



VISIT JONES' website (www.garyjonescomedian.com).

Gary Jones

Laughter is the best medicine

BY IAN J. TWOMBLY

YOU GREW UP POOR. You survived Vietnam. You toiled through airline after airline as each one folded. What do you do next? If you're Gary Jones, you become a professional comic.

Jones often says his life is defined by his modest upbringing on a small family farm in rural New York. Instead, it seems hard work and a fearless attitude are what truly propelled him. As a boy, Jones' only exposure to flying was through balsa wood models and an aviation magazine his uncle bought him. He saw the airliners flying overhead as a path out of the farm life, and joined the military after graduating high school. "I went to the military to escape poverty," he says.

After a year in Vietnam—including as part of the security detail at Bien Hoa Air Base during the Tet Offensive—Jones was on his way out through civilian pilot training, a college degree, and an A&P certificate using the GI Bill. Jones was able to study with a small FAA manual and take the private pilot written exam in Saigon during

his tour. "Most guys would buy new cars with their pay," he said. Jones saved it all and purchased a Cessna 150 when he got home.

A few decades of rotating through corporate, charter, and the airlines followed. His aviation career came to a close as a Cessna salesman. When the market crashed in 2008 he was left wondering what to do with his time. Jones always had an interest in comedy, and he searched online for a stand-up comedy school. At age 63, he found himself in a dive bar learning the craft. Today he plays casinos, bigger clubs, and some USO tours. "It's not that I'm an outstanding comedian," he says. "I have a work ethic that won't quit."

Jones flies his Mooney to as many gigs as he can, and has introduced other comics to aviation by offering rides to shows. His humor covers a broad range of subjects, but he's most proud of that which relates to the military. Jones says people come up to him and open up about their experiences. "To bring laughter and help them forget the crap that's going on around them is a real privilege." **AOPA**



LOGBOOK

WHO | Comedian Gary Jones

HOURS | More than 23,000

EXTRA | "I couldn't do what I do, or what I want to, without my Mooney. Instead of driving six to eight hours to a show, I'm there in an hour to an hour and a half. I can do last-minute shows because of it."

LEAH NASH