



Bell 505 Testimonial Rocky Mountain Rotors

Growth Through Right Sizing





Interview with Mark Taylor

Founder, Co-Owner, and Chief Pilot for Rocky Mountain Rotors

TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND THE COMPANY'S BACKGROUND?

“I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE MONTANA, THIS IS MY HOME, I LOVE IT HERE. THAT KIND OF FORCED ME INTO STARTING MY OWN COMPANY”

“I've done a lot of things, I've ranched, I've farmed, was in the construction world, really just trying to save money up to get into a career I really wanted to do, and that was flying. I didn't go into it with the idea of owning my own company. I was intent on flying for another company that was already established here. I was looking for a job and was told “we don't hire anybody until they have 2000 hours.” It just crushed me, I was wondering, how am I going to do this? I didn't want to leave Montana, this is my home, I love it here. That kind of forced me into starting my own company.

I started Rocky Mountain Rotors back in 2006 but under a different name. I wrote my own Part 135 certificate, it took about 2 years. It was super hard. You're new to everything and you're trying to tailor the certificate to what you're going to be doing down the road. A helicopter is just so diversified in what they can do, I didn't have that vision when we first started of all the types of work that we'd be doing. It started as just a flight school with some light commercial work and tours, but then got introduced to doing some search and rescue with the sheriff's department. My business partner had a Jet Ranger and I quickly realized, if I wanted to grow the business, we had to get into the bigger turbines. I purchased a Bell 407GX in 2014 and started doing some flying for an elite resort called the Yellowstone Club. For some of the members we needed to acquire a twin ended up getting a Bell 429. “





WHY ARE HELICOPTERS THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB?

“IT’S PROBABLY EVERYBODY’S DREAM TO FLY AND, IF YOU’RE GOING TO FLY, THERE ISN’T A FIXED WING PILOT OUT THERE THAT WOULDN’T ADMIT THEY WANT TO OR WOULD LOVE TO FLY HELICOPTERS”

WHAT FEATURES ATTRACTED YOU TO THE BELL 505?

“RIGHT NOW, THE 505 IS THE BEST TRAINER ON THE MARKET. I SEE STUDENTS LEARNING QUICKER, UNDER LESS STRESS”

“The 505 is incredibly simple with the FADEC and the G1000. I’ve been around private training for a while, and I’m extremely happy with the 505 and how its’ been running. If you’re training with us you have to get some high-altitude time. We’ve seen so many people get into high density altitude situations where they’re beyond their skill level or beyond the limits of the helicopter, but the 505 has plenty of power to help keep people out of situations where a lot of smaller aircraft are governed. No helicopter pilot is going to ever say a helicopter has too much power, that just isn’t going to happen.

Being a turbine trainer, in an autorotation you’re typically doing a power recovery and rolling the throttles on well in advance. In the 505, right at the exact same time we begin our cyclic flare and the click of the throttle comes on, we announce “throttle on, begin flare”. It’s that quick, it’s that easy. Let’s say a student doesn’t roll the throttle on or doesn’t get the throttle on with the old twist grip and an instructor has to come in and grab hold, that helicopter is usually going to the ground or were going to have to do a power recovery and usually that leads to an over torque. The fly/idle switch is super simple and is way easier for a new student. They’re trying to talk, look outside, get their scan going; sure, it becomes memory after a while, but to ease the learning pains and the amount of stress on that new pilot with simple steps and simple screens, where they’re not individually looking at steam gauges, its super easy. I see students learning quicker, under less stress. Right now, the 505 is the best trainer on the market.

Real estate has become very popular. It was great when the 505 came on board, it’s another air-conditioned ship and has plenty of power and visibility so everyone can enjoy. I feel guilty as heck with the Jet Ranger putting people in the back seat, I really love what Bell’s done with the open cabin. We love the big windows, the passengers love it, the back-seat passengers especially love it with the stadium seating and the open cockpit design.





“OUR CUSTOMERS LOVE THE 505. THE PERFORMANCE OF THE HELICOPTER IS IMPRESSIVE.”

Our customers love the 505, the sheriff's departments we fly for, Gallatin County and Park County, they really enjoy the 505. It's very diversified as far as the missions it can do. I love the seats in the rear, how quickly we can remove them. There's been multiple times we've had to turn it into a cargo ship vs a passenger ship and most of those times its involved search and rescue. Whether it's taking gear and supplies in or people out. The performance of the helicopter is impressive.

The very first long line job that I did with the 505 was in White Sulphur Springs. We were hired to bring an outfitter's camp in and about 8 tons of equipment. Six miles of flying because of the forest service boundaries. It was 11° C, 7,500 ft elevation where we had to set it down, so I came in at 7700 ft over some very tall trees in this bowl. Started out with 1100 lb under the helicopter. Everything was working just fine, still in the green, but the helicopter was handling very well. I backed it off 100 lb after the wind started to blow since we were on the leeward side of the mountain, but we only needed to leave off 100 lb, the helicopter did great. We had a fuel truck nearby, I put 45-1 hour of fuel on board for each load. I was super impressed.

This led me to bid on the Teton job that we ended up winning. There are 6 universities doing research trying to better date the Tetons. Our bigger aircraft weren't competitive, so I bid the 505. There was a company out of Salt Lake bidding their Long Light Single, which they had used the first year, but the universities were looking for something a little less expensive. We ended up carrying 750 lb of load up to Delta Lake which is at 9,016 feet. It's in a little bowl, so you're close to 9200 ft when you're flying in. Temperature was around 0° C. It was wintertime, so we set everything down on the ice of the lake. You're on the east side of the Tetons, prevailing winds out of the southwest and we have a bigger induced flow off the top of the mountain coming over the top of the rotor blades. It was an easy set in there, gentle, had a lot of outs. I went to full left pedal and still had engine power remaining. We did about 8 sets and then several days later I had to go pick up the equipment and then switch everything back and take the crew out. To keep everything as light as possible, I removed the seats, which isn't a big deal but everything helps when you're dealing with those altitudes. Easy to throw the seats back in and pull the crew back out at the end.

“THERES A BIG PRICING DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A 505 AND A LONG LIGHT SINGLE'S COST OF OPERATIONS”

There's a big pricing difference between a 505 and a Long Light Single's cost of operations. If I need to move more weight I'm looking at my larger single engine aircraft, but the 505 is right there as a contender and I can operate it for quite a bit less than the other aircraft. Being competitive with an aircraft that's capable of performing up here, it definitely has helped.



IT WOULD'VE BEEN A HUGE MISTAKE FOR THE GROWTH OF OUR COMPANY HAD WE BOUGHT A DIFFERENT AIRCRAFT

It would've been a huge mistake for the growth of our company had we bought a different aircraft. I would've been missing out with the amount of jobs I've been picking up with the 505. Other light helicopters are built for more pleasure with a soft blade where the 505 has more of a rigid blade to it for lifting heavier weights and longevity. The rotor head on the 505, the long ranger transmission, the blades, its time proven, we knew what we were getting into on that, we have a lot of experience with it. There wasn't anything that was going to be a surprise there. I've been really impressed with how clean the Arrius engine has been running. If you ever look in the exhaust it looks brand new every single time. It's not a mess to fly, you just wonder how it can fly so efficiently and so clean and put that amazing power out."

WHAT MAKES BELL A GREAT INDUSTRY PARTNER?

"THEY STOOD BEHIND EVERYTHING THEY SAID THEY WOULD DO IN THE BEGINNING. WE'VE BEEN EXTREMELY HAPPY WITH THE BELL 505, IT PERFORMS BETTER THAN WE EXPECTED"

"We ended going down to HAI in 2014 with the intention of buying a competitor's aircraft, but this is where the 505 came alive for us. While we were down there, Bell was unveiling the 505. We started looking at the 505 way more seriously and it was tough to make that decision down there because there wasn't really a helicopter to look at, it didn't even have an engine. We bought into one of the positions knowing full well it was a new model. We spoke very candidly with the Bell team about it being a new model and we knew there would be issues, but the team swore they'd take care of any issues and years down the road they have. All the wrinkles that needed to be ironed out, they have stood behind everything they said they would do in the beginning. We've been extremely happy with the Bell 505, it performs better than we expected.

We're now an AMC for Bell and we've been picking up new business, for example a 429 coming up from Texas as well as a 505 from a pair of owners that we trained how to fly. They actually sold their smaller turbine helicopter to get a 505 after seeing ours, and really because of the back seats. Its easier to get in and out of and there's no big hump in the middle for that middle passenger. Just more leg room and a large cargo bay."

