

Beyond Bemidji an experimental adventure

So, what's beyond Bemidji you may ask. Most non-Minnesotans will think: Gosh, is there anything? ... let's see, the Canadian border is up there somewhere, and how about Grand Forks, oops, that's North Dakota. So try Bagley, Gonvick, Gully and Clearbrook. In my case these little burbs are important because my #2 daughter and her family live there. On occasion my wife Dixie and I take an all-day drive in the Buick to go there. This time it's different. A chaperon is needed for four days while my daughter, mother of two children and a foreign exchange student, attends a work-related conference in Phoenix.

My granddaughter Anne has just turned 16. It turns out that Grampa has been looking for an excuse to fly there in his Avid. Having recently overhauled the carburetor and serviced the landing gear, he was ready for an early Spring flight.

And so it happened! March 30, 2011.

Bagley (7Y4) is the nearest public airport to my daughter's home near Gonvick. Single runway, unattended, no fuel, portapotty for services; just the kind of field this readership knows and

loves. It fit Anne's preference too as I definitely needed ground transportation. I landed 7Y4 at 16:30 giving her time to drive from Clearbrook after school let out. She showed up in her PT Cruiser as I was heading to the portapotty. We each took pride in our perfect timing, then proceeded to tying down N525VM, an Avid Flyer, Mark IV model. I purchased it five years ago from the builder Vince Stokosa of Fond Du Lac. It is incomplete cosmetically but functionally complete to my satisfaction. For me satisfaction means capable of serious x-country flight. At 600 lbs empty, 1150 gross wt and 80 hp Jabiru engine, it serves me well.

Eagle River (EGV) is home base for me, with 7Y4 being a distance of 308 statute miles, on a course of 292. That puts Superior (SUW) right on course, close to the half-way point where I chose to stop for lunch, restroom and gas. That leg went well, but as always it seems, a headwind factor developed, reducing my groundspeed to 80 mph. I landed SUW with 1:56 hrs on the clock. I decided the fuel supply was sufficient, only having used 8 of 24 gallons. I wanted to meet Anne on time at 7Y4 so headed out

for my destination. All went well except for the winds which further conspired against me. My second leg time was 2:20.

The adventure part of my trip starts the next day, Thursday, when a urinary tract infection sets in. I had experience with these infections in the past but a good Urologist treated me and prescribed medication that has been effective for years...until now.

I had hoped to return home after the weekend but that was before the attack. A weather window looked open for Tuesday and Wednesday but my condition wasn't improved enough yet.

While I felt fine in every other way, the frequent urges would have me landing every 30 minutes or so. By the way, turbulence makes it worse I discovered.

Wednesday noon I took-off in Depends underwear for the first leg to Bemidji for fuel, only 20 minutes. That went okay but I had not yet stuffed extra pads in for fear of the line boy wondering about my baggy look. I waited till the bill was paid and no one around the plane. As inconspicuous as

(Continued on page 2)

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(Continued from page 1)

possible I packed in extra pads and quickly boarded. Taking off for SUW I wondered how long it would be before I was forced to test this automatic urinal. I thought to myself: after all, am I not flying in the EXPERIMENTAL category? This is as it should be. I decided on non-stop, BJI to EGV. Time enroute 3:50, the 10 mph headwind devil with me all through the total trip!

Fortunately, it was after 17:00 when I landed EGV. The field was deserted of my usual gawking friends; my briefs were hanging rather low, heavy with the full afternoon's production. My wife shows up to transport me home. I requested clearance "direct to the shower!" I think she was impressed with how determined I had been to get home to see her.

Jim Zietlow

This article originally published in May 2011 NCWLF Newsletter.