



The Twin State Flyer

EAA Chapter 740 Newsletter

Box 5530, West Lebanon, NH 03784
December 2004

A Real Cross-Country

By Andreas Bentz, 740 President

It is December, the days are getting shorter, the air colder. We find ourselves having to preheat our airplane engines (reminding ourselves not to skimp on preflight inspections despite the cold), but our airplanes love the cool, dense air as they jump into the air and climb away from the runway.

As the holidays, and the end of the year are approaching, I find myself thinking back over this past year's flying to warm destinations. There was an early spring trip to Florida in a friend's Tiger, and another one to Key West in a rented Seminole. But most of all, there was a trip across the U.S. in the Sundowner - and that story I want to share with you today. I hope you enjoy reading it - and I want to wish you all a very happy holiday season, full of warming memories.

It was a crazy idea for a Christmas present. My parents had only once been in a small airplane, and I was thinking of flying them across the country in our little Beech Sundowner. So I offered the idea, and they, almost to my surprise, were thrilled. Living in the German South, they had never been anywhere west of New York City, and that had been on a long-ago visit to the U.S. They were going to fly to Boston on Lufthansa; I was to pick them up, and we were going to spend two weeks flying across the country. My mother wanted to visit

family in Cincinnati, OH, and in Reno, NV. My father wanted to see the Southwest, the Grand Canyon, and Vegas. Two weeks later, they would fly home again, on Lufthansa, from San Francisco.

So we started planning for a trip during the first two weeks of September. My father was in charge of making up a trip itinerary for places to visit. My mother was in charge of figuring out how to fit two weeks' worth of clothes into a bag that wasn't allowed to weigh more than 20 pounds. I would make hotel and car reservation. Oh, yes, I would be in charge of flying too.

Day 1. So early in the morning of September 1, we set out from Boston's Hanscom Field (BED) in the Sundowner that my two co-owners had so incredibly graciously allowed me to have for two weeks. I wanted to ease my parents into flying slowly, so I decided on legs no longer than two hours - at least for the first day. We stopped for fuel and food in Allentown, PA (ABE). The FBO gave us a ride to the Bethlehem diner - soup and salad bar for \$5 - and what I thought was going to be a quick stop turned into a European lunch affair. Having been away from home for almost 13 years, I had forgotten that lunch was the Germans' main meal. So my dad had the soup, ate his salad, asked the waitress for a beer (which they didn't have), ordered desert and coffee, flirted with the waitress (in German), while I called Flight Service to extend the departure time on our flight plan. So much for getting to Cincinnati in time for dinner, I thought.

The next fuel stop was in Wheeling, WV (HLG), just south of Pittsburgh. If you ever make it there, walk the 100 yards over to the main terminal, where the airport manager has accumulated an

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Boilerplate

Chapter 740 is a local chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association. It received its charter in October 1981 and operates as a non-profit club. Monthly meetings are normally held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at Signal Aviation Services building at the Lebanon Municipal airport, W. Lebanon, NH at 7 pm. Visitors are always welcome.

This newsletter is a monthly publication and is sent to all members in good standing, EAA HQ and certain other EAA chapters. A complimentary 3-month subscription will be sent to prospective members on request. Please send address corrections to the editor at 85 Best Rd., Windsor, VT 05089 or email at: twill01@vermontel.net.

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impressive collection of aviation memorabilia – all laid out neatly like in a museum, except you can touch everything. A short trip from there (with a little detour around Columbus, OH, where the president was campaigning) we arrived at Cincinnati's Butler County field (HAO), where my mother's cousin was waiting to pick us up. Having immigrated into the US in the 1960s, he had recently retired from General Electric, after thirty years of designing rotor blades for GE's turbofan engines. He took a look at our single engine and two-bladed prop, and shook his head in amusement. We arrived at their home, where the whole family had gathered for a dinner of German roast pork. Yes, I had forgotten that too ... dinner was the Germans' other main meal.

Day 2. After FedEx delivered my parents' bag (Lufthansa, with German efficiency, had departed Munich on time, albeit without half the passengers' baggage) we set out to the airport. The previous day I had learned that without a lot more practice, my parents were probably incapable of a quick turn; so I planned for two legs. The first leg took us to Vichy-Rolla, MO, (VIH). There, on the ramp, was a perfectly preserved DC-3. In the hangar we found two Mustangs, and a Grumman Goose. We borrowed the FBO's crew car – an old police cruiser, complete with search lights and bullet hole in the windshield. "Be careful," the lovely lady at the FBO had warned us, "it's used to going fast!" We followed her recommendation for a "mom and pop restaurant, just down the road". We walked in and, as in a movie, the locals' conversation stopped while they all turned to look us over. Somehow we must have passed the test as, after a very long minute, they resumed their conversation, the waitress seated us, and we had the best, ever, fried catfish sandwich.

For our overnight stop I had planned Hutchinson, KS (HUT), famous for ... having the world's largest grain elevator. And, apparently, famous for its air and space museum, second only (according to the marketing material) to the Smithsonian. We arrived on the later side of the evening. None of the hotels had shuttles, and the FBO no crew car. The line service technician offered to call "the" taxi. No, I

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hadn't misheard ... Hutchinson has just one taxi. When it finally came back from the other trips it had made, my father almost refused to get in. The rust holes in the trunk were so large that you could see inside the trunk from outside (the trunk contained three wheels and tires – spares, presumably – not enough space for our luggage, so we squeezed into the back seat with our suitcases). Some of the doors could only be opened from outside, others only from the inside. The side window was stuck in the half-open position. The driver didn't say a lot, but when she said "ten dollars" I swear I saw only one tooth. I turned to my mum, and in my best Judy Garland impression said "we're not in Kansas any more, Toto". I'm not sure she got the joke.

Day 3. By the way, we never got to find out whether the air and space museum was any good; the next day's TAF was predicting afternoon thunderstorms in Santa Fe, NM (SAF), our next stop. I think my parents must have sensed my urgency, because for the first time on our trip we were in the air by 7 am, and the fuel stop in Liberal, KS (LBL), took no more than 30 minutes. To the west of Independence, the terrain rose, until finally the first mountains were visible on the horizon.

Crossing over the first ridge at the Las Vegas, NM, VOR, turbulence hit. We were at 10,000 feet, and it was near impossible to hold altitude. I requested, and got a block between 10,000 and 11,000 (10,000 was the MEA). I had read about the turbulence from daytime heating in the desert, but I hadn't anticipated how strong it was going to be. After 30 minutes of being rocked around, the landing at Santa Fe was in strong, but steady winds. I looked behind me and my mum winked at my and said "that was fun". The FBO had our rental car waiting for us on the ramp; we tied down the plane, and headed into town. We had just made it to the hotel when the thunderstorm began. It turns out that there's a lot of weather that you just don't get to see in the East. Impressive thunder and lighting all around us – yet not a drop of rain. You could see dark rain shafts under the clouds. But the air was so dry that the moisture evaporated before reaching the ground: virga. I remembered a training video I had once seen at an FAA Wings seminar – a Cherokee being pushed into terrain by the downdrafts under virga. I shuddered and stepped back inside the hotel. How does the saying go? It's better to be on the ground wishing to be up in the air ...

Day 4. We had planned to spend another day in Santa Fe, and that turned out to be wise. The next day was a washout. We barely managed to stay dry for our visit to Taos. The sky briefly cleared for a short walk through Santa Fe. But, for the next day, Flight Service promised a beautiful morning. I realized just how nice it was to have access to superb forecast products, all for a free call to Flight Service.

Day 5. The next day was a short flight from Santa Fe, over Albuquerque, to Deming, NM (DMN), for fuel. (The other refueling option would have been Truth or Consequences, NM ... but that just sounded too ominous.) From there a short hop over the mountains down to Tucson, AZ (TUS). Flying a very wide left downwind, following an RJ on a visual approach (What was the controller thinking? A Sundowner following an RJ?) put us right over Davis-Monthan Air Force base. If you have never seen hundreds, if not thousands, of airplanes parked, all neatly in rows, this was an impressive, if sad, sight. Tucson is home of the Aerospace Maintenance and Recovery Center as well as several private aircraft scrap yards. Surplus and retired aircraft from all branches of the military are stored here due to the ideal climate. There were airplanes missing their wings, others cut in half. Something in my stomach clenched.

Day 6. We spent a day in Tucson. My parents did what a friend in Tucson described as "a week's worth of sightseeing" in one day, while I decided to get some quiet time at the hotel pool, planning the next few days' flights. Plus, I had discovered a Krispy Kreme around the corner and was going to keep an eye on when they switched on the fresh donut sign. They did, and I gained a few pounds that day. Among all the new cities I saw on this trip, Tucson also was the only one that almost immediately made me feel as if I could live there. Clean, inviting, and nicely laid out, a city that seemed to have plenty of good spirit. And, Tucson has some incredibly friendly controllers. We all had a wonderful time there.

Day 7. The next day's flight took us into the mountains. After an early start in Tucson, we flew over Phoenix, then north past Sedona to our destination: Flagstaff, AZ (FLG). Flagstaff has a 7,000 foot runway at an elevation of 7,011 feet. I had calculated density altitude (9,000 feet), runway length and climb rate (in case of a go-around), but no amount of calculation had prepared me for what a 200 foot per minute climb would look like on a go-around. Because just as I was about to flare, the wind picked us up, turned the airplane about 45 degrees to the left, and I decided to go around. I had already selected carburetor heat off on short final, so all I had to do was add power, and take flaps out. I pushed the throttle full forward and ... not a lot happened. I kept the nose down to pick up speed, and slowly nursed the flaps out, grateful for manual flaps. The stall warning horn was blaring, and the trees at the opposite end of the runway were coming closer; they looked too tall to clear. We made it over the trees just fine, and (I checked), got the promised 200 foot per minute climb rate. But the first time you experience that, straight off the runway, it looks ... mighty scary.

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Well, at least it scared me. A lot.

The tower apologized for assigning the wrong runway, and cleared us to land on the opposite runway. The landing was not one of my best, but it was firm, and we were on the ground. I tried not to let my parents see that I was shaking. As we got out of the plane, my mother, with characteristic acuity, asked (presumably referring to the stall warning horn) “when the plane makes that ‘beep’ sound, is that normal?”

Days 7 – 9. We left the plane in Wiseman Aviation’s capable hands for a few days while we explored the Grand Canyon, Monument Valley, Bryce Canyon, and Zion National Park by car. On the way back I decided to drop my parents off at the Grand Canyon, and drove back to Flagstaff on my own. Grand Canyon’s runway (GCN) is 1,000 feet longer than Flagstaff’s, and it is 1,000 feet lower. My plan was to take off from Flagstaff in the early morning, fly up to Grand Canyon, and pick up my parents there. I did not want a repeat of a few days before.

Day 10. The alarm clock rang at 4am. By 5am I was at the airport and in the air by 6. The Sundowner climbed at 1,000 feet per minute into the crisp mountain air. As I flew along the highway, west out of Flagstaff, the sun rose, and the sky turned from a soft magnolia to a rich purple and red. It struck me again just how incredibly privileged we are to be able to see beauty like this, from the air. I landed at Grand Canyon just after sunrise, picked up my parents and we made the short one-hour hop to Bullhead City, AZ, paralleling the deep scar that the Grand Canyon cuts into the landscape. Because of density altitude I had taken off with minimum fuel, and despite the fact that Las Vegas (that day’s destination) was only 150 miles north of Bullhead City, I wanted to refuel. Who knew how busy the Las Vegas class B airspace was going to be.

Bullhead City (IFP) had the only taxiway I have ever seen that went up and down a hill. The ramp was a good 50 feet below the runway elevation. A sign on the taxiway warned to “give way to airplanes going up”. It was almost like driving a mountain pass, just with an airplane.

The approach controller at Las Vegas McCarran (LAS) did a terrific job of working us in between the airline crowd. We were on a wide downwind to runway 19R when the controller told us to follow an RJ on final. I had him in sight (about 3 miles away), and began the turn to base. Anxiously the controller asked if I really had the traffic in sight: “don’t cut him off”. Maybe they don’t work Sundowners up there every day, but by the time I turned final, the RJ was already at the gate. As I was handed off to the tower I got a “thank you for the help” from the approach controller. Nice. Final approach to landing was a trip: the runway parallels the Las Vegas “Strip”, and on short final all the big hotels flash right by you ... the MGM Grand, New York New York, the Mandalay Bay ... I was glad I had decided to fly into McCarran, rather than the GA reliever

Henderson Executive. And on the ground, the people at Executive Air Terminal treated us like rock stars.

Day 11. Another day by the hotel pool for me. Looking back over the past 10 days I was surprised how exhausted I was, not from the flying as much as from juggling the schedule, making sure rental cars were available when we needed them, playing tour guide to my parents, deciding how much about the business of flying to share with them (and how much about the decision-making process to keep away from them in order not to worry them), but above all, the responsibility for making this a safe, on-time, as well as fun trip.

Day 12. Today was going to take us to Reno, NV. I decided to cross over into the San Joaquin Valley, fly north through California, and cross back over the mountains to Reno, rather than take the more direct route from Las Vegas to Reno. Partly because there weren’t many off-airport landing options on the direct route; and partly because the direct route goes through multiple MOAs. And I had very little interest in an encounter with an F-16. So we stopped in Visalia, CA (VIS), just south of Fresno, for fuel. This was also the only time we had a mechanical problem, about as innocuous as it gets: the Bendix gear in the starter motor had got stuck. Visalia turned out to be the perfect place to have a starter failure: there was a wonderful mechanic on the field; with a brother who ran an engine overhaul shop on the same field. After a few tries at banging on the starter, and lubricating the gear, the mechanic took the starter off, drove it to his brother’s shop on the other end of the field (and us to a restaurant for lunch). The starter was overhauled, tested, and installed back on the airplane within two hours, and we were back in the air – it doesn’t get much better than that.

We followed, VFR, I-80 over Truckee-Tahoe, with an incredible view of Lake Tahoe, reflecting the mountains like a dark blue mirror, over the Bird’s Eye pass to Reno. (At least I think the controller called it “Bird’s Eye pass” ... I checked in with Reno approach and I think the controller asked if I was planning to fly through the “Bird’s Eye pass”. “Well, I don’t know if I am, but I’m going to follow I-80 across the ridge.” A knowing laugh from the controller: “Yes, that’s it. Expect a right downwind, runway 16R.”) Despite being near maximum gross weight, the Sundowner made it up to 11,500 feet for the crossing. I did before, but I got to really love this plane on our trip.

Day 13. After the visit with my mother’s family north of Reno, two more very short hops (refueling stop at Lincoln, CA (LHM), to Oakland, CA (OAK), where I dropped my parents off, to explore San Francisco on their own for the last day of their vacation. The landing on runway 27R affords a beautiful view of San Francisco across the bay, right off the departure end. Coming to Oakland was worth it for just that view. After 3,150 NM, we had made the trip across the country.

Fly While You Build

Dino Vlahakis Chapter 740 Flight Advisor

By now you should have all had a chance to peruse your Nov. '04 issue of Sport Aviation. In addition to all the neat "stuff" SA features every month, there is a pertinent article on page 102 entitled "FLY WHILE YOU BUILD which I recommend as reading or rereading." It's in the Stick and Rudder section.

I have long advocated maintaining pilot proficiency during the building phase. It's very easy to get wrapped up with the rivet gun, welding torch or dope can and forget about flying even though it's an airplane that you are building with intent of someday flying it.

Some of you may rent now and then to keep your flying skills from getting too rusty while those with another airplane have an added luxury. Most of us fall in the one airplane category. Therefore it behooves us to try and stay "spun up" even if it's it means flying something unlike the one you're building or restoring. Keep flying! Don't get lost in your workshop.

There is one line I'd like to excerpt from Ken Ibold's great article. He hits the nail on the head with the second sentence in which he states "During the months or years of construction, it's easy to see how piloting skills can atrophy to point where the labor of love transforms into a road to disaster."

While the safety record has improved since the implementation of the flight advisor program, there are sadly enough instances of accidents attributable to what the thrust of the article is all about. In addition there are those who have been reluctant to avail themselves of the F/A program. In our own chapter we have had some bent metal resulting from lack of recent flying experience. Remember that there is the Tech Counselor program too that is another tool available to the builder. We have two of them in chapter 740 along with a Flight Advisor. Using all the resources available to you is the professional approach.

Chapter 740 Annual Christmas Dinner will occur at AJ's Restaurant, White River Jct. Vt. On December 19th at 6 pm.

Minutes from 11/4/2004 Directors Meeting

Submitted by Tom Williamson, director

Present were Andreas Bentz, Jim DeHaven, Dino Vlahakis, Tom Williamson, Bill Molloy, and Frank Brunot.

Our planned program for the meeting on 11/9 will be postponed until our January meeting, a presentation by Chuck Wiles, new Leb Airport Manager.

Jim DeHaven, 740 VP, volunteered to approach Simon Hamm to speak at our February meeting. Simon has flown a Taylorcraft up to Alaska and has a home there.

Andreas suggested we put out a program feedback survey to the membership, which was thought a good idea.

2005 Fly-In events were decided upon, plan a fly-in BBQ at Claremont, NH, on June 4th, r.d. 5th, and one on August 13th, r.d. 14th, at Lebanon.

It was decided to change the bank account from a simple savings account to a checking account, fees are the same (there aren't any) and it allows for better tracking of money.

The annual dues were discussed and it was decided to leave them at their current level of \$24. Chapter non-profit status will be verified for currency by Andreas.

Dino Vlahakis, membership chairman, is in the process of updating the roster. To be out soon. Nametags for members was discussed, Tom Williamson will look into Gnomon Copy's tags when he next publishes the newsletter.

Donation of subscriptions for Sport Aviation to public libraries was discussed, Jim DeHaven was going to talk to librarians as to whether it would get read.

An inventory of chapter property will be conducted soon.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Next Chapter Meeting will be January 11th 2005, Chuck Wiles, Lebanon Airport manager will present.



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