

## Questions for James Cooling

An unfamiliar sound — **loud, high-pitched and potent** — was a siren call for this son of aviation who went on to become one of the industry's **foremost legal practitioners** and effective volunteers



**James Cooling**

*Principal and founder,  
Cooling & Herbers, P.C.,  
Kansas City, Mo.*

### 1 What advice have you for a pilot who's told by ATC to call after landing?

**Cooling:** There is no legal requirement to return the call, but most pilots want to. We advise that you call your attorney first. If you don't have one, call us, and then together call the tower or FSDO. A professional pilot can't afford to have a black mark on his record. The FAA can be aggressive and a controller can elicit information that can do an innocent but unknowing pilot harm. So it's a good idea to have a third party who knows the regs on your side. And also file a NASA report within ten days of the flight. And if an inspector asks for your license during a ramp check, show it — those are the rules — but he can't keep it. We're not trying to get out of anything, but we don't want pilots to suffer from a misinterpretation of the regulations.

### 2 You've been piloting since you were 16. Has the FAA ever come after you?

**Cooling:** Fortunately, no. But understand I grew up in FAA neighborhoods. My father used to grill me about the FARs at the dinner table. These people have known me forever and know I respect them. Once an FAA regional counsel asked me to represent an agency pilot who was facing FAA action that would have cost him all his tickets. I did, and won, and the FAA lawyer, who lost, was really appreciative.

### 3 Did you always know you'd be an aviation attorney?

**Cooling:** No. I had considered becoming a doctor, but couldn't stand all the blood. However, I think I always knew I'd be involved in aviation. When I was about seven I heard the sound of a jet engine spooling up at Billy Mitchell Field in Milwaukee where we then lived, and I was transfixed, staring into the sky. I had a kind of premonition that my life would somehow be associated with that sound. And now all these years later, having traveled the globe, I don't think there's any more beautiful sight than being on top . . . of an overcast with blue skies above.

### 4 You just received NBAA's Winant Award for all your volunteer work in aviation. Aren't those billable hours you're giving away?

**Cooling:** Aviation has been very good to me, and I'm honored to give back to the community. I've helped a great team raise money for the EAA, the National Aviation Hall of Fame, the NBAA, and the Corporate Angel Network for years, and am happy to do so. Like many folks, I've had family members who were stricken by cancer, a horrible disease. I never thought I would call CAN in behalf of one of them, but I did, and the service they provided lifted spirits wonderfully at a very difficult time. I am so grateful.

### 5 You're a long time Kansas City Chiefs supporter with a fist full of season tickets. Having any trouble finding takers this year?

**Cooling:** Ha! I had an aviation tailgate party for Andy Reid's first game as coach — against Dallas no less. Sixty-five people showed up and enjoyed empanadas and sausages from Piropos. Yum. We had a great time line-dancing in the parking lot and gave "The Chiefs" a great launch.

Son of a TWA pilot who became one of the FAA's first business jet examiners, Cooling has aviation in his DNA. A University of Missouri history major and Notre Dame law school grad, in 1969 he became an aide to the American Commander, Berlin, helping the likes of Bob Hope, Neil Armstrong, Chief Justice Earl Warren, and actress Elke Sommer peek over The Wall at residents in drab East Berlin. He even got to visit former Deputy Fuhrer Rudolf Hess, the lone resident of Spandau Prison. After completing his service, he turned to law full time and began his own firm in 1977. Over the years, the 25-employee firm — 12 are lawyers — has handled certificate actions and aircraft transactions the world over. Cooling was a member of the NBAA Board and has led fundraising efforts for a variety of aviation-related organizations. He flies his own Piper Seneca III.



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