

Part II – The Return

I could try to describing Oshkosh, the event, but there is no way I can put it into words. You just have to go and experience it yourself. I almost said see it, but you really do experience it.

The departure is completely uneventful as compared to the arrival. The morning we wanted to depart however was 500 broken, 1100 overcast so we checked into filing IFR but there was a 3-5 hour wait for a clearance so we figured we would do the show again and wait for VFR. There are still things that we had not seen even though we had been there for almost a week.

About noon the wx went VFR and so we did our preflight, and started the taxi for takeoff. We were about number 50 for takeoff, so we sat and inched our way to the runway. We had the engine off, and just pulled the a/p along until we were about number ten and then started the engine and did our run-up. Same deal for takeoff, you watch the flaggers, and listen to the tower. This is the first time we actually got to say something on the radio. Twr asks your direction of flight, and since all departures were on rwy 27 they put you on the left side if you are southwest, through east bound, and on the right side if you are west through northeast bound. We are west, so they assigned into position and hold on the right side. As soon as we were in position we were cleared for takeoff. Since the controller is standing on a box beside the runway, he actually used our N number.

Now, remember that the show is almost over, but there are still hundreds of airplanes at Ripon and Fisk inbound, so we stay well away from those areas, and head for our overnight destination of St. Cloud. We plan a more leisurely trip home, two days, one night, with fuel stops in St Cloud, Bismarck, Miles City, Great Falls, and Spokane. West bound always takes more fuel because the winds aloft are from the west.

The flight to St Cloud was pretty much uneventful, with the slight exception that it was really marginal VFR with low ceilings, but the forecast at St. Cloud was for clear, so up through a hole we went, and on direct to St Cloud. We got there mid afternoon, and again a leisurely stop for gas, half hour instead of 10 minutes and we were again enroute to Bismarck where we planned our RON.

An hour or so west of St Cloud a very strange thing started happening. I noticed by feeling it as well as looking at the VSI that we were climbing at about 500 ft/min, but I had not put in any control inputs. I usually fly long xc with only my feet on the rudders for directional control and trim for pitch. But this was weird! Oh well, a couple of turns of nose down and we were back level again. Then the reverse, all of a sudden we were headed down. This time trim would not solve the problem. Hmmm, I better pay some attention to this. Add a touch of pitch up, a little trim to remove the control pressure, and we are level once again. A few minutes later – same thing! This time, climbing more than 1000 ft/min. Nose down, power back so as to not exceed engine redline, and down we go. Well the nose was pointed down, airspeed rising, but so is the airplane. Surf's up! Well all that free lift was again short lived, because a couple of minutes later we again hit the back side again. As before, airplane is descending, pull the nose up, add full power, peg V_y on the airspeed and wait. Not too bad only lost a net of 1000' considering that a few minutes before I was climbing like crazy. This lasted for about an hour. Up a couple of thousand feet, with the nose low, followed by down a couple of thousand feet at V_y and in some cases V_x . I was never so glad to see Bismarck in all my life. I was totally exhausted.

Staying in Bismarck was like a trip into the movie Cocoon. Really great accommodating people, but a strange little town. That is a whole chapter in its self.

The next morning off to Great Falls via Miles City. Between BIS and MLS, the wind started picking up. Not much at first, but I did notice the ground speed diminishing a bit. Almost unnoticeable in the beginning, but I noticed I was later getting to each check point that I had planned. Pretty soon I was down to about 40 Kts ground speed, and it is very strange to see all the cars and trucks passing us. Of course in Montana there is no speed limit, so they may have been doing over 55. Well that's why I'd planned Miles City for gas in the first place, but this was a bunch worse than advertised. I gotta file a PIREP on this!

Ok full of gas again and on to GTF. Again pretty routine except the winds aloft, and GTF was now forecasting 300 @45G55 at our arrival time. Oh well we are in a Cherokee, and it can take it. About 30 miles out I start listening to ATIS and to my dismay, both cross wind runways are NOTAMed out of service! Like I said, we are in a Cherokee, and there is no demonstrated crosswind component that I'm aware of, so in we go. Rwy 3 is in use, and so that gives us an exact 90 degree left cross wind at the forecast velocity. Why is the forecast correct now? Well to help a bit, I keep my speed up and aim for a spot about a third of the way down the 10,500' runway, and also aim for the right side of the runway. Now you say "Right side with a left crosswind?" Well normally I would agree with you, but I also did not line up with the runway. I naturally had a pretty good crab angle, but I want to touch down on the right side and land across toward the left side so I could use the width to my advantage. It must have worked, because the tower commended us on the approach and landing, and we are still here to talk about it. I'm sure that the tower was questioning our sanity, but just too polite to say anything.

Well, again full fuel, full tummy, and off we go to Spokane. Nothing to report here, except that it was good to see WA again. We stopped briefly in Spokane for a quick visit with our family, as they were having a reunion there. We spent a couple of hours and then on home in time for a late night dinner and a good night's sleep in our own little bed.

We'll unload the plane in the morning (if I feel like it) but for now, a nice cold home brewed Dunkelweisen.

Until next time...

Dave and Hella