

Skyraider Sentinel

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Skyraider Aviation Welcomes New Club Members!

- Randall Bolger
- Brian Davis
- Walt Kowalski

This Month in Aviation History



Otto Lilienthal

August 10th, 1896... On this date, aviation pioneer Otto Lilienthal died after crashing his number 11 glider the previous day. Lilienthal (a.k.a. the German Glider King) was the first person to make repeated successful glider flights. Before his death, Lilienthal completed approximately 2,500 flights. From his death bed, Lilienthal uttered his famous last words, "Kleine Opfer müssen gebracht werden!" ("Small sacrifices must be made!")



Luxury Sport Aircraft

"To invent an airplane is nothing. To build one is something. But to fly is everything."

— Otto Lilienthal.

Skyraider Aviation Contributes to DNC Security

The 2008 Democratic National Convention (DNC) descended upon Denver this month. The temporary flight restrictions (TFRs) surrounding the event greatly disrupted normal flight operations from airports throughout the Denver metro area. Some normal flight operations were specifically forbidden, while others were cancelled simply because pilots did not want to deal with the hassle of getting special clearances.

While many pilots were steering away from Denver, a few days prior to the convention Skyraider Aviation flew right into the thick of it. Our mission... tactical aerial reconnaissance. With a local SWAT officer armed only with a digital camera, we flew around the Pepsi Center and Invesco Field. The SWAT team tasked with perimeter defense of both locales had maps of the area, and had certainly surveyed the area by foot, but they wanted to get the unique perspective one can only get from the air. By having current aerial photographs of the sites, the SWAT team was able to improve their situational awareness, and ultimately devise a better tactical posture for securing these historic venues.

If the lack of any significant trouble around these sites is any indication, then the mission was a success!



<http://www.lsamaintenance.com>

Upcoming Events

- September 6th: *National Radial Engine Exhibition*, Akron, CO
www.nationalradialengineexhibition.com
- September 20th: *Fly-In Breakfast*, Sidney, NE. Pilots eat for FREE!

X-Country by Gobosh

By Chris Dillis

I've heard it said many times that a long cross country flight is just a series of shorter flights strung together. The idea is that if you can complete the 75 mile cross country required of the sport pilot candidate or the 150 mile flight required of the private pilot candidate, then you can complete a cross country flight of unlimited length. While this notion is essentially true, I'm here to tell you... flying a Gobosh Light Sport Aircraft from Oshkosh, Wisconsin to Erie, Colorado, and then to the Los Angeles area (a combined distance of over 1,700 nautical miles) presents many challenges not found on shorter trips. With constantly changing weather, radically different terrain, and every imaginable class of airspace to contend with, a trip of this length can be quite the adventure! This is my story.

"I saw that if I didn't go soon, I might not go at all that day."

All I could think was, "Did I secure the airplane well enough?"

It all began on Sunday, August 3rd 2008, the last day of EAA's AirVenture Oshkosh. Skyraider Aviation's brand new Gobosh 700 Light Sport Aircraft had been proudly displayed on the "LSA Mall" at the show during the week, but as the festivities started to wind down late Sunday afternoon we repositioned the aircraft close to a taxiway so I could get out of there promptly at the conclusion of the air show at 5:00 PM. When the clock struck 5:00 and the airport opened for departures I hopped into N1277K and fired up the engine. While there was a pretty healthy line of aircraft waiting for departure, the controllers and ground crew kept things moving like clockwork. In fact I don't recall ever actually coming to a complete stop in the short distance from my parking space to the runway. I was cleared onto the runway with a fellow Gobosh driver who coincidentally happened upon the same taxiway intersection at the same time, and we conducted a formation take-off. After a few minutes en route, we veered off on our respective courses... me toward Madison, WI, while my colleague, Erik, proceeded toward Moline, IL. Flying under a high overcast with an occasional sprinkling of rain, I made it to my destination, a small non-towered airport near Madison (Middleton Municipal - Morey Field Airport; C29), in a little over 30 minutes.

At about 3:00 AM the next morning I was awoken to the crash of thunder and the howling of wind. All I could think was, "Did I secure the airplane well enough?" That wind was really howling! I was eventually able to set aside the thoughts of twisted aluminum running through my head, and fell back to sleep, hoping the weather would improve by daybreak. It did improve... but it was still not good. When I got back out to the airport later that morning, I found my knots had held, and the airplane was fine. The weather, however, could

stand some improvement. There were low clouds and occasional rain showers. I would have to wait before departing to Rockford International Airport (KRFD) in Rockford, IL where I had an appointment to have some avionics upgrades done to the airplane. For about 2 hours I monitored forecasts and radar, and finally saw the break I was waiting for. It wasn't much of a break, but I saw that if I didn't go soon, I might not go at all that day. Besides, there were plenty of alternate airports along the way, so if things started to deteriorate while in flight, I could always stop and wait at another airport. So at about 11:00AM, I set out toward KRFD.

The flight went smoothly, except for the constant threat of dark clouds and rain off to the east. I didn't have satellite weather in the plane, but I knew from my pre-flight checks that this weather was moving further to the east, and should be out of my way as I got closer to Rockford. That proved to be mostly true. As I got to within a few miles of Rockford, their controllers informed me that the visibility at the field had deteriorated to 2.5 miles and there were thunderstorms in the area. Then the controller asked me to "state my intentions". "Ah hah", I thought, "These are marginal VFR conditions. They can't clear me to land unless I request a Special VFR clearance." At this point I could see the airport, and the winds were reported within limits, so I requested a Special VFR clearance... sort of. Having never actually requested a Special VFR clearance, and having not even thought of such a thing since my initial flight training nearly 10 years ago... I goofed a bit and requested a "marginal VFR" clearance. The controller responded with something like, "Did you just say you wanted a *marginal* VFR clearance?" I corrected myself, was cleared to land, and touched down easily.

The work on N1277K was slated to

last a couple days, so the plan was to have someone from Gobosh come and get me to bring me back to Gobosh HQ in Moline, Illinois. Later that day when the weather cleared up enough around Moline, Erik from Gobosh came and picked me up in another Gobosh 700. We returned to Moline without incident.

The next day I caught a ride back to Rockford with Dave Graham of Gobosh. We flew a Super Decathlon... my first time in one of those. We returned to Moline late in the day, Dave in the Decathlon and me in the freshly upgraded Gobosh. While the Decathlon is a faster airplane, Dave slowed it up enough for us to fly formation all the way back to Moline. The weather was superb, and the sight of the Decathlon only a few yards from my wing was spectacular. If only I had my camera (and someone to work it... wouldn't want to be distracted with photography while flying in a tight formation.) When we got back to Moline we performed a low formation pass for the crew in the tower, before coming around and landing. What a magnificent flight!

The previous couple days had presented some interesting flying opportunities. I got the chance to fly under some less than ideal weather conditions (marginal VFR). I got to fly a type of aircraft I hadn't flown before (Super Decathlon). And I encountered a type of airspace I hadn't been in before (Rockford is in a TRSA – Terminal Radar Service Area). But all these flights were short... in the 60 to 70 mile range. On Wednesday August 6th it was time for the real adventure to begin... the trip back to Colorado... a trip with a straight line distance of nearly 670 nautical miles.

Bright and early that morning I met

Dave Graham out at the Gobosh hangar at Moline International Airport. There I found N1277K freshly polished, with a full tank of gas, positioned smartly in Gobosh's spotless hangar. Before being allowed to officially "take delivery" of our new airplane, Dave systematically reviewed all the documentation with me, and ensured the airplane was supplied with all the accessories and provisions. I was very impressed with the professionalism and thoroughness of the Gobosh delivery process. I was even supplied with a full bottle of airplane wax to keep our new airplane looking good in the weeks to come! Later, when I taxied away from the hangar, it was with the knowledge that all my documents were in order and that I had everything I was supposed to have. I kept thinking that if I, a Gobosh dealer, was treated with this level of professionalism and courtesy, then a "real" customer taking delivery of a Gobosh must get a truly phenomenal level of service. The delivery experience proved to me that Gobosh truly is in the "Luxury Sport Aircraft" business.

As I flew away from Moline, content with my experience that morning, I set a course toward Nebraska City Municipal Airport (KAFK), about 40nm south of Omaha. This leg was about 250nm in length and would take about 2 and a half hours. My preflight check of the weather revealed a line of rain west of Omaha, but this first leg should be clear. The predictions were accurate. With my iPod plugged into the Gobosh's audio jack, I spent the next couple hours enjoying perfect flying weather while cranking tunes through my headset. The auxiliary audio input to the intercom has got to be one of my favorite features of our new Gobosh! I'm amazed other light sport aircraft don't offer the same

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option.

I landed at Nebraska City under sunny skies and calm winds. After topping off with fuel, checking the weather, and consulting with some locals, I chose the destination for my next leg... North Platte, Nebraska (KLBF). North Platte is roughly halfway between Nebraska City and Denver. And I could tell by the weather radar that if I made it to North Platte, I would have no weather issues for the remainder of my trip. The only problem was that I couldn't go directly to North Platte. I would have to deviate to the north for about 50 miles to get around a line of rain showers before turning west toward my destination.

I took off from Nebraska City airport and headed north. I couldn't have been flying for more than five minutes before the sunny skies over Nebraska City gave way to partly cloudy conditions, then to a complete overcast. Soon there was rain off to the west and I found myself skirting the line between steady rain showers on one side of the airplane and sun on the other. Occasionally I flew through some light rain, but visibility was always good, and I always had the sun to the right of me, just in case conditions on my heading deteriorated. I gave up on listening to my iPod, and instead opted for tuning in AWOS stations at airports along my route. As I flew along, I continually got weather updates from airports 20 to 30nm in front of me. While at times, the weather looked pretty bad, by deviating around patches of rain showers in the direction of the airports reporting good weather, I was ultimately able to bypass the bad weather and arrive in North Platte under a layer of scattered clouds. While the wind was blowing fairly hard

(15 to 20 knots) upon my arrival, it was generally down the runway and my landing was uneventful. After a harrowing journey dodging weather, it was good to finally be on the ground at my destination... if only for a short time.

After refueling the airplane I went into the FBO at North Platte to check the weather. From my earlier inquiries, I knew to expect very little weather on the final leg back to Colorado. The only issue was going to be some scattered thunderstorms developing like they always do on summer afternoons in Colorado. I checked the radar and confirmed what I suspected. There was nothing showing up on radar between North Platte and Denver except for some small scattered pockets of activity right along the Front Range... these would be easy to avoid. So I went back out to the airplane, hopped in, and set out on the last 210nm to Erie.

Again, I was amazed at how quickly the weather can change. I took off from North Platte under scattered clouds, but within 5 minutes it was a thin but solid overcast. Within 15 minutes the overcast had descended to an uncomfortable height and visibility had also decreased. Not wanting to become another statistic, I turned around and went back to North Platte. I went into the FBO and had a closer look at the weather computer. Sure enough... there was a solid line of IMC west of North Platte extending pretty far north and south. By only checking radar earlier, I missed out on these instrument conditions. Doppler radar only picks up precipitation... it does not show fog or clouds (unless there is rain in those clouds).

There was no practical way around the weather, so I would just have to wait

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for things to clear up. By now it was 2:00pm, and I began looking into lodging options, as I was fairly certain I would be spending the night in North Platte. Then a call from one of our flight instructors pretty well cemented the idea that I'd be staying in North Platte. She advised there was a big ugly thunderstorm building just north of our home airport, and that it would be wise to stay away. Still, I figured I'd hold off on booking a room in North Platte for just a bit longer.

The longer I waited, the more conditions in Nebraska improved, although radar showed more convective activity building closer to home. At about 3:00pm things improved to the point where I felt I could safely make another attempt westward. I thought there was no way I was going to make it all the way into the Denver area, but every mile I flew that day would be one less mile I would have to fly the next. So I took off, expecting to make it 50 miles, or perhaps 100 if I were lucky.

As luck would have it, those last 200 miles were fairly easy (though a bit stressful). There were some cumulous clouds and bumps for most of the way, but nothing too serious. A roughly 30 knot tailwind made those last 200 miles go by quickly, although those same winds were also cause for concern. AWOS stations along the way were reporting easterly surface winds of up to 30 knots. If those conditions continued all the way to Erie, I would probably have to land elsewhere as Erie's single runway is aligned north/south. That would make for a dreadful crosswind. Still, I ventured on, figuring if I made it into the Denver area, I could land at an airport with a more favorable runway alignment.

As I got to within 30nm of home things were looking very ugly to the north and south. There was a wall of black to the north, completely obscuring my view of Greeley and points beyond (although Greeley's AWOS was reporting 10 miles visibility, and skies clear below 12,000 feet). Things were better to the south with regard to visibility, but the towering cumulous clouds and the streaks of virga (a.k.a "black tendrils of death") made it clear that south was not any place I'd want to go. But directly in front of me it was clear except for some small and widely scattered high cumulous clouds. As I got to within 20nm of Erie, I was still clear of any scary weather, and I was pleasantly surprised to hear on Erie's AWOS that winds there were only 10 knots and blowing straight down the runway!

I landed at Erie at about 5:00pm. After tucking the airplane away in our hangar and making a couple phone calls I went back outside to see that the skies over Erie were now filled with roiling black clouds. An hour later as I sat in a local restaurant with my wife, the klaxon of the emergency broadcast system sounded over the radio, and a voice announced a tornado warning was in effect for the local area because several funnel clouds had been spotted. I found out later that a tornado watch had been in effect at the time I landed!

Now that we had our new Gobosh at Erie, it was time to return our old Gobosh to its owner. We had been leasing N703GB from Cable Aircraft Company of Ontario, California for the prior year. Our lease agreement required me to return the aircraft to Cable Airport in Ontario, California (near L.A.) upon termination of the lease. So, after recovering for a few days from the big Oshkosh trip, I was

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“IMC” on the way to Santa Fe

ready for another epic journey. At 5:00am on Monday, August 11th I arrived at Erie Municipal Airport with the intention of being airborne by 6:00. On my drive to the airport I observed crystal clear skies in all directions, and no indications of any wind. It was truly perfect weather, and I looked forward to flying under these ideal conditions. My elation with the weather was soon soured by an FSS weather briefer who told me the entire route from Eire to Santa Fe (my first planned stop) was under instrument meteorological conditions. I couldn't believe it! As the sun rose, I thought I could just make out the top of Pike's Peak over 60 miles away. There was no way the route could be under IMC! So at just after 6:00am, I set off despite the recommendation from FSS against VFR flight. I just had to see for myself... knowing all the while I may have to turn back.

I departed EIK, circled to the west to gain altitude, and then set out on a nearly direct course to Santa Fe. As I left the comfort of the Front Range, I found myself over some fairly rugged but relatively low terrain. My altitude of 10,500' was more than adequate to clear any obstacle with plenty of room to spare. And the only instrument meteorological conditions along the way were some very small patches of ground fog in some of the deep valleys. I don't know where the FSS weather briefer got his information! As I flew along in calm, cool, and clear air, I kicked back and enjoyed the scenery.

*“At 9740 feet, Mosca
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Sangre de Cristo
Mountains...”*

As I approached the Sangre de Cristo mountain range I had to find and cross my first mountain pass of the trip... Mosca Pass. At 9740 feet, Mosca Pass offers a relatively low path across the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, some of which top out at over 14,000 feet. While the pass was

less than 10,000 feet, I wanted more air underneath me than my previous altitude of 10,500 would allow, so as I approached the pass I popped up to 12,500. Flying over the pass was very cool! The 12,000+ foot summits flanking either side seemed much closer than they actually were, but with only small bumps along the way, I passed through the gap with confidence. As I emerged on the western side of the pass, the Great Sand Dunes came into view, as did a wide open flat valley that stretched 20 to 30 miles across. The rest of the way to Santa Fe was right down this big flat valley... a piece of cake!

I arrived in Santa Fe with 2.9 hours having elapsed on the Hobbs meter. The GPS reported an actual flight time of 2.7 hours. So, considering the straight line distance between Erie and Santa Fe is 268nm, my speed averaged over 99 knots. And since I had to circle a bit to climb before starting out, and I had a bit of a dogleg in my route in order to cross the Sangre de Cristos, my actual speed was probably more like 105 knots. But the most impressive statistic was my fuel burn. I topped off my tank in Santa Fe with 11.5 gallons of gas. That means my fuel burn along the way was less than 4 gallons per hour!

My next planned leg had me going to Winslow-Lindbergh Regional Airport, 229nm to the southwest. Though I would have preferred a longer leg, this airport was right on my course toward California, and there were few other options within range beyond it. In fact there were few options within 50 miles of there in any direction... I had some desolate country to fly over. By the time I got to Lindbergh Regional Airport, I was glad to have chosen it as my next destination... I was ready for a break! During this segment, the

calm cool air I had experienced on the first leg was long gone. For the entire 229nm I was constantly getting bumped around. The turbulence was never really bad, but it was constant. It was just enough that I couldn't just sit back and let the airplane fly on its own. I had to constantly make corrections to stay on course.

A quick side note... on aeronautical charts, state boundaries are not really emphasized since they are not very useful for navigation (you can't see them from the air). So in my planning it never really occurred to me that Winslow-Lindbergh Regional Airport was in Winslow, Arizona. After topping off with gas, and reading the fuel receipt, it finally struck me that I was in Winslow, Arizona. As soon as I came to that realization, the lyrics from the old Eagles song, "Take it Easy" started playing through my head.

*Well, I'm a standing on a
corner
in Winslow, Arizona
and such a fine sight to see
It's a girl, my Lord, in a flatbed
Ford slowin' down to take a
look at me*

So for the next two legs of my trip (350 miles) I had the Eagles driving me mad. Then it was Steve Miller with "Rock 'n Me" sharing the space in my head.

*I went from Winslow, Arizona
All the way to Tacoma
Philadelphia, Atlanta, L.A.
Northern California where the
girls are warm
So I could be with my sweet
baby, yeah*

As it turns out, the actual lyrics state, "I went from Phoenix, Arizona" (not Winslow, Arizona), but after flying in a

small airplane for several hours over wide open desert, my memory began playing tricks on me.

I was really wishing this Gobosh was equipped with an iPod jack like our new one. But since it was not, I had Steve Miller and the Eagles as constant companions on my way to Lake Havasu City Airport, and then onto Cable Airport in Ontario, California. The monotony of these songs matched the monotony of the terrain. While the last two legs were under 200nm each, they seemed to take forever as I flew over some of the most barren land I had ever seen. There was little to break up the boredom except for the approach to Lake Havasu and later on, the approach into the LA area.

Lake Havasu City Airport sits at an elevation of only 783' right on the shore of Lake Havasu. Only about 3 miles to the east of the airport (right along my flight path) Grossman Peak looms more than 4000 feet above the field elevation. So coming in to land at Lake Havasu airport, I had to stay pretty high before dropping in at the last minute to do a mid-field crosswind entry to runway 14. That was fun!

When I got on the ground, my outside air temperature gauge was reading 118 degrees! I pulled up to Desert Skies Executive Air Terminal and went inside. I told the guy behind the desk that I wanted to top off my fuel tank. After calling for the fuel truck he directed me to the self-serve slushy machine. When it's 118 degrees, nothing beats the heat like an icy cold slushy! (Except for maybe the two bottles of complementary ice cold bottled water also provide by Desert Skies.) I felt slightly bad that a "top off" in a Gobosh that just flew fewer than 200 miles amounted to about 8.5

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*"...my outside air
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gallons of gas. Desert Skies barely made up for the cost of the water and slushies with my fuel purchase!

As I walked back out to the airplane, I wondered how the Gobosh would handle this extreme heat. As it turns out it did just fine. On climb out with full throttle I was getting better than 500fpm, but that was short lived. After about 5 minutes one of my cylinder head temperatures started to read a tad high, so I throttled back a bit to keep everything in the green. Doing so reduced my rate of climb, which left me in a quandary. I knew cooler air awaited me higher up, and the sooner I could get there the sooner my engine would cool down. On the other hand, I couldn't risk the cylinder head temps getting too much higher, so I had to settle for lower power and a delay in getting to the cooler air up above. At one point I was helped upward by an exceptional thermal. For about 10 seconds my VSI was pegged at the top of the scale. And then as quickly as I had gone up, the bottom fell out and I experienced a brief moment of weightlessness as everything not tied down in the cockpit went up in the air and then tumbled back down. I think I probably did alright by that thermal. Despite the drop at the end, I think I probably netted 500 feet of altitude. As I kept climbing the air in fact cooled and my engine temperatures settled back down to normal. While the terrain at this point would have allowed me to stay safely down around 5,000 feet, I chose to cruise the rest of the way to Cable Airport at 8,500 feet where the outside air temperatures were in the sixties.

As I approached the LA area, a wall of 8,000 to 12,000 foot mountains separated me from my destination. My planned path was to take me through a low valley south of Big Bear

called Banning Pass. As I rounded Big Bear and caught my first glimpse of the LA basin, I was perturbed to see a layer of clouds covering the entire valley. From the angle of the sun, it was difficult to tell if this was fog with no visibility, or just a layer of haze with restricted visibility. With just about 30 miles left to go to my final destination, I pulled back the power, lowered the nose, and began a fairly rapid descent at 120 knots down toward the layer. As I got closer, I could tell this was just haze, and I estimated visibility through it to be better than 5 miles. As I descended into the haze, my hopes were raised as visibility got even better. And I was also pretty excited to see the GPS tick down the estimated time remaining en route to less than 15 minutes. Just then the engine started running really rough. It acted as if someone was moving the throttle in and out. Needless to say, that got my attention. I shoved the throttle full forward and pulled on carb heat, but nothing changed. As luck would have it, I could see an airport directly in front of me through the haze. I had plenty of altitude and the engine was still producing a good amount of power as it went through its gyrations. Given these factors, I was not terribly concerned, but obviously I wanted to get on the ground as soon as possible. I hit the "nearest" button on the GPS and up popped a list of the closest airports along with some airport information. Redlands was the closest, so I tuned in their CTAF frequency and announced that I was coming in for a precautionary landing. Over the radio I heard another pilot in the pattern, so I requested that he make way for me, as I was coming in for a landing, and it may be without engine power. As I got closer to the airport and lined up on final, I could see a big "24" painted on the end of the runway. I announced to Redlands

"I experienced a brief moment of weightlessness as everything not tied down in the cockpit went up in the air and then tumbled back down."

"Just then the engine started running really rough."

CTAF that I was on final for runway 24. At some point along final my engine roughness cleared up, but I landed anyway. Right after landing the guy in the traffic pattern at Redlands called me on the radio and told me that Redlands doesn't have a runway 24... I must have landed at San Bernardino International. (San Bernardino and Redlands are only 4 miles apart) It was right about then that I noticed all the large passenger jets parked outside very large terminal buildings. "Oh this can't be good", I thought, "I've just landed at a major airport without even talking to the tower. I'm going to have some explaining to do." Just then the voice from Redlands came back over the radio and told me I could contact San Bernardino Unicom on 122.975 to get help with my airplane. I tried raising someone on Unicom, but since nobody answered, I just taxied out of the way to a quiet little spot away from the big jets. This place was strange... lots of big commercial jets, but no visible activity. No airplanes moving, no baggage handlers, and certainly no one excitedly rushing out to intercept me for landing (and then taxiing) without a clearance. I stopped the airplane, got out, and called Tony, the owner of this airplane. I was relieved when he told me that San Bernardino is just a maintenance depot for airliners. It's a non-towered airport so I hadn't deviated from any regulations by landing there without talking to anyone. Tony also offered that my engine roughness was likely the result of carburetor icing brought on by my rapid, yet low power descent into a layer of moisture. I noticed later that my carb heat knob was no longer pulled out. I must have failed to lock it into position when I pulled it earlier. Since the knob is spring loaded, it would have gone back into the off position on its own. In Colorado where

we have no moisture, carb icing is extremely rare, but when conditions are right (like they were that day) the carburetors are quite susceptible to icing.

Now that I had a good explanation of what likely happened, I got back into the airplane started back up and taxied back to the runway. While San Bernardino has a 10,000 foot runway, and I was positioned at roughly the halfway point, I opted to taxi a mile to the far end rather than doing an intersection departure. That would give me plenty of extra runway just in case the engine started acting up again. I got to the beginning of runway 24, did a thorough run up, and rolled onto 24 for departure. The engine ran beautifully, and I was off the ground in just a few hundred feet. I must have been at my cruising altitude by the time I reached the far end of the runway. I flew the last 22 miles to Cable Airport with the carb heat knob pulled on, and without incident. I arrived just before 5:00pm. After a nearly 12 hour day of flying... it was finally over!

Going back now and adding up the times in my logbook, I can see the whole trip from Oshkosh to California took 20.5 hours and included 12 takeoffs and landings. While these hours were logged on 5 individual days, the bulk of the hours were done in just two days. What a trip!

"This place was strange... lots of big commercial jets, but no visible activity."