



VOLUME 56

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NO. 3

Arizona to Iowa in a Champ and a Pacer

By Fr. Gene Murray

It all started when my nephew, Dave McKenna, decided to purchase a 7AC Champ in Wickenburg, Arizona, and asked me to fly out in his Piper Pacer with him to retrieve the Champ.

I am a 5,000-hour private pilot with over 3,000 hours in tailwheel time and ample cross-country experience.

Dave had around 400 hours tailwheel time.

I have many friends at the Indian Hills Airpark in Salome, Arizona, who were gracious enough to put us up



while we were out there.

Here is an account of our return flight from Salome to Cherokee, Iowa. I flew the 160-horsepower PA 22-20 and Dave flew the newly purchased 100-horsepower Champ.

However, this story is about the Champ that had no radio or transponder, so the pilot had to use a handheld radio, navigate with charts and had to avoid controlled airspace that required two-way communications. For navigation, he had the assistance of a Garmin 496 GPS.

**DAY 1: Wednesday, April 18, 2018
PA 22-20 N8632D and Champion N62695**

**INDIAN HILLS AIRPARK, AZ (2AZ1) to ELOY,
AZ (E60) (135 statute miles)**



We departed Indian Hills Airpark (2AZ1), which is about 100 miles due west of Phoenix, at 5:55 a.m. on Wednesday, April 18, 2018, bound for Eloy, Arizona (E60).

Winds were light, sky was clear. It was just after dawn and the sun hadn't yet risen when we took off on the first leg of a 1,400-mile journey that we hoped to accomplish in two days.

We headed southeast just beyond the Class B airspace of Phoenix opting to fly the southern route toward Tucson and El Paso rather than the more direct route toward

Dave McKenna and his newly purchased 7AC Champ

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Plans taking shape for 2019 NAPP Convention in Sioux Falls, South Dakota

The 2019 NAPP Convention hotel has been selected. The Country Inn & Suites by Radisson in downtown Sioux Falls, South Dakota, will be our home base.

- Arrival on Monday, July 8
- Convention activities July 9-10
- Depart on Thursday, July 11

Hotel details:

The convention room rate is \$119 per night, plus 10% tax. A complimentary hot breakfast is included. We also will have a meeting room at the hotel.

- **Address:** 200 E. 8th St., Sioux Falls, SD 57103
- **Phone:** 605-373-0153
- **Website:** <https://www.countryinns.com/sioux-falls-hotel-sd-57104/sdsfalls>
- Heated indoor pool
- Fitness center
- Bicycle/walking path along Big Sioux River
- On-site restaurant, Falls Landing

Convention activities:

Our convention host, Fr. Bob Lacey, has confirmed a tour of the Earth Resources Observation and Science Center ([EROS](#)), as well as a tour and Mass at the [Cathedral of St. Joseph](#). More convention details to come.

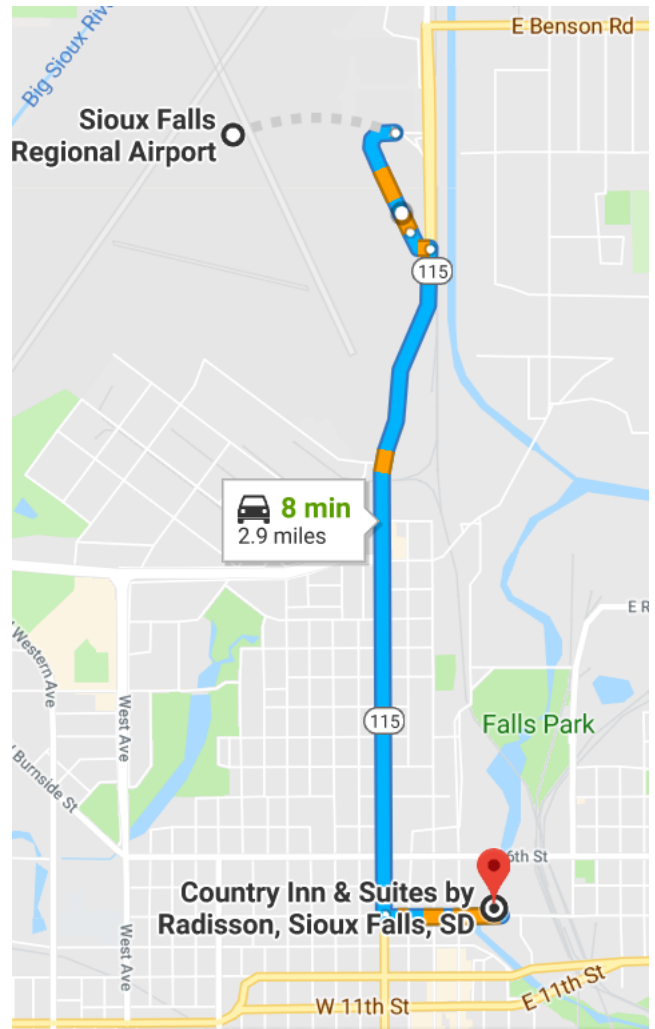
Sioux Falls Regional Airport ([KFSD](#))

Airport website: <https://www.sfairport.com/>

Airlines: American, Delta, United, Allegiant, Frontier

FBO – Maverick Air Center: <https://maverickaircenter.com/>

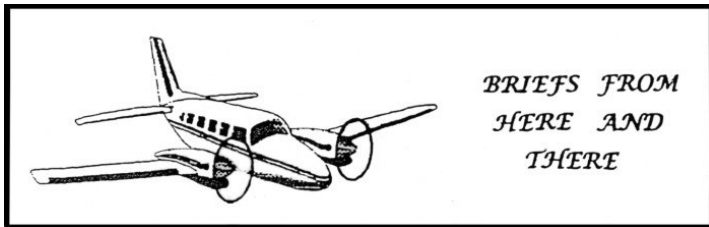
FBO – Signature Flight Support: <https://www.signatureflight.com/locations/fsd>



Google Maps



Country Inn & Suites, downtown Sioux Falls



Prayers for Dennis Kudlak

Deacon Dennis Kudlak in Erie, Pennsylvania, shared this note on November 21:

“Last week I was diagnosed with stomach cancer. After consultation with several doctors, I have decided to go to UPMC Pittsburgh-Shadyside to have my operation. Appreciate you keeping me and my family in your prayers.”



In the news: Fr. Joe McCaffrey was featured in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on October 20 under the headline: [7 parishes headed for merger celebrate first Mass in Lawrence County.](#)

Excerpt: Seven Lawrence County parishes are forming a grouping that is on track to merge in the next two years. For the first weekend, Father McCaffrey, administrator of the Lawrence County parish, said it was important to bring everyone together on neutral turf, so the grouping held Masses at New Castle Area High School’s auditorium.

Joe’s new mailing address: St. James Parish, 4019 US 422, Pulaski, PA 16143

Joint website: <https://www.catholicnewcastle.org/>

Fr. Ed Moran shared this from October’s AOPA Air Bulletin:

The FAA reopened its Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast rebate program on October 12, offering \$500 to owners of qualifying single-engine piston airplanes who reserve a rebate, equip with the technical standard order (TSO)-approved ADS-B Out hardware, and successfully complete a performance validation flight.

Rebates can be reserved until October 11, 2019, or when all available rebates have been claimed—whichever comes first.

For more information: <https://www.faa.gov/nextgen/equipadsb/rebate/>

Report from the DeLand Sport Aviation Showcase

By George Gratton

The DeLand Sport Aviation Showcase in Florida has passed into history, again a success. Many displays, vendors, forums, and, of course, our John Zapp and the Flying Musicians. Some new planes, gadgets, and paraphernalia as always.

For reasons unknown to me, again no presence from Piper, nor any avionics shops, all from the state of Florida. I can only imagine business is so good they don't need any more.

The ICON A5 amphibious plane was on display. Unlike other shows, it was only a single plane with no display tent. Their sales people are touting production model #67 is now on the line. After only 10 years of production! The price now crowds \$400,000, so I cannot order one this weekend. Ten years ago, it was state of the art; now it is looking dated.

There is a new light sport aircraft (LSA) that looks like a Cessna 182 Junior but in carbon fiber. Pretty cool. The rest of the usual types, Piper Cub clones, STOL planes, kits and manufactured planes and amphibians, all were present. They were faced with some wind on Friday to attempt demonstrations. Most chickened out. Comanches don't get nervous over 15 mph quartering wind, but LSA sure do.

Food vendors were junk-food junkies, but at least one was able to make me a vegetarian wrap (not vegan) to accommodate my new lifestyle diet. The Comfort Inn is right across the highway from the airport, walking distance and reasonable. That's my report. I hope Jana continues this fall show.

Some assembly required. Batteries not included.

Fr. John Swing of Nekoosa, Wisconsin, continues to make progress building his Onex aircraft.

“My favorite toy as a child was my Erector Set. The Onex is the mother of all Erector Sets,” he says.



New priest pilot discovers a different way to see the world

By Fr. Alex Carandang

For a normal associate priest like me, it's not every day you get to meet a pilot, much less a priest pilot. So, for me, it was interesting to have met Fr. Mel Hermann, who has been a priest pilot for 58 years. His stories about his experiences in flying, meeting and training people to fly were truly things I have never heard of.

I met him when I got transferred to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Palm Coast, Florida, as an associate pastor in July 2016. I was coming straight from Manila, Philippines, after being a priest there for nine years.

Every time I get transferred to a new assignment, I know for sure there are new places to discover, new people to meet, new experiences to learn from. However, in a unique and truly unexpected way, in this new chapter of my life, I never knew I was going to be a priest pilot.

Fr. Mel and I started our journey in the cockpit February 27, 2018, at Daytona Aviation Academy at Flagler County Airport.

It took me more than a year to finally decide to start my pilot training with him. I must discern very carefully, though. I really wanted to do it ever since I knew he was a pilot. When I got to the point of "Why not?" (and this is a productive way to spend my day off instead of chasing golf balls) I gathered all my courage and went for it.



On November 8, 2018, I passed my private pilot check ride and I could now say I am officially a pilot, thanks to Fr. Mel.

The training and the study are really challenging. I must really give my heart, my mind, my soul and my strength into it. Just like how the gospel demands of us. If you truly want something truly valuable and precious, you must give it your all.

The whole process really changed me and the way I see the world. It's not just another skill that I learned, but it's a whole new perspective and outlook on life.

And suddenly the sky is now within my reach. Now I am looking forward to flying, in whatever direction God points me. With His providence, I will go and fly.

New NAPP member is studying for Diocese of Fairbanks

Joshua Miller is studying for the Diocese of Fairbanks, Alaska, and is in the second year of the Pre-Theology program at Mundelein Seminary in Illinois.



After that, he will continue at Mundelein Seminary for Major Theology studies and anticipates graduating in 2024 after his pastoral year in Alaska.

Prior to entering seminary, Josh served as a field artillery officer in the U.S. Army for five years. He grew up on a farm outside Waseca, Minnesota, and has lived in New York, Oklahoma and Alaska.

His has a Bachelor of Science degree in Geospatial Information Science from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

He comes from a large extended family of German and Irish heritage. He is the oldest of five children and the only son. His father was an Army infantry officer, one of his sisters and brothers-in-law are also USMA graduates and field artillery officers currently stationed at Fort Drum, New York, and one of his other sisters is in her third year at the Air Force Academy.

His hobbies include: playing hockey, staying fit, hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, tinkering in the garage, snow sports, riding his motorcycle, cold weather, and silence.

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His favorite saint is St. Gregory VII. He is also sponsored by the Archdiocese for the Military Services and, God-willing, he will go back to the Army as a chaplain after he is ordained and serve as a priest.

Josh first heard about the National Association of Priest Pilots from Msgr. John Hemann, who lives down the street from his parents in Clear Lake, Iowa.

Later, he met the only current priest pilot in the Diocese of Fairbanks, Fr. James Falsey (retired, Diocese of Saginaw). In the summer of 2018, he also came to know NAPP member Fr. Joe Nettekoven (Diocese of Orange, California) who was serving in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region of Alaska for the summer. Bishop Chad Zielinski of Fairbanks is a retired Air Force chaplain.

Josh lives down the hall from NAPP member Nicholas Radloff (former Air Force navigator) at Mundelein Seminary.

Josh plans to make use of the diocesan plane to take flight lessons during his pastoral year in Fairbanks.

Welcome to another new member: Fr. Shawn Roser, Parochial Vicar at [St. Joseph Church](#), Bradenton, Florida.

NAPP Executive Team

President: John Schmitz
1st Vice President: Joe McCaffrey
2nd Vice President: Bill Menzel
Secretary: Allen Corrigan
Treasurer: John Hemann

Regional Directors
East: Al Ruschman
Midwest: John Hemann

Seminary days in Ohio: Recalling the Taylorcraft and Twin Beech

By Fr. Frank Mouch
Charter member, NAPP

By the time of my ordination in 1958, I had soloed. Staying at the Josephinum Seminary for my first five years of ministry, I bought one-third of the pictured Taylorcraft and completed the private license and a course in instrument flying at Ohio State University.

The seminary had its own 3,000-foot sod airstrip, shade hangar and fuel tank.

In 1961, the school was able to purchase from the government two Twin Beech aircraft for \$250 each in flyable condition with top-flight 1951 radios and instrumentation (no

autopilot) and I became its “corporate pilot.”

The pictured C-45 has patches, since it needed to be flown only from Davis Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona to Columbus, Ohio, on a ferry permit. It provided many parts for the aircraft we used.

I continued flying until last January, having joined the UFO (United Flying Octogenarians) five years ago.

While I have not been very active in NAPP’s meetings, our regular gift to the bishop of northern Alaska has motivated me to make private donations to that diocese, which needs flying so badly.

Navy Chaplain Bill Appel provided this update:

“I’ll deploy aboard another destroyer in January sometime,” he says. “I’ll be home the month of March. Other than that, I’ll be deployed from January to November (again). Thanks! Hope all are well.”

Until mid-January, he is in residence at St. Gregory the Great Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Greetings to all. I hope you were able to enjoy a relaxing and thank-filled Thanksgiving Day.

I want to wish everyone a hopeful Advent season and pray that the Christ Child we will celebrate soon at Christmas brings each of you His Peace, Love, and Joy.

May you and your families have a blessed Merry Christmas.

*Fr. John Schmitz
 President*

A meeting with meat in times of hunger

Flying Medical Service is a non-profit, volunteer organization in Tanzania, East Africa. It provides preventative, curative and health-related education services. It also provides medical air transport. NAPP gives financial support to the organization.

By Fr. Pat Patten
Director, Flying Medical Service

The short rainy season is here with memories of the last long rains. The grass is green. The cows will calve and have milk. Soon, people will not be hungry.

I was training Lori (right), our newest pilot, an engineer with flight experience in Botswana, Laos and the United States. She previously owned an electrical manufacturing company in Laos and sold her shares before joining Flying Medical Service. I usually fly with each new pilot for three months, making sure that we get to all our rather tricky airstrips at least three times before new pilots go on their own.



We were nearly finished, our three months together. We had two clinics that day, in the remote areas of Serengetuni and Ngoile, 90 miles west of where we live, on the edges of East Africa's great Serengeti Plains. Serengetuni was busy with nearly 60 patients treated, dozens of children vaccinated, and perhaps 20 pregnant women examined. Just as we were finishing and packing everything in the plane, the first rain shower reached us. We don't generally have frontal weather here in the tropics. Rather, the weather is cellular. We could see the rain cells moving in from the southeast. They alternately obscured our next destination, then made it wonderfully clear, as the rain washed the dust from the dry air. The challenge was to leave Serengetuni when visibility was good with us, and to get to Ngoile when it was not raining there.

The doctor and nurse waited patiently in the seats behind us. We were at midfield, waiting so that we could check all-around visibility when the time came to depart. Each threshold at Serengetuni is perhaps 20 feet lower than the crest in the middle, limiting visibility from one end of the short runway to the other. Lori started the engine. Both ends of the field were clear. We taxied to the east threshold, 5,000 feet above sea level, and rolled into the turn as she continued to push the throttle forward.

Rain on a departing Cessna 206's windshield makes visibility worse on the co-pilot's side. I could see almost nothing. Had Lori been new with us, I would have suggested we wait and go back to the center of the field. But she was nearly ready to be flying on her own, and I wanted to see her make her own decisions. We kept rolling. She could see well enough. At midfield, Lori saw a group of Grant gazelle, which had suddenly moved onto the far end of the runway. She made the split-second decision that makes or breaks bush pilots. She said with conviction: "We can do it. We're okay." Hot temperatures, high altitude, wet grass. And we did make it. Almost. We rotated just before the end of the airstrip. As I was about to breathe a sigh of relief, there was a distinct and solid clunk on what I thought was the landing gear on my side. Surely, we had drifted too far to the right on the narrow strip and hit the rockpile marking the end.

The plane was in the air, though, and flying nicely. We still had tires on both sides. We landed at Ngoile, our next clinic destination, a nice airstrip in the middle of a volcanic caldera filled in smoothly by thousands of years of dust and dirt and erosion, but with edge and end markings of the runway not easy to see. Lori's eyes are better than mine, and she put the plane down nicely, right at the threshold and perfectly centered on the airstrip.

On the ground, we looked carefully all around the aircraft. No scuffing or scratches. Nothing loose. No marks at all. (A subsequent inspection of the landing gear saddles showed no cracks or pulled rivets.) Then came a surprising call on my cellphone. The chairman of the village of Serengetuni called, using the recently installed cell network on the edge of the Serengeti national park. He said in an excited voice: "The village would like to thank you for the fresh gazelle meat." Our right tire apparently hit one of the Grant gazelles square on the head just moments after we were airborne.

Lori flies on her own now, a quite accomplished bush pilot. But we still joke with her at the end of clinics, asking if she donated any food to the villages this time around.

Happy Christmas from Pat Patten and the Flying Medical Service crew in Tanzania.

P.O. Box 508, Arusha, Tanzania, East Africa
www.flyingmedicalservice.org
fms@fms.or.tz
+255-759367367

USS SIOUX CITY LCS 11 in a native son's eyes

By Fr. Miles Barrett

How best to go to and from Cape May, New Jersey, to a Navy ship's pre-commissioning tour and avoid eight-plus hours of traffic through Philadelphia, Baltimore, and the D.C. Beltway?

After all, being a Diocese of Sioux City ordained priest ordained in the Sioux City Cathedral of the Epiphany and being in the parish from grade school through college, I wanted to see the [USS SIOUX CITY LCS 11](#) and tour it.

Location of the commissioning? Where I served as the first Ethics Fellow and next as the fourth and fifth battalion chaplain and senior Catholic chaplain at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

Severe clear weather before the storm opened up N42PG for an IFR flight into the DC SFRA controlled airspace into KANP in about 40 minutes with headwinds. Return flight would be closer to 30 minutes. This is the sort of day that general aviation pilots keep the plane around to enjoy. Seeing old shipmates/friends to share the day only accented God's gifts of aviation.

Built in Marinette, Wisconsin, the USS SIOUX CITY is a Littoral Combat Ship (LCS). It is an amazing ship with the latest technology in mine-warfare, anti-submarine warfare, and surface warfare.

A large aft flight deck also comes with an unmanned helicopter and crew for special operations.

Having a draft of 13 feet of water allows close-in shore-line support.



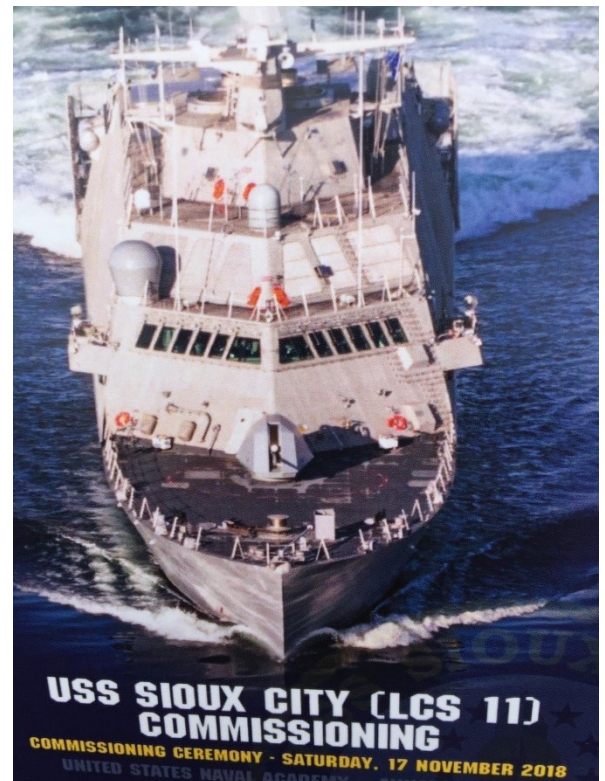
And its two Rolls-Royce jet engines and two Colt-Pielstick diesel engines and four Rolls-Royce water jets, plus two steerable screws combine to provide maneuverability like I've never heard of with a ship that is 378.3 feet long and 57.4 feet abeam.

With a speed of 52 mph, it performs like a fast Jet Ski over the water! Think about it! Four diesel engines of 800 kilowatts each for electrical power assure the high-tech bridge has plenty of power for the touch screens, which control everything from

valves to engines.

As few as 15 to 50 core crew members can take her underway, and up to 75 mission crew members (Blue and Gold crews) can go for a patrol of 21 days.

I had a women's retreat back in Sea Isle, New Jersey, on Saturday, November 17, so I took advantage of the weather on the prior Wednesday. I beat the crowds; over 4,000 came for the commissioning. And by flying, I beat the traffic. God bless our military personnel and their missions. *PAX CHRISTI, carpe diem!*



Midwest Spring Regional is April 29 in Missouri

Fr. John Schmitz will host the NAPP Spring Regional Meeting on Monday, April 29, 2019, in Laurie, Missouri – in the Ozarks. This is a repeat location, but hopefully with better weather. Fly-in participants had to cancel for the October 1 gathering.

Fr. John is at [St. Patrick](#), and the [National Shrine of Mary, Mother of the Church](#) in Laurie.

Airport: Camdenton, Missouri ([KOZS](#)). FBO: [Lake Aviation Center](#). Arrive by 10:30 a.m. and return to airport around 3 p.m. More details to come.

RSVP to Fr. John Schmitz:

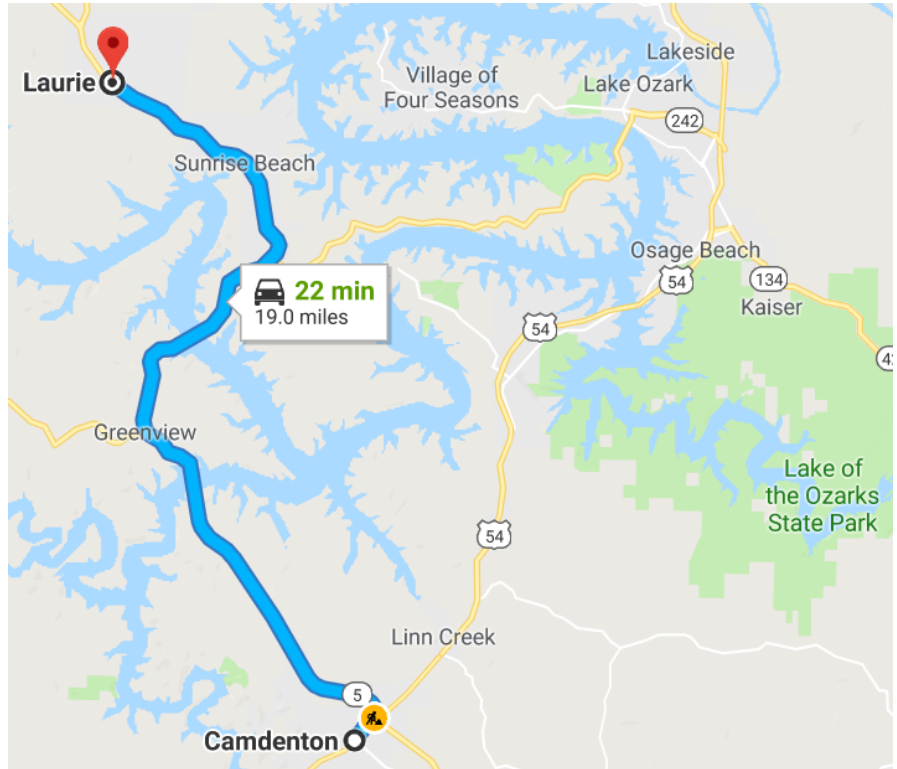
- Email: presidentofnapp@gmail.com
- Cell: 573-619-6889
- Parish 573-374-7855

Please include:

- Name
- Cellphone number
- Email address

Traveling by:

- Private plane: N-number; estimated time of arrival
- Car: estimated time of arrival



Google Maps

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Albuquerque, which had much more rugged terrain. We planned this leg for 3,500 feet MSL, dodging higher terrain along the way, a distance of 135 statute miles.

Since the Champ fuel burn was an unknown quantity (we had only flown it 2 hours since purchase), we had to be conservative about the length of legs and carefully record the fuel burn and tachometer, especially for the first leg.

I had hoped to fly alongside the Champ and maintain visual contact in the Piper Pacer. This proved to be impractical, so after the first 10 minutes of each leg, Dave was pretty much on his own.

We arrived at Eloy (E60) at 7:30 a.m.; 1.5 hours on tach; Champ total fuel burn was 9.8 gallons, for a consumption rate of about 6.5 gallons per hour. It seemed high, but Dave forgot to lean the fuel mixture at altitude on the first leg and subsequent legs got better fuel consumption.

ELOY, AZ (E60) to WILCOX, AZ (P33) (105 statute miles)

The Champ ran like a champ and, by leaning the mixture, Dave got it down to 5.5 gph, gaining confidence all the while in the airplane.

ute miles)

After fueling the planes and visiting with Bill Lewelin and his wife (Champ owners), on Bill's advice, we changed our flight plan from Lordsburg, New Mexico, to Cochise County Airport at Wilcox, Arizona, because it was a little shorter distance.

We departed Eloy at 8:05 a.m. in bright sunshine and light winds and arrived at Wilcox (P33) at 9:25 a.m., a distance of 105 statute miles. This was the first test of the Champ at higher altitudes as there were some higher ridges along this route.

Dave was more than a little concerned because the terrain along this leg was quite rugged, and at places high, and remote from human habitation.

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So Dave took advantage of the occasional thermal and climbed to 9,500 feet. The Champ ran like a champ and, by leaning the mixture, Dave got it down to 5.5 gph, gaining confidence all the while in the airplane.

WILCOX, AZ (P33) to TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES, NM (TCS) (175 statute miles)

After topping off the tanks, we departed Wilcox at approximately 10:10 a.m. and arrived at Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, (TCS) at 12:01 p.m. Mountain Time, a distance of 175 statute miles. Time en route: 1 hour, 51 minutes. Tach: 1.9 hours. Fuel burn was around 5.5 gph.

Because of high terrain along the direct route, we flew a dogleg route, northeast out of Wilcox along the highway toward Deming, New Mexico. At a point about 10 miles north of Deming, we turned north and angled toward Truth or Consequences up the Rio Grande Valley. This is a corridor with high country and mountains on our left and restricted area on our right.

To our relief, the winds were light and the sky was clear, so we opted to fly up the Rio Grande River Valley rather than go farther east over El Paso and up the east side of the White Sands Restricted Area, which saved us about 75 miles. We were spared the hassle of trying to navigate the very restricted airspace around El Paso. (Remember, the Champ had no transponder and a weak radio.) The winds continued to be light on this leg. And even though it was getting toward mid-day, the thermals were tolerable.

TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES, NM (TCS) to SANTA ROSA, NM (SXU) (209 statute miles)

In order to maintain proper fuel reserves for this leg, we needed to make an interim stop at Socorro, New Mexico, to make the next leg to Santa Rosa, New Mexico.

* We departed (TCS) for Socorro, New Mexico,

KONM) a distance of 59 statute miles and landed without any problem. (Tach: 7 hours.)

With fuel tanks topped, we departed for Santa Rosa (SXU) via the Socorro VOR (ONM), skirting the restricted area, then direct to Santa Rosa, a distance of 150 statute miles. (Tach: 1.6 hours.)



Google Maps

This leg ended with a difficult variable gusting crosswind, which presented a challenge in landing and take-off, either of which could have ended in disaster. We both struggled with this landing and takeoff. The problem was that the winds were so unpredictable, seeming to change from downwind to base to final. The best way to describe them is “tricky,” requiring the pilot to “fly the plane” all the way to

shutdown. The takeoffs were just as tricky, catching a crosswind gust just after the tail came up, pushing the plane off the runway. Needless to say, we were glad to be safely away from Santa Rosa.

(* Because of the Champ’s fuel limits, we tried to plan each leg for 150 miles.)

SANTA ROSA, NM (SXU) to DALHART, TX (DHT) (140 statute miles)

We fueled there and departed for Dalhart, Texas, a distance of 140 statute miles. While there is a lot of desert on the way to Dalhart, there is little terrain to navigate. Once we were around the north side of the White Sands Restricted Area, it is mostly descending onto the plains and would be a relaxing flight except we were (tach: 1.5 hours) running out of time because we were crossing a time zone and losing an hour and hoping to arrive before the FBO closed at 5 p.m. Central Time.

We made our first serious planning mistake in not calling ahead to make sure we had transportation to a motel. I arrived in the Pacer at Dalhart at 6 p.m. local time. Dave arrived at about 6:20, and everything was shut down. Total tach time on the Champ: 7.9 hours.

It had been a long, tiring and stressful day, but we were relieved to be clear of the mountains and onto

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the plains. We had made it all the way to Dalhart as planned that day – a distance of 800 miles with five fuel stops. It was a successful flight thus far and without any mechanical problems. The weather had been very good with only a few midday thermals that were to be expected.

Note: When we arrived at DHT, the FBO was shut down and not a soul to be seen. We were without transportation and three miles from town. I found the FBO after-hours phone number in ForeFlight. He said that there was a “call-out fee” of \$75. We called the motel only to discover that there is no courtesy van nor was there a city taxi service. We paid the \$75 and he came and fueled the airplanes so we would be able to depart first thing in the morning. If you buy gas at the DHT FBO, it includes a courtesy crew vehicle.

Had there been a taxi, we would have paid more than \$75. As it turned out, it wasn't that expensive, and we had the convenience of our own wheels. (Or had we called ahead, he might have left the keys in the courtesy car.) By the time we got the planes fueled and tied down, it was getting dark, so we took the keys to the courtesy vehicle and headed for the motel. Things tended to work out because the crew vehicle was complimentary and aviation fuel prices were perhaps the most reasonable of the trip.

We arrived at the Best Western too tired to go to a restaurant, so we ate snack food and went to bed.

DAY 2: THURSDAY, APRIL 19

DALHART, TX (DHT) to MEADE, KS (MEJ) (155 statute miles; tach: 1.6 hours)

As tired as we were after the long day of flying, we did not sleep well, so we got up early, ate breakfast at the motel and left for the airport shortly after 7 a.m. Central Time. We departed Dalhart at 7:55 a.m. in blue skies and light winds for Meade, Kansas (MEJ), a distance of 145 statute miles.

Since the weather forecast for the day was good, we could relax a little and enjoy the flight. We had the

mountains and desert behind us and we were headed home; first stop: Meade, Kansas. Meade is a real nice airport with a credit card reader at the pump and a good grass crosswind runway. Most Kansas airports have crosswind runways because it is most always windy in Kansas. However, our luck was with us and the winds were light.



Inside the Pacer, Gene tracks the route.

MEADE, KS (MEJ) to OSBORNE, KS (K75) (173 statute miles)

We departed Meade at 10:40 a.m. for Osborne, Kansas, (K75) and arrived at 12:12 p.m. Tach: 2 hours. A decent airport on the edge of town with a grass crosswind runway. The down side was that Osborne airport is unattended and we had to call for service and someone came out from town. (Again, we should have called

ahead.) This caused an additional 40-minute delay, but we were making good time and would arrive home before nightfall.

OSBORNE, KS (K75) to DAVID CITY, NE (93Y) (150 statute miles)

We departed Osborne, Kansas, at 1 p.m. and arrived at David City, Nebraska, (93Y) at 2:20 and 2:35 p.m. Nice airport with a turf crosswind strip. Again, the airport was unattended, and we had to call for service.

DAVID CITY, NE (93Y) to CHEROKEE, IA (CKP) (135 statute miles)

We departed David City, Nebraska, at 3:10 p.m. for Cherokee, Iowa, on the last leg of the journey, a distance of 131 statute miles. After 1.6 hours on the tach, we arrived at Cherokee at 4:30 p.m. In bright sunshine and light winds, we were greatly relieved that all went well. It was a day after a late spring storm dropped 10 inches of snow in northwest Iowa, but the runway was clear and dry in melting sunshine. There was little observable snow on the ground until we crossed the Missouri River south of Sioux City.

EPILOGUE: They say that every long trip is just a series of shorter ones. The first day of this trip had five difficult legs, each with its own particular challenge.

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This trip required a lot of planning and luck because the Champ had only 3 hours of fuel endurance without reserve, so we tried to plan 150-mile legs.

We were fortunate to have the support of the folks back at Indian Hills. We called back at the end of each leg to report on our progress.

(Note: We would have lost the use of the auxiliary wing tank, but Tim Steier at the Salome Airpark noticed that the wing tank had the wrong cap and it was replaced with the properly vented cap.) **

We also had to be concerned about the weather, it had to be VFR with light winds. We tried to pick airports with crosswind turf runways, not usually available in the mountains, because we were flying taildraggers with fairly low crosswind capabilities.

When you travel 1,400 miles cross country, west to east, it is almost unheard of to expect that you will not encounter bad weather, low ceilings, headwinds, gusting crosswinds at airports, etc., because it is almost certain that you will cross a front somewhere along the way, providing some or all of the above conditions.

Watching the prognostic charts on ForeFlight, we postponed our departure twice and finally on the third try, we hit a two-day period when we could expect acceptable weather conditions without crossing a front or high winds.

We were very fortunate and lucked out as the weather was almost perfect VFR with sunshine and light winds all the way.

We found ForeFlight to be an extremely valuable tool for flight planning. I doubt that we could have made the trip in two days without it or a similar flight-planning tool.

In addition to the weather, there was some concern about the 7AC Champ itself. While it had just been annualized prior to the flight, it had not been in service for several years and would be flying over rugged and remote areas, so everything mechanical needed to work.

However, our concerns were for naught as the Continental engine ran flawlessly and Dave had his Garmin

496 GPS, so navigation was no problem. Nevertheless, he had issues with the hand-held radio. It had very little range, so plane-to-plane communication was limited to close range. This meant that 10 minutes after we were airborne, he was on his own if he had any trouble since we were out of range from each other.

We arrived at Cherokee, Iowa, with huge smiles of relief that we had made this long trip in two days in a minimally equipped Champ along a route filled with many problems. We successfully navigated them all and the Champ was home safe.

** The 5-gallon auxiliary wing tank is not directly connected to the engine, so it acts like a spare 5-gallon can of gas and is dumped into the main gas tank only after the main tank has emptied sufficiently. This is done by turning a valve allowing fuel to gravity feed to the 12-gallon main tank while airborne. However, this system requires a special "snorkel" vent on the top of the cap facing into the wind. This is because the location of the cap of the wing tank is in a low-pressure area and causes a vacuum in the wing tank unless it is vented with the "snorkel." A normally vented cap, sans snorkel, will work fine on the ground but not aloft. Needless to say, an improperly vented cap could present a situation where you would have fuel starvation with 5 gallons of gas in the auxiliary tank.

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Deadline for the February edition: January 31.

CFI Corner: What is the most dangerous flying situation?

By Fr. Ed Moran, CFI, CFII, AGI, AGII

In considering the above question in our Aero Club, the prevailing anecdotal response, knowing all our instructors, was, “Having two CFIs fly together.” Given the penchant for many of our senior instructors to be “legends in their own mind,” you can easily understand the popular response to the question.



The statistics bear out something common to anyone who has flown: Nearly half of all weather-related accidents happen as a result of continued VFR flight into instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) – and sadly, the majority of those accidents are fatal. Since we are entering the winter season of fast-moving fronts and low visibility, I thought it prudent to devote this month’s CFI Corner to the issue.

Many of us who are IFR-rated know how quickly actual instrument flight skills deteriorate. The danger comes in “thinking I can do it” versus “knowing I can do it” – because I have practiced recently, know the aircraft and have a high level of situational awareness in working in the local flying area. Flight situations get a bit “sparse” especially during cross-country flights into new environments, different air traffic control vectoring and rapidly changing weather conditions.

Add to this scenario fatigue, fuel concerns, and low blood sugar from extended fasting, lowering ceilings, and transition from VFR into IMC can become truly perilous.

We all have stories of “scud-running,” of trying to “get back in before it really gets bad.” Add to this the confidence that comes from knowing the local area while risking being “in and out of the clouds.”

Why these situations are truly dangerous comes from the conscious awareness it takes to transition from VFR into marginal IMC. This is where most fatal

weather accidents occur.

With the comforting thought that “I kind of know where I am” is often forgotten the necessary transition to a regular interior instrument cross check and an instrument situational orientation.

This orientation consists of the kind of approaches, navigation aids, arrival weather forecast, frequencies and traffic density at my destination. Without planning, these kinds of transitional situations and the overload they present to the pilot are truly perilous.

What many VFR pilots also tend to forget in situations like these, when we over-extend our margins of safety, are some of the physiological issues that occur when outside visual orientation becomes diminished or lost entirely. Here I am thinking especially of the problem of induced vertigo. This can happen whenever, in or out of the clouds, we adjust our straight-and-level to false visual horizons (i.e. the bends) or when we make steeper than standard-rate turns that disrupt the movement of fluids over balance and orientation mechanisms in the inner ear. Once induced vertigo occurs, getting on the instruments and trusting them literally becomes a life-or-death issue.

If John Kennedy Jr., flying his high-performance Lance that evening out to Martha’s Vineyard, had practiced such transitions, he might still be alive today to talk about how to deal with loss of visual references while flying at night.

Take some time and get some “hood work” under VFR conditions to keep

instrument cross-check skills sharp. If you are IFR rated, practice flying in high-ceiling days where the actual instrument conditions give good experience but don’t require approaches down to minimums.

Buddy-flying is a tremendous safety margin since fatigue can be diminished, cockpit tasks can be shared to alleviate the typical stress of setting up for a landing in marginal weather or getting special VFR clearance into the airport, even if you happen to both be CFIs!

Here is a link if you want a more thorough discussion of the topic: https://www.skybrary.aero/index.php/Inadvertent_VFR_Flight_Into_IMC

Remember to send me your questions at moranec13@gmail.com. The only truly dumb questions are the ones never asked.