

## Flying the Back Country Airstrips

*By Darrel Sauder*

Some of you may recall my presentation about flying my trike to Utah and flying over Canyonlands National Park and taking a look at several back country airstrips. Well, I just did it again in my Citabria along with another fellow, Jerry Runia, from Esteline, SD. Jerry has a 7 GCBC Citabria just like mine, but 160 horse (mine is 150 horse). We got the idea about 6 months ago after looking at the CD of my trip. We planned on going the first of September, didn't get away until the eleventh due to all the forest fire smoke. First leg was Sturgis to Rawlins, WY. It was an uneventful flight at 8500 feet with only a few knots of headwind. The Black Hills and Newcastle, WY passed leisurely by. We refueled at Rawlins, elevation over 7000 feet. This was where I got a small wake-up call. Plenty of runway but density altitude was over 9000 feet, I was fully loaded with fuel and gear. Rolling along on takeoff...and rolling...and rolling...gee.....this thing had ought to be flying. Well, it finally did, still had plenty of runway left but climb out was sluggish and minimal. This was a good lesson to think about for the back country airstrips we would be going into.

Next stop was Moab, UT. We got there midafternoon, tied the aircraft down and caught the 20 mile or so ride into town with the refueling lady. We were continually impressed with the friendly and helpful attitude of the staff at Redtail Aviation. They were super friendly and helpful. We frequently asked for only a few gallons of fuel, so we could stay light for the airstrips we would be going into. We spent considerable time at the hotel and over meals outlining our "strategy" for the next day. We would pour over the chart and thoroughly look at every airstrip in the "Fly Utah" booklet. The chart and booklet by Galen L. Hanselman are very detailed and an excellent source for making informed choices of airstrips to land or not to land.

The big day...second day of our trip and our first attempt at a Utah back country airstrip. Nothing ever goes completely as planned....Jerry's radio went inop so we taxied back in and dug out the hand held which worked "OK". First airstrip was Mineral Canyon.. Not overly tough but we had to land right into the sun, which made it difficult-- to say the least. However we made it! We took a necessary "walk" to calm down a bit and didn't need any coffee to stay awake. Horseshoe Canyon was next....basically uneventful as it was on top of a plateau. Angel point was literally up and down two hills. Both our landing and takeoff were very short.





Off at 7 or so the next morning for Happy Canyon....uneventful landing....old miners cabin complete with shovels, old pots and pans and a log book to sign. This was marked as private so we expect a landing fee when they see our names in the log book. Dirty Devil was next with an interesting write up in the book, "Runway is soft and short, usable by STOL equipped, high performance aircraft with proficient pilots. Hidden Splendor was by far the most challenging strip that we flew into. We had to be "On Your Game" on the approach but once the runway was found....piece of cake....over 3000 feet long. Take off was on the open end of the runway and no problem as long as you had climb performance. Mexican Mountain was also "interesting"...tall trees at the approach end and brush and trees at the departure end. We both landed long to get over the trees resulting in necessary braking to avoid making a tunnel through the brush at the end.

Took off the next day for Deloris Point and Gateway, CO. Deloris Point was long but extremely rough and hilly. "Ride-em Cowboy" was my comment on takeoff. Gateway was an upscale resort with a dirt landing strip only for the stout-hearted. A state highway winds its way into the resort and, at \$385 for the cheap rooms and \$2000 for high end, we did not stay overnight. It stormed and rained the evening we got back from Gateway. Figuring the back country airstrips were wet, we elected to declare a day of flight—seeing, so jumped in Jerry's airplane and saw some unbelievable country. Smoke had cleared so we took a lot of pictures.

Next day we "hopped" our way south of Moab, landing at several paved small town airstrips and overnights at Blunt, UT (Population about 450) When I asked if the motel could give us a ride from the airport the lady said they would bring a car out and leave it at the airport for us.

Next day staged out of Cal Black ...flew to Monument Valley and a couple of "squeakers" one less than 1100 feet and 4500 or so density altitude, but landed upslope and took off downslope. Flew back to Rawlins that night then home the next day.

Now to close with a melodramatic quote from Henry David Thoreau. "Your best dreams are when you lie in them awake"



*Ed. Note: In the last issue of the Flyboy News, I had pictures of Curt's trip west. He had sent an article, but it apparently got lost in cyberspace. So here are more pics and, as Paul Harvey said, and now for the rest of the story.*

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## **My DC-3 Trip**

**By Curt Groote**

Back in the 50's I used to watch Braniff International Airways DC-3's and Convair's ply the sky over our farm between Waterloo and Des Moines (route origin Minneapolis, terminus Kansas City). Dad would go out to the Nebraska Sandhills every year and get some cattle to feed up with what we grew on our 160 acre farm. When they were ready, he'd take them into the Chicago stockyards on a couple semis. I got to go along twice so had a couple rides from Chicago Midway-Rockford-Dubuque-Waterloo on Braniff. Vivid memories.

For years I've had a desire to fly a DC-3. Last August I was able to do it. I flew (RV-10) from RAP to West Yellowstone, MT one afternoon and looked forward to overnighing in a tent at the airport campground. It rained and I got wet when walking into town to get a bite to eat for supper. Got halfway there, getting wet, and - duh - wondered why in the approaching nightfall anybody would be wandering around on the loose in that country, so turned back and had some snacks that were in the plane.

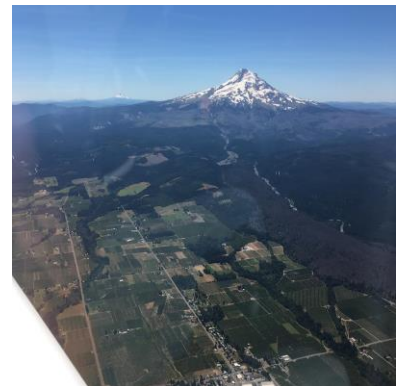
The next morning I landed at the grass runway of Smiley Creek, Idaho (U87) for breakfast at the cafe across the street. Then on to Johnson Creek's (3U2) grass. On the way, there was a lot of smoke from the forest fires going on. The approach to Johnson Creek was both interesting and fun, coming in over Yellow Pine and then down the canyon which was 45 degrees off final. The runway then popped out and there you are ready to land. Really enjoyed it.



*Smoke in the distance*



*Approach to Johnson Creek  
upper right*



*Mt. Hood*





On to Columbia Gorge/The Dalles, WA, adding a state having landed in. Then to Aurora, Oregon. The next day with Aerometal International I got an hour of left seat time in N18121 - exhilarating. Built in 1937 it was flown from the factory to Newark by Captain Eddie Rickenbacker to join Eastern's Great Silver Fleet. In 1942 it went into the military and then post-war returned to Eastern. In 1974 it was sold to Trans Texas. The experience of flying the DC-3 was one of the many best aviation flights I've been privileged and blessed to do. Advanced Flight Systems (glass panel maker and what's in my -10) was nearby in Canby so went over to meet Rob and crew and see their operation.



And then, of course, no trip out west would be entirely successful and complete without eating at an In-N-Out ;^), so I flew the 175 nm out-of-the-way journey to Oregon's only one - in Medford.

The big day ended by going to Nampa, ID. The FBO was closed so started over to Caldwell and talked to a guy in the pattern who, when on the ground, got me a car stored in a hangar and directed me to a motel. Nice guys at airports, right?

Then home the next day.  
Another great trip.





## Brenda & Gary Telkamp

Married August 26, 2017  
in Fort Sumner, NM

Congratulations!!!

### Next Meeting:

Tuesday, October 10

at Chapter 39 Clubhouse

### 6:00 Burger Burn

Please bring salad, dessert, or munchies to share. (Donations also appreciated to cover expenses.)

### 7:00 Program

Darrel will talk about flying back country airports.

Followed by meeting



## Benkerts' Annual Fly in/Drive in Family Picnic on October 14

Arrivals: 11:30-12:30 Lunch 12:30

Lunch: approximately 12:30

We'll provide BBQ, beans, soft drinks, and water. Please bring munchies or a dish to share.

Feel free to bring a guest.

Kids are welcome, as long as you do the supervising.

For more information, call Dan at 431-6060/

Directions to Dan's Airport are on page 7.



### SURVIVING A MID-AIR

by Bob Braham

[Read the story here.](#)

It had been a very VFR day and I was cleared for takeoff from Runway 31 at KLNS (Class D) in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, returning to my home base KDMW (non-towered) in Westminster, Maryland. At approximately 3:30 pm local time and 15 miles from my destination, I switched from Potomac Approach (125.525) to the AWOS at KDMW. Winds 190 at 5, altimeter 30.18, sky clear below one two thousand.

## Chapter 39

### Officers

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Vice President	Arie LaCroix
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### Volunteers

Newsletter & Web Manager	Molly Benkert
Young Eagles	Brenda Nolan
Safety Officer	Jerry Densmore

**Tech Advisor** Jerry Densmore

## TREASURER'S REPORT

By Scott Christensen

Balance brought forward.....\$8876.26

Income:

Burger Burn.....\$70.00

Expenses:

Burger Burn.....25.16

Balance on hand..... \$8921.10

**WHAT IS IT??** Two airframes stored in Eastern South Dakota, believed to be Liaison aircraft, possibly L-3 Aeronca? Appears most parts are there, including 2 Franklin engines. Owner looking for storage space in the Hills, help with rebuild project, sale, ?? Contact Rob Burton—605-391-7790





### **Directions to the Benkert Annual Fly in/Drive in Family Picnic**

Driving: From town, take Highway 44 east to Long View Rd (angles off to the left at Dollar General store). Go east for just over 5 1/2 miles. (After you cross Radar Hill Rd., it's about 2 1/2 miles. Or if you take 44 and turn onto Radar Hill Rd, turn east at the first 4-way stop onto Long View. Two mailboxes (one with our name on it) will be on the right. Turn and come straight down the lane to Dan's Airport. Our address is 15045 Long View Rd. Dan's cell phone is 431-6060.

Flying: 1) Normal contact with Rapid Tower (125.85) outside of 5 miles 2) Advise of your intent to takeoff/land at Dan's RWY 13/31, depending on winds. 3) Traffic permitting, they will usually tell you "Cleared as requested" and give a caution advisory. NOTE: They will not clear you to land. 4) They may ask if you have permission, as my operating agreement with them specifies prior permission to land except in an emergency. I will make sure they are aware of the event. 5) Runway is 2400' long and grass cut short. The west side is smoother than the east side. Park on NW side. If full, park south of east hangar.

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### **THE FIRST NONSTOP COAST-TO-COAST FLIGHT**

The first trans-continental flight across America was made in 1911, just 8 years after the Wright's historic 59 second, 852 foot distance flown over the sands at Kitty Hawk January 17, 1903. But it took Calbraith "Cal" Perry Rodgers who took off from Sheepshead Bay, New York on September 17, 1911, a total of 49 days to reach Long Beach, Pasadena, California on November 5, 1911.

His Wright EX biplane was named "Win Fiz". It was powered with a Wright 4-cylinder water cooled engine of 35 horsepower, driving two pusher propellers.

The Hearst newspapers, at the time, had offered a \$50,000 prize for the first coast-to-coast flight completed within 30 days. [Full story >>](#)