week which tested the limits of their flying skills, but, even more importantly, brought them closer together. They became friends and equals during the trip. And second, Rinker confronts the problems he's had with his father, Tom Buck, a flamboyant, self-made man who had taught himself to fly during the Great Depression and barnstormed his way out of poverty into a successful career in publishing. The often crushingly frustrating, head-to-head conflict between fifteen year-old Rinker and his father is perhaps best explained, metaphorically, by a phenomenon the author calls "copilot vertigo," a "phenomenon ... where visibility over the pilot in front is limited .. [and] the copilot longs to battle the turbulence himself and restore his sense of control." Rinker was at a point in his development where he needed to get out from under the thumb of his rigidly controlling father, and the journey he makes with his brother helps him to do this. Indeed, at the very heart of this eloquent memoir is the story of a son finally coming to terms with what was for so long a deeply difficult relationship with his own father. I was able to connect to this story at both levels, as a son, and as a father. In fact I nearly wept at the author's description of the first phone call home from the boys after the initial leg of their flight from New Jersey to Indiana. "My father must have been sitting all evening with the phone in his lap. We didn't even get off a full ring before he picked it up. When he heard it was us, we could hear the tension and worry going out of his voice." Yeah, wondering if his 17 year-old and 15 year-old sons were okay on this momentous and maybe foolhardy adventure. Dad was probably a muddle of guilt, fear and envy about the whole thing. But mostly he was probably scared for them. Yeah, I could relate. Just like I could relate to the constant confrontations between the ebullient 14 and 15-year old Rinker and his strict, disciplinarian dad. And this is so important - being able to relate, I mean - and LIKING the main character, in this case the author narrator, Rinker Buck. And I liked Buck, no mistake. Not only a great writer, but obviously a great human being, looking back at those days over thirty years later with the advantage of those extra intervening years working for him in telling his story. Because this is so much also a book about flying, I was often reminded of a couple similar memoirs I've read in the past ten or twelve years: Clyde Edgerton's *Solo: My Adventures in the Air*, and Samuel Hynes's *Flights of Passage: Recollections of a World War II Aviator*. Both are wonderful books about both flying and a young man's coming of age. If you liked Buck's book, you'd certainly like Hynes and Edgerton too. This book? Outstanding. Highly recommended.- Tim Bazzett, author of the memoir, BOOKLOVER

Not only have I read this wonderful book many times, I have purchased it for friends, friends'

children, my children and my own niece. When my daughter read this book in high school, she made a comment I have never forgotten: "Mom, this book made my spirit absolutely waft." If you want to give a gift to anyone for any reason, you can hardly go wrong with Flight of Passage. Not only is this book compelling, it is written in perfect English - something that was formerly expected but is now rare as hen's teeth. Other reviewers have given the outline of the story: two teenage brothers repair their father's single engine plane and fly it across the Country. At its heart, Flight of Passage is the adult Rinker Buck remembering how he and his brother shared an experience that probably no parent in the 21st Century would allow, much less encourage. Perhaps this book is so wonderful because this trip happened at a time when, except for the always possible accident with the plane, two boys were perfectly safe on their own, flying by paper maps along telephone wires or two lane roads. Wonderful in every way.

This is one of the most fascinating biographies I have ever read. Any pilot will enjoy this incredible documentary of two teenage brothers restoring their Piper Cub aircraft and then flying it coast to coast and back in the mid 60s, without any electronic navigation aids or radio on board. Caution : the book contains many four letter words/curses which adds authenticity to this biography, but may be offensive for some readers. Beyond the documentary aspect of flying a Piper Cub coast to coast, the book describes the complex relationship the brothers had with their father, very touching feelings and emotions of two teenage boys growing up in a large family. All in all : a thoroughly enjoyable true story of two teenage boys growing up in America in the 60s and becoming accomplished pilots in the process.

What a great book, in my opinion! It is well written, the technical details seem to be accurate and realistic, and the flash backs to his growing up with his Father and Brother are very interesting to read. I spent most of my career in civil aviation, and while not a private pilot, I spent a fair amount of time in general aviation aircraft, which helped to make this book so compelling to me. I had first read Rinker Buck's book, "The Oregon Trail". That book was so well written, interesting, and historically accurate that I decided to read another of his books. I was not disappointed!

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