

My 2006 Vacation

Winnipeg - Clinton - Boulder - Winnipeg

2006 was supposed to be a special year as this was the year I was going to retire from Manitoba Telecom Services after 29 years, 9 months and 3 days. With the retirement date of June 30th, I set out to plan a very special vacation, one that included lots of flying.

For the past 2 summers I had taken in the Cessna 150-152 fly-in in Clinton Iowa followed by a the trip to Oshkosh with a group of fellow club members. These were great trips but 2006 was going to be somewhat different. At the 2005 fly-in I was talking to Joel Keister and Lexie Armitage about music and in particular Bluegrass music. Lexie informed me that the Planet Bluegrass Rockygrass Festival in Lyons Co. was the place to be. I was to keep this in mind and after doing research on the web, I thought the possibilities were there.

The end of November came around and there were rumors that the Company may be offering a buy-out to certain eligible employees. I applied for the retirement incentive with the stipulation that I would retire on my 55th birthday at the beginning of June. After a long 6-week wait I got the letter that I had been accepted with a retirement date of June 30th. Now I could forge ahead with my plans and not have to worry about getting back in 2 weeks.

First things first. I registered for the 2006 Clinton Fly-in. Second; get the Bluegrass tickets as I had heard they go fast. I then emailed Joel and Lexie and told them of my plans and that I would talk to them at Clinton. The pieces of the puzzle were coming together and all that was left now was to hurry-up and wait for July 19th my proposed departure date.



July 19th came quickly. By now I had recruited 4 more people for the Clinton trip and I decided to name our caravan the “Prairie Oysters” Bill and Monique Hilash and Don Wither and George Porayko. Bill and Monique and I would leave on the 19th and Don and George would leave on the 20th. The weather promised to be good however there was the possibility that we would be catching up to some low ceilings and showers. Bill and Monique and I decided to meet at the Pine Creek customs at 9AM. We had purchased our decal earlier to save time and we had also filled out the form 178, which states who we are our tail number and passengers on board. Our business at the customs took about 1/2 hour with no hitches and we carried on to our next stop, which was Detroit Lakes. By now it was around 11AM. We fuelled up, called the Princeton FSS for a weather update and decided to wait for an hour as we would be catching up to the weather as promised. Our next stop was Mankato. The two-hour flight was to be cut short, as we had now caught up to low ceilings and showers. We made it as far as



Hutchison and decided to spend the night at the Super 8. The next morning we were back in the air at 7:30. The sky was clear and the winds were light. A perfect day! Arlin Greger, of Ipswich SD wanting to join our Caravan in Mankato, had contacted me earlier that week. This however was not be as we were leaving from Hutchison so we tuned in our radios as we passed Mankato hoping to contact him by air. No such luck. We had just crossed into Iowa when we ran into scud. There had been a fair bit of rain earlier and all that moisture was leaving the ground in the form of cloud; low cloud at that and any one who has flown in Iowa knows that towers grow real tall and in low cloud and fog that can become a real problem so we set down and waited it out in Osage. By now it was breakfast time so one of the locals, who saw us land greeted us and took us to the Burger King for something to eat. It was around 9AM and after waiting another couple of hours we set out again. Next stop was Independence for fuel. Once again we waited for the weather to dissipate. At 4PM we decided head out for the last leg. The FSS was telling us the ceiling enroute was from 1300-2000' asl and just a few miles south of our track conditions were IFR. We set out and found for the most part the ceiling was at 2000' I was slightly ahead of Bill and Monique and was aiming for a break in the clouds near Maquoketa when I heard them call in that they had run into a solid cloud bank and were landing in Maquoketa. By now I had 1700' and a clear path ahead of me when I heard Don and George call in responding to my call that I had CWI in sight and ceiling still 1700'. I landed at 4:30 and waited for the rest to catch up. Don and George arrived at 5PM and Bill and Monique landed 5:30. We all made it safe and sound.



Now it was time to enjoy the weekend. This was the first time for Don and George and Bill and Monique and the third trip for me. I knew they were going to have a fine time and it wasn't long before they were mingling with the rest of the crowd. Everybody is so friendly and easy to talk to. We all registered and carried on. Through out the entire weekend mother nature was threatening. Friday night it rained and Saturday night the skies opened up and those who were camping had to deal with it. Fortunately I had been a little more prepared on Saturday because of my experience on Friday. I put all my bags on top of my air mattress and my chair. On Friday my bags go soaked and I spent a good deal of time on Saturday day drying cloths. When we did get a break in the weather, some of the contests were run but unfortunately the day wasn't long enough to complete everything. The banquet followed in the big hangar. At about 7PM the black cloud we had been observing in the west greeted us with real white-out. Not snow but wind and rain. Everybody made sure all the planes were secured and tents zipped up and waited it out. While all this weather was happening we were all dining on delicious roast pork and enjoying all the presentations. At the

end of the evening everyone relaxed. The weather had passed and the outlook for Sunday was looking good.





Sunday came along and the sky was clear with a 15 kt breeze from the west. Bill and Monique and Don and George were first off the mark as they were determined make it back to Winnipeg before night fall. I took my sweet time and at about 10:30 I said my good-byes and headed west on part 2 of my vacation. I had my course all drawn up on my maps with my first stop at Ames. I was flying at 4500' ASL, crossed directly over Cedar Rapids and arrived in AMES about noon. I fueled up and continued on my way. The stop had been 1/2 hour.



Next stop was Columbus Nebraska. I had been in the air about 1 1/2 hours when I looked and it seemed as though I was almost out of fuel. How could this be? I can fly comfortably for 3 hours which gives me 45 minutes reserve. Something was not right so my first move was to check the obvious. Could I see any fuel leaving the plane. The answer was no. Now it was time remember what I'd been taught. Number #1: always fly the airplane. I had established that. I checked my gauges and now I realized my high voltage light was on. Still nothing clicked so while the propeller was still turning I decided to look for a place to land. By now I was showing empty on both tanks. I had listened to the Tekamah AWOS and the report was "winds 210 @ 20kt" so now I was looking for a north-south road. Fortunately in this part of the country there are lots of them. I chose a suitable road, did all my checks and set up for a precautionary landing. The road was long and straight and the only wires visible were well up from my point of touch down. There were however poles on either side of road approximately 10' off the end of each wing but they never presented a problem as I was to focused on keeping the plane in the middle of the road. The road was very narrow and crowned so the nose wheel was having trouble staying on top of

the ridge. By now I was stopped and had shut the plane down and was trying to figure what my problem. After I realized I still had lots of fuel, I thought about my high voltage light. By now I realized my battery was run down just enough to prevent the fuel gauges from reading accurately. The radios were still receiving. I tried to restart the plane but the battery was too far gone, so I waited. After about 45 minutes and about 1 full rotation of the prop, the engine started and I was off. I turned the master to battery only and turned on 1 radio and flew the 50 miles to Columbus. The funny thing about this little episode was that I had been on the road for about 45 minutes and no one saw me land, take off or even came down the road. I wish I would have taken a picture. There were tall corn fields on both sides of the road so no one could see me even if they wanted to. The take off was a little longer than usual as I had lots of road and when I rotated I wanted to fly and not mush. I arrived in Columbus at about 4PM and thought I should stay over and have the problem looked at in the morning. I got a ride to the Sleep Inn motel and after checking in and having a shower I walked to Applebee's for supper and an ice cold beer. The temperature must have been 95F. Now I could relax however I was still thinking about my problem. By morning I had it all figured out. It had to be the voltage regulator and sure enough when the A&P pulled the cover off the regulator the high voltage light went off and it hasn't failed since.



I left Columbus at around 10AM. It was already starting to heat up on my way to my next stop North Platte. It was about a 2 hour flight into a consistent 20kt breeze with mild turbulence. I arrived at noon, refueled and took a break to review my course and to call the FSS for a weather update. My next stop was Boulder or so I thought. I was told that arriving or taking off in Boulder in the afternoon could be trouble some because of the density altitude and wind sheer. FSS had told me the low level sheer had been reported so I changed my plans. By now I was at 6500' and the winds had picked up and the mild turbulence had given way to sever turbulence so I pointed the nose west and headed for Sidney the home of "Cabela's". I was quite surprised when I called in and the Unicom operator asked me if I wanted them to call the "Cabela's bus". I didn't know what they meant but I soon found out. Sidney is Cabela's headquarters. Everything seemed to revolve around Cabelas's. Even the big water tower had Cabela's on it. The staff at the airport were great and after fueling my plane and telling me where to stay and hang out they gave me their airport truck to get me around. That evening I visited Cabelas's had supper at a local Steakhouse and checked into the Super 8.



The next morning I arrived at the airport at 7:30AM hoping for an early start however the FSS told me to wait for a line of thunder showers tracking from the northwest to the south east. By 10AM I was in the air and rather than flying direct to Boulder I thought I should check out Greeley. One of our flying club members, Dan and Pat Montgomery who used to live at the Erie Air Park just southwest of Greeley told me Greeley was a great place to stop for lunch. Dan used to fly for United out of Denver and retired to his native Winnipeg for the summer months 5 years ago. They were right. Greeley was a beautiful city with a great airport and their services were second to none. They treated me like gold so I decided to stay and check out the city. The Super 8 next to Old Chicago's was recommended and fortunately they had rooms available. I checked in and cleaned up and walked to Old Chicago's for supper and a cold beer. By 7PM it was raining and back in my room catching up on my logs, relaxing and planning my next leg.



After a Continental breakfast I arrived at the airport at 9AM and after loading my bags and checking with FSS I was in the air at 10AM. I decided to do a couple of circuits just to see what it was like taking off at 4700' with a density attitude of 7000'. It was as I was told. My ground roll was doubled

and my rate of climb was cut in half. After two circuits I pointed the nose 230 degrees at 7500' and headed for Boulder. I was surprised by the amount of traffic. Ft Collins-Loveland and Longmont are both busy airports so I made sure I stayed above their traffic patterns. As I approached Boulder I couldn't help but admire the foothills and the mountains in the back but I couldn't see the airport. My GPS was saying 4 miles straight ahead. I could hear the Unicom as the gliders were busy. Then all of a sudden it was right there in front of me. A little correction to the right and I reported left down wind for 08. Before I knew it I made a perfect landing and as I taxied off to the ramp I could feel a real sense of accomplishment. I had reached my destination!



I walked up to the terminal building and was immediately greeted by the locals. They told me where to park and after the plane was tied down I went back into the terminal building to relax and have a coffee and a donut. The people were really friendly and talkative and we carried on with our banter till noon.

Now it was time to time to unpack and find Joel's place. Joel had drawn me a map and told me where to find the keys to his Explorer. It all worked out. It was Wednesday and Joel told me he wasn't going to be back in Boulder till Thursday. The day was still young so I set out to Lyons; The home of the Rockygrass Bluegrass festival. This was my ultimate destination so I looked up my campground and set up my tent and headed back to Boulder. The next day Joel arrived so I picked him up at the airport and went to his house. Later that afternoon Joel and I went for a drive up to Estes Park. It was a beautiful day and the scenery was spectacular. All the time I kept thinking what it would be like to fly through these mountains. We were at 12000' ASL and I'm sure the 150 would be gasping for air. I know I was as we were walking up to the visitor center. It was pretty barren up there as we were well above the tree line and other than tourist the only living beings were birds and Elk. On the way back we stopped ant a roadside park next to a creek and had some lunch and talked about our Clinton trip. On the way back to Boulder Joel dropped me off at my camp site where I would be relaxing and listening to some good Colorado bluegrass.



The Rockygrass Bluegrass Festival was certainly worth attending. The venue was beautiful and the acts were second to none. The overall atmosphere was exactly what I was looking for. The people were friendly and there were kids all over the place. A real family event. The neatest part of the venue was that St. Vrain River flowed long side the seating area and there were kids tubing and adults sitting in the river on their lawn chairs relaxing and listening to music. It was all very laid back. Meanwhile all weekend I had been keeping my eyes open for Lexie as she had told me earlier that she would be there. We never did meet until Monday morning when we all met at the Boulder Airport. I had made arrangements for Joel to pick me up on Monday at 7AM so I could get an early start back to Winnipeg.







Monday morning we all met at the airport. There were Joel, Lexie and Lexie's friend and I. We all decided to fly to Greeley for breakfast.. Since I had quite a bit of luggage, Joel and I split my heaviest bags as we would both be carrying passengers and I didn't want to be too heavy. Lexie came with me and I asked her what procedure she used to take off at this airport especially with a density altitude of 8500'. I followed her instructions and it all worked out perfectly. We were airborne about 9AM. You have to remember this was my first time taking off at full gross at a mile high airport and a DA of 8500'. Sierra Uniform performed flawlessly. We arrived in Greeley at 9:30 where Gordon Ellis joined us for breakfast. It was nice to see him. We all had a good visit and by 11AM I decided it was time to go. I said my good-byes and after filling up I was on my way.



Next stop was North Platte. I had a little tail wind so the 217 kt miles took 2 hours and after refueling, calling the FSS and taking a little break I was on my way. Flight Services informed me that I would have a tail wind for about 100 miles followed by an on the nose headwind of about 25kts. They were very wrong. The head wind started after only 50 miles and instead of 25kts it was more like 35kts. My ground speed had diminished to 50-55kts and the mechanical turbulence was almost unbearable. As I crossed over Valentine Nebraska I was thinking should I land? I had been into my flight for just over an hour but I decided to continue on as there were other airports enroute. The winds did not let up at all and after another hour the weather was starting to deteriorate. With the smoky haze and a clouds building to the northwest, I was starting to get concerned. I was still out of reach of Pierre AWOS. Now I could see lightning and I was getting worried. It was time to look for alternates. The only airport now was Presho SD about 20 miles off course to the northeast. I had been into my flight 2 3/4 hours and I set my limit at 3 hours. I got to Presho but the cross wind was too great in the gusty conditions. I had no choice. It was to Pierre or bust I was at my 3 hour limit and I had 30Kt miles to go. I had leaned out and throttled back for some time in anticipation of this also it made the ride a little smoother. Finally 10 miles

back I could see rwy 31. I maintained my 1000' agl and reported straight in hoping the showers would dissipate. The AWOS was reporting clear but I could see a heavy shower and lightning just to the west of the airport. I landed on the wet pavement and taxied to the ramp and was immediately directed to the tie downs. No sooner had I shut down the airplane and the shies open up. I stayed in the airplane till the rain and lightning subsided and proceeded to the FBO bags in hand. This 196 kt mile leg had been the longest leg time wise ever in a 150. Three hours and twenty minutes and after fuelling up I did my calculations and found I had exactly 30 minutes left. It was sure nice to be down safely.. After relaxing for a while I called the Ramkota Inn and they sent their shuttle.





The next morning the weather was good. The winds were light and there was a high layer of stratus cloud so I knew it was going to be smooth. I was back in the air at 8:30. I arrived in Bismarck ND at 11. I refueled, called FSS and filed my flight plan to S28. By now the winds had changed in my favor and by 11:30AM I was back in the air and arrived at the Peace Gardens at





1:00PM. Since there was no delay at the customs I was on my way in 15 minutes. The 130 kt mile was the fastest. The wind was squarely on my back and in a little over an hour I reported left downwind for 27 at Lyncrest.

Looking back I can say that I really enjoyed the entire two weeks in spite of a few challenges on the way. Fourteen days 2111 kt miles a ton of great memories lots of pictures and new friends, what more can you ask for except I'd do it again.

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