

Fred Boone, airline captain for Delta airlines. It took 11 years for him to reach the top of his profession.

The first black airline pilot was hired in 1965 after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of an applicant, Marlon D. Green, which was filed in 1957. There are now over 200 black commercial pilots — but fewer than 20 are captains.

Green. He went to work for Continental in January 1965 with a retroactive pay date back to June

After Greene cracked the black pilot barrier at Continental, the other airlines began taking on black flyers in ever increasing numbers. Boone says the numbers still aren't what they should and could be. And he said there are a number of factors that tend to reduce the number of black pilots employed by major airlines.

Boone said "If blacks wind up with the qualifications, then there is no bar now to them entering the field." However, he said, "Young black men who are motivated to flying go into the military and stay in the military rather than going into private industry. It's a highly competitive field."

Graddy said he thinks the racial barriers to blacks becoming commercial airline pilots have been lifted, but there aren't many black pilots "because very few

flew transports into Vietnam and Graddy flew surveillance missions in Southeast Asia. They joined the commercial airlines almost immediately after leaving the ser-

Boone, who is a 1961 graduate of Morgan State University, was hired by Delta as a second officer in May 1969. A second officer or flight engineer monitors the plane's various systems. Although he doesn't do any flying, he is a rated pilot.

In November of the same year, he was promoted to first officer or co-pilot. After being promoted to larger and more complex aircraft over a 10-year period, he was appointed captain.

Graddy joined Delta in 1968 as a second officer, was later promoted to co-pilot and 10 years later he too was appointed a captain.

When asked if they enjoyed their jobs and if they would encourage blacks youths with an interest in flying for a career to try

Black Pilots at the Top

"There is total acceptance, but always a raised eyebrow. I can see that the sight of a black pilot surprises people. Black people like to stop in the cockpit and say hello. I can see the pride they

> -Samuel Graddy, Captain, Delta Airlines.

What's life like at 35,000 feet and 500 miles per hour?

Wonderful, according to Fred Boone and Samuel Graddy, a pair of black pilot-captains employed by Deka Airlines. The two men are at the top of the heap in the air line employment field and they say they wouldn't trade their jobs for any other occupation.

Boone, a 39-year-old Baltimore native, and Graddy, a 41-year-old former Army pilot from Washington, N.C., are rarities in the commercial airline industry.

About 40,000 pilots are employed by the major commercial airlines in the United States. Fewer than 200 of them are black. And of these 200 black pilots only between 12 and 15 of them have attained the coveted rank of

The captain on an airline flight is "the" pilot and his \$80,000 to By Jackson Stone

\$100,000 annual salary is more than double that of a co-pilot (first officer) or flight engineer (second

The captain's position is one that requires a great deal of physical and mental stamina and carries a considerable amount of responsibility and respect.

Boone and Graddy say there are few black captains in the aviation industry because it takes a number of years to move from second officer to captain-11 for Boone and 10 for Graddy-and because it was 1965 before the first black pilot was hired by a major commercial airline.

He was Marlon D. Green, a former Air Force captain who had logged 3,071 hours in multiengined bombers and cargo planes. Boone said a commercial pilot needs only about 1,500 flight

hours to be competitive. Green filed a lawsuit against Continental Airlines in 1957, after seeing the airline hire five white applicants with less flying time than he had amassed. The battle went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which in 1963 ruled in favor of

blacks come through the pipeline." He said there were only three blacks in his military flight training class of 200 students.

What is the pipeline? How does a young black man or woman prepare for a career in commercial airline piloting?

Boone and Graddy are typical of 80 percent of the black pilots employed by major U.S. commercial airlines. Both men served in the military. Boone was a Navy pilot for 9 years and Graddy was an Army pilot for five-and-a-half.

Boone explained that military flight training is almost a must for most black pilots, a few of whom would have had the money to pay for private lessons that cost as much as \$25 an hour.

"The average guy in the military amasses about 2,000 hours of flight time," he said. "A guy taking private lessons needs at least 12 to 15 hours of lessons to begin soloing and then he would have to begin getting in flight hours. He would need an awful lot of money to be competitive."

Both men undertook hazardous

duty while in the service. Boone

for a job with the commercial airlines, both men quickly and enthusiastically replied yes to both questions.

"It's not just another job," Boone declared, with a note of excitement entering his voice. "It's my chosen field. I think I've found the thing I enjoy the most and I'm real happy with it. I wouldn't want to change jobs at all. Commercial airline work is at the top of the industry. It's what we all shoot for."

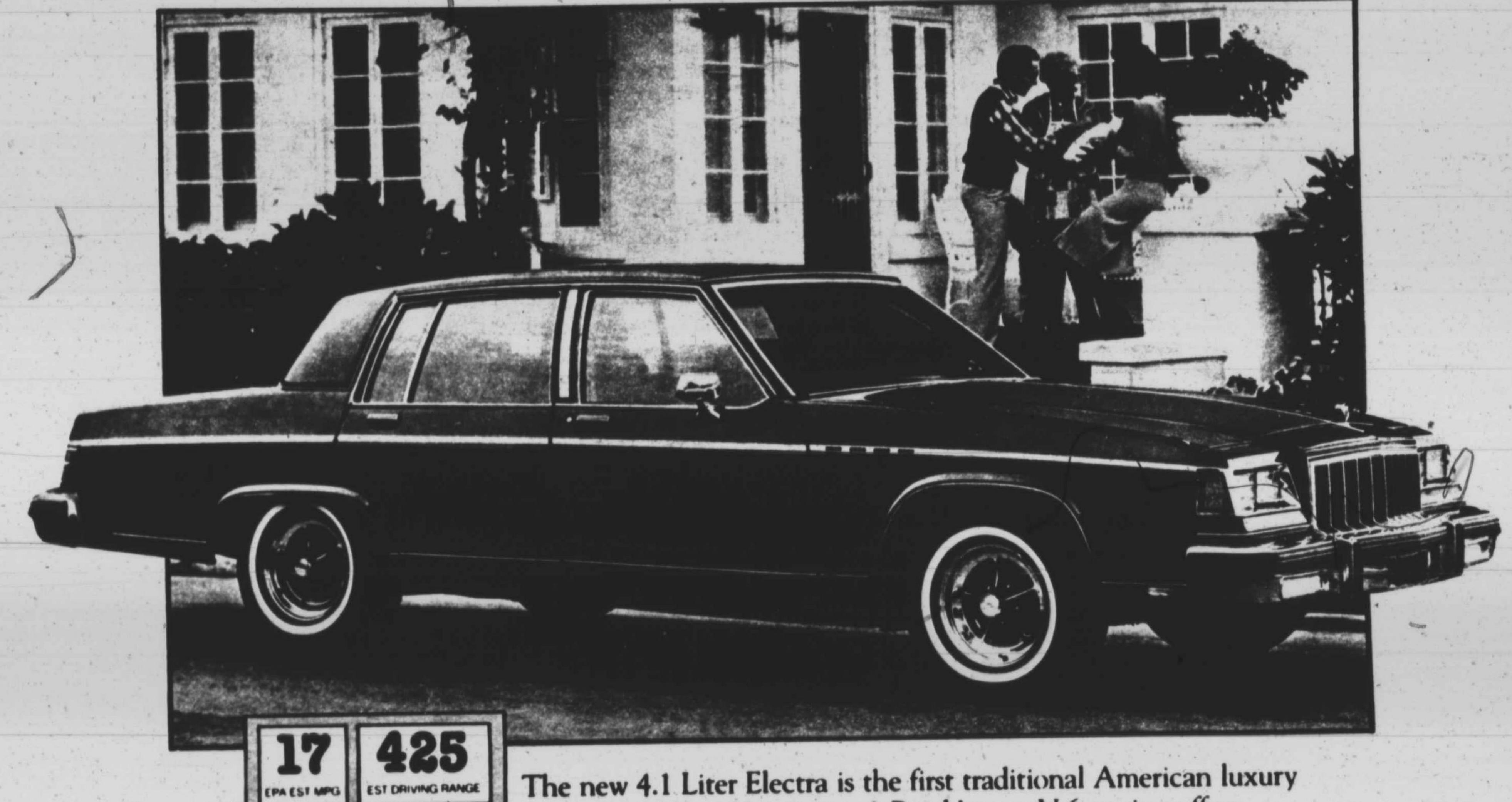
Graddy said he loves piloting and would recommend the job to others, because, "It's desirable to have a job that you don't find a chore—that is different and excking. The rewards of what I do are immediate.

"I think it's (airline captain) something youth should strive for because it's a demanding profession—something you must struggle for—and when you reach it, it is extremely rewarding. This is a specific type of training—the flying experience." Graddy

He explained that those who don't reach the top-the commercial airlines field—can usually

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The new 4.1 Liter Buick Electra. Remarkable luxury with efficient V-6 performance.



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