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For those who might consider a 3,363-nautical-mile flight across the North

Atlantic in a light twin-engine plane, here are some informative counsel

and entertaining by-play from one who has been through the experience

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# TO Paris VIA NARSARSSUAK

■ Ocean Station Bravo, Goose Bay, Newfoundland; Narsarsuak, Greenland; high frequency radios, altitude reported in flight levels rather than in feet. Was this real or was it a dream?

It was real and at the same time a dream come true for me, a nonprofessional pilot who flew solo across the Atlantic in an unmodified twin-engine aircraft with no extra gas tanks. The plane was a new Cessna 310; its destination was Paris. My assignment—get it over there.

It wasn't until I reached the Cessna plant at Wichita that I found out how "my" bird was equipped. It was a standard 310, right off the assembly line. The only differences were that the altimeter was calibrated in millibars and there was a French registration. F-BNFI was her identification, and she was to be mine for a few enjoyable days.

To keep ATC happy, before the ocean hop I had to have a high-frequency transceiver temporarily installed. This minor surgery consisted of running from a hole drilled in the bottom of the plane an antenna which could be trailed at length. The temporary installation took about four hours.

After putting a few hours on the bird to make sure everything was going to stay together (no oil leaks, etc.), I headed north to Canada. The flight through Canada to Goose Bay is one of the prettiest in the world, so I'm told. The scenery would have looked prettier if there had been less snow on the ground.

As I approached Goose Bay, a call to the tower produced the response:

"Who are you, where did you come from and what do you want?" After filling the tower in I received clearance to land. Later I was told that according to their fine print I wasn't supposed to be there, although there were some other civilian airplanes on the joint Canadian and U.S. air base.

The Canadian added that he had cleared me to land because he figured that if he hadn't I would have turned off the radio, landed anyway, and said that I hadn't heard the instructions not to land. But now that I was there, how long was I going to be around, and would I please pay the \$6.65 landing fee?

After refueling with 26-cent-a-gallon gas and checking the oil (only available in gallons) I started negotiations for a ride. If you are military (I was not) or a good talker, you can call the American side of the field and get a military taxi to pick you up. But it's much easier and quicker to call a civilian cab for the short ride over to the weather station.

The rainmaker had sad news. Narsarsuak had rotten weather, and it was expected to remain bad for a few days. Looking at the weather map and thinking positively, I noted a slow but progressive movement of the low pressure system which was to blame for the bad weather. I hoped it would move out of the way that night but the forecaster promised it would not.

His advice was to sack out in the visiting officers' quarters and forget it. But I could call him the following day. In the meantime, he would send a request to the Danish forecaster at

Sondrestrom, Greenland, to call the tower at Narsarsuak. If the field were clear, the tower would call a small fishing village located on the fjord up which one must fly to get to the airport. The condition of the fjord would be passed back to the tower at Narsarsuak, then to Sondrestrom, then by radio teletype to the United States and finally to Goose Bay. When received after this involved and time-consuming process, the forecast would report the ceiling, visibility and surface winds at the field and conditions of the fjord. The fjord is always forecast either open or closed, no in-between. That makes for easy decisions.

Before hitting the sack that night I reviewed the maps and tried to out-guess the rainmaker. I felt sure the weather was going to be better tomorrow, and that I could go. Then a session with the slide rule and map to see if I could turn the 310 around inside the fjord, if necessary. According to the slide rule, it was possible.

Next morning I was so sure of my weather that I didn't call the rainmaker, but checked out of the VOQ and took a taxi over to see him, confident that after he gave me winds aloft and forecast it would be off into the wild blue yonder.

The weatherman smiled as he handed me a large personalized folder for the trip. Forecast for Narsarsuak was 8,000 feet broken and 15 miles visibility, with 40° surface wind at 25 to 35 knots. This was even better than I expected and meant *go*.

Winds aloft would be from 340° at 20 knots to Ocean Station Bravo, then 110° at 20 knots for the rest of the trip. At the first glance it looked like a routine tail wind component. For the moment I had forgotten that the winds aloft were reported from true north. Up here, true and magnetic north were separated by almost 40°. This meant, rather than a tail wind, a 20-knot head wind for the 820-mile hop to Greenland.

The head wind was a strike against

by PAUL HOFFMAN, Jr., D.D.S. / AOPA 211992



Following the first leg of its transatlantic journey, Cessna 310 rests on the Royal Canadian Air Force ramp at Goose Bay. PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

me, but the forecast of 8,000 feet broken with 15 miles visibility, the fjord open and forecast to remain so, was too good to miss even with the head wind. I filed the flight plan, paid the extra dollar overnight parking fee, and hotfooted it to the plane.

At 9:35 the engines were started and I taxied out. "Goose ground control, this is twin Cessna Foxtrot Bravo November Foxtrot India, IFR to Narsarsuak." The radio was silent for a minute. I almost expected to hear it say, "Man, are you crazy? Where are you going?" But in a few seconds came the Canadian voice, "AFC clears F-BNFI to Narsarsuak airport via flight plan route. Climb to and maintain flight level niner zero." Boy, was that simple, a clearance to cross the North Atlantic in only 18 words.

Off Goose at 9:50, I contacted radar on 118.1 mc, then Goose center on 120.4 and was on my way.

Until now it had been a dream. I had expected to wake up at any moment to find the trip was only a figment of my imagination. Well, here I was, and no one was going to talk to me now and mess up the . . . "Cessna F-BNFI, this is Goose center, over." Goose wanted a high-frequency check on 5626.5 kc and an estimate for the first reporting point.

High-frequency stuff is a pain. You have to wind out the trailing antenna, listen to the radio for the maximum hiss, fly the airplane, and keep the wire from going out too fast, or it will unwind from the reel, jerk off the attachment and be gone for good. HF radio is a piece of seldom-used baggage that the big boys down on the ground say we have to have and use. Actually, almost all of the transmissions could have been done on VHF or VHF relay, keeping the HF in reserve.

For some crossings one wouldn't need to use the HF at all. But it should always be carried because it is the link to the weatherman and ATC. If things start to go sour, it might be the HF that would provide the latest weather information and be the real life saver.

"Goose center, this is Cessna F-BNFI, on 5626.5 kc estimating 54° 55' north, 56° 17' west at 1600 Zulu." There, that ought to keep the center happy for a while.

At 10:45, the last checkpoint on the land chart showed a ground speed of 152 knots (178 m.p.h.) with a 10° left wind correction angle. I put away the land charts for the North American Continent because there were only water and clouds below. The ADF beeped out Morse code for YBOS and the needle pointed straight ahead. That meant Ocean Station Bravo, whose call sign is YB, was on its assigned station straight ahead.

Ten minutes later Goose omni was out of range, one more tie with the mainland cut. What the heck, why not cut them all? That HF antenna isn't doing any good shaking around out back; it's probably slowing me down. I might just land with the antenna still



Nearing coast of Greenland, the author captured this picture of the fjords that mark that country, with the Greenland Ice Cap on the horizon. Note the icebergs afloat off the coast line.

At one of the wider points in fjord leading toward Narsarsuak Airport, Hoffman's altitude was less than that of the steep granite cliffs that wall in the waterway.



out. That seemed to be good justification for winding it in.

It was a job winding in the antenna. The reel had been placed awkwardly for my big hand. With each revolution the knob which held the reel in place hit the side of my hand, and gradually loosened up. Once, the knob actually fell off. I could imagine the reel falling off and the antenna departing out the rear of the plane, leaving me without the required HF communications.

According to the computer, with 21 inches of manifold pressure, 2,100 r.p.m. and outside air temperature  $-10^{\circ}$  C at 9,000 feet, the power setting was only 54% and gas consumption 10.4 gallons an hour for each engine. The plane indicated 178 m.p.h., for a true airspeed of 201 m.p.h.

At 11:42, I contacted Ocean Station Bravo to request a radar plot, plus the latest weather at Narsarsuak. Ocean Station Bravo returned with: "Cessna F-BNFI, this is Ocean Station Bravo. Roger your message. Wait one for the

wishing that he could be up there with me on the way to Paris, rather than down there on the wet, rolling ship.

His radar fixes provided position and ground speed, which turned out to be a welcome vote of confidence that the navigation so far had been up to snuff. Depending on flight level, it appears that one can talk to this ocean station as far out as 150 to 200 miles.

By 1:21, I sighted Greenland. Skies clear, visibility unlimited. That low white stuff way off in the distance which I thought might be ground fog, turned out to be ice. Therefore, the fjord should be CAVU.

What a beautiful sight! From calculations done later, I spotted the coast of Greenland when I was still 175 miles out. That's real CAVU weather. It can also be disconcerting because one expects to see a coast line about 50 to 70 miles out and, after half an hour of flying at close to 200 m.p.h., wonders why it still

breathtaking. I have never seen such spectacular scenery. There are literally hundreds of fjords, but only one has an airport. They all look alike. The problem is to find the Nardlunaq Fjord, the one with the airport hidden 60 miles up the fjord.

The key to the correct fjord lies in a small island, Simiutak, which has an abandoned weather station and a nice, strong radio station.

Identifying Simiutak Island, I sneaked down low and came in the way planes have to do if the weather is bad, à la Earnest Kahn.

This was really it. One would have to search far and wide to find a more superb sight. As one progresses up the fjord the sides get higher and higher. Just 20 miles up the fjord the walls rise 3,000 feet straight up from the water. Farther up, the walls rise to heights greater than a mile.

For the pilot, the awesomeness of the sheer rise is magnified by the fact that there is not only a mile-high wall



North Atlantic route Author Hoffman took to Paris.

radar plot, and ah . . . ah . . . where the heck is ah . . . ah . . . how do you say it, Narsarsuak?"

Did you ever get the feeling that the place you wanted to go no longer existed? A short chat with the boys below finally convinced them that there was such a place, and that it was the same as BW1 or "Bluie West One," the identification used by the military for the old airstrip during the war and now famous from the book "Fate Is The Hunter."

A short wait produced the report that Narsarsuak had 2,000 feet overcast and 20 miles. That transmission was interrupted by an airliner overhead that had passed near BW1. The pilot reported that BW1 had 8,000 feet scattered with 15 miles and that the fjord was open.

The radio operator on Ocean Station Bravo appeared lonely and wanted to talk to someone, so we had a pleasant chat. Before we said goodbye he was

appears to be just as far away.

In Greenland, the coast line is made up of tall, rough mountains. These magnificent mountains and the clear air give one the illusion that he is much closer than is actually the case.

The VFR chart has a funny line about 75 miles from the coast line, not seen before on any of our charts. It says: "Approximate maximum limits of pack ice for April."

The icebergs are beautiful. I had never seen a large one before, but there they were, for as far as I could see. They contain every shade of blue, from the dark blue of the water to the light blues of the skies and, finally, light blue-white. The spectacle is so hypnotizing that one can almost forget to fly the plane until the air closer to the land becomes rough due to the wind coming down off the ice cap and spilling over and around the mountains.

The ice cap and the fjords are

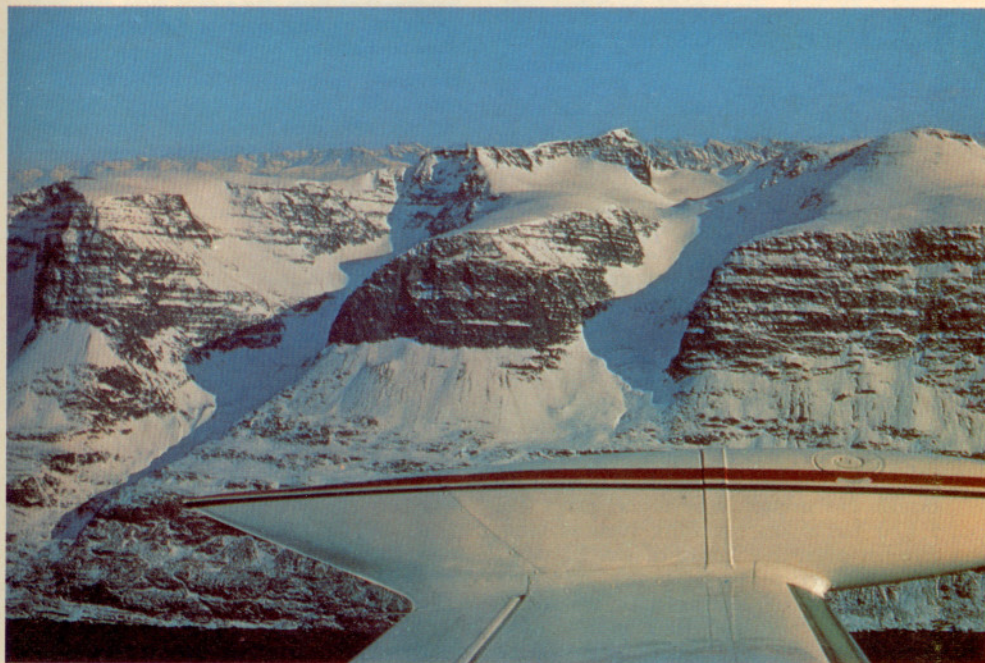
very close to the right wing of the airplane but also another just like it even closer to the left wing.

If this was the right fjord, according to "Fate Is the Hunter," there should be a sunken freighter some 40 miles up its course. This received considerable attention in the book and is even located on the chart. When it came into view on my left, I was disappointed to see such a small vessel. But I could easily see how this little piece of metal could cause rejoicing after flying up the fjord in bad weather.

Once past the sunken ship, it was time to get the plane slowed down, wheels down and in the green, and flaps part way down, even though the field was not in sight. A large airplane that is incapable of making a go-around directly over the airport that waits until the field is in sight to put the gear and flaps down will be through flying for the day. If you're coming up the fjord, hugging the left wall



Rounding the final fjord, the pilot finds himself on short final to Narsarssuak Airport. Approach end of 6,500-foot runway is 10 feet above sea level. The other end is 136 ASL.



Heading out from Narsarssuak, the 310 had to pass between forbidding granite fjord walls towering more than a mile high.

While refueling at Narsarssuak, Hoffman sought indoor shelter to protect himself against chill 25 m.p.h. winds sweeping off Greenland Ice Cap in background.



and have the plane slowed down to 135 m.p.h. when you round the last corner, the field will be right in front of you. You will be on short final, less than 50 seconds from the end of the runway.

The runway looks tiny compared to the massive rocks flanking the fjord, but it is plenty long. If the weather is good, there will be a 25 m.p.h.-plus head wind on landing. That, combined with the uphill 6,500-foot runway, makes for an extremely short landing roll. The approach end of the runway, right next to the water, is 10 feet above sea level, but the other end of the runway is 136 feet high.

After landing I was met by several airport employees. These people are Danish and are extremely courteous. There was one man for the gas, one for the landing fee, and the rest just came out to break the boredom and to see who had flown in. They were all dressed up in winter parkas that looked twice as big as Eskimo parkas. When I got out of the warm aircraft, the reason for the parkas was obvious. The winds whistling down the ice cap onto the field bit right through my coat, jacket, shirt and skin.

Werner, the young chap in charge, couldn't have been more helpful. After the plane was gassed up we rode in a World War II vintage Jeep over to the buildings where gas and landing fees were paid.

The landing fee was a reasonable \$5. The gas, 350 liters or 92.3 gallons, cost only 28.4 cents a gallon, despite the fact that lack of competition in this remote area where fuel has to be transported very long distances could cause prices to be extremely high.

Neither at Narsarssuak nor at any other place on the trip was I asked for the international gas credit cards. The regular U.S. cards were fine. I couldn't help but compare this situation to that in the Bahama Islands, where nothing but the International Shell or International Esso cards will be accepted.

After I had paid for the gas, Werner led me to the radio room to file my flight plan on to Iceland. When I had filled out the form to my satisfaction, he took the paper and filled out another flight plan, with my information, the way that his radio operator wanted it. This was nicer than the typical bureaucratic style of: "Do it over again, in three copies, and don't forget to fill in every line."

Back in the radio shack, we tried to obtain a weather forecast for the leg to Iceland. Yes, the required information could be obtained, but it would take about two hours. There were some old reports that yielded some information, but the latest reports were not there now. The old winds aloft report promised head winds, but this was nothing new for "Head-Wind Hoffman."

From the radio shack we went to the kitchen, where Werner asked the cook to make some sandwiches. They were

typical open-faced Danish sandwiches, works of art, as though they had come out of a book on how to prepare delicious-looking sandwiches. For one dollar, the cook provided coffee and four sandwiches. I drank the coffee and ate two sandwiches, avoiding two that were picturesque but appeared to be covered with fish eyes. The cook insisted on wrapping those for me to take along.

By now I felt that Werner was my guide, as we tore off down the dirt road back to the plane.

It felt good to be back in the 310, and it was only a few short seconds before the heater was pumping out warm air. The tower gave permission to taxi onto the runway and do the runup.

The weather between Nasarssuak and Iceland wasn't too good, but the bird had deicers on the wings and the tail, plus electric heaters on the props. The deicing system, I was confident, would take care of the weather en route. If the weather at Reykjavík, Iceland, were bad, Keflavik would be a good alternate. It would be close, and they had the works—ADF, VOR, ILS, and radar approaches. At worst, the terminal weather would only mean a change in destination.

But how about winds aloft? They had been forecast at 16 knots at about 45°. With my luck for head winds, I figured that the wind might be directly on my nose, not at 16 but at 20. So out with the computer.

The problem was whether I could make it to Iceland if the wind should be on the nose at 40 knots. The computer told me I could make it, but without my customary 1½ hours of reserve fuel. I was pretty sure the winds wouldn't be that strong and even if they were, where could one go after reaching Iceland if he didn't want to land? No matter how much extra gas I had left upon reaching Iceland, one, two, or even 2½ hours of gas wouldn't get me any place with my feet dry. Going back to Narsarssuak would be impossible because they don't have lights at night and would probably be fogged in. Likewise, Scotland would be out of the question for lack of gas. So here we go, Iceland or swim!

Taking off from Narsarssuak is spectacular. From the takeoff position one can see about 300 yards down the runway. From that point the runway drops off 126 feet!

It is a classical one-way airport. Regardless of the wind, you land uphill and even though there now is a tail wind gusting to 35 knots, it's a downwind, downhill takeoff.

It's a funny feeling to push the throttles forward, start the takeoff roll and not be able to see the other end of the runway. According to the book, you are supposed to raise the nose at 90, break ground and fly it off at 105. With a tail wind of 40 m.p.h. that means that the bird is rolling over the ground at about 145 before you haul it off the ground. If there should be an engine failure, stopping on the run-



At final destination, Toussus Le Noble Airport, southwest of Paris, the author turns over keys of F-BNFI to chief pilot of Fenwick Aviation, Cessna dealer in France.

way would be out of the question.

The climbout is supposed to be circling over the field to 11,000 feet, then start across the ice cap. But that would take up too much gas to be practical. The best way is to climb up out of the fjord, wind around the mountains until you are over the ice cap, continue on VFR until past the east coast of Greenland and then get your IFR clearance for the 778 miles to Iceland.

The takeoff, if you can call it that, was at 4 p.m. and by 4:15 I had reached the cruising altitude of 9,000 feet. While taking pictures of the ice cap, flying the plane, and trying to tune in Ocean Station Alfa, I made a remarkable discovery. I had forgotten to state on the flight plan the request for Ocean Station Alfa to broadcast continuously, so I tuned in Keflavik at 355 kc on the ADF and changed course to the left to go direct rather than over the ocean station.

At 4:45 an Air Canada plane relayed the news that the terminal forecast for Reykjavik was good. It was time to put the camera away now because it was beginning to get dark and up ahead was some bad weather, the promised front. There would be about 45 minutes to an hour of solid IFR.

Just for fun, I turned off "George," the autopilot, and did some of the work myself. Then, without warning—*bang!* It sounded as though the Jolly Green Giant were out there with a sledge hammer doing a tattoo on the side of the plane.

It was that old gremlin, ice. A quick look with the wing light showed a small buildup. Twisting around with a cabin flashlight, I could see through the back window a similar amount on

the tail. One flick of the proper button on the dashboard and the boots on the leading edges of the wing and tail expanded, breaking the ice loose, only to have the slip stream pick up the chips and hurl them backwards with explosive force to fall harmlessly to the ground almost two miles below.

I took care of the props by turning another switch which activated some small electric heaters. This provided less of a show because the ice didn't "explode off" and fly away; instead, it came off with that banging noise and made dents in the sides of the fuselage.

For the next half hour I amused myself by waiting for the wing ice to build up enough for the boots to blast it off. Then, suddenly, the plane broke out of the dark cloud and sailed into smooth air. The stars were just coming out and the horizon where the sun had almost set was a brilliant blue.

Ocean Station Alfa called wanting my position and relayed current winds aloft. Talking with the ocean station was not easy. The operators were from England and had such a heavy accent that it was almost impossible to understand.

The winds aloft report and the cross bearing from Ocean Station Alfa confirmed my suspicion that the winds were not as strong as I had allowed for. I was ahead of schedule and would arrive at Iceland with plenty of gas left over.

Back on went the autopilot while I pushed the seat back and stretched out to relax and take in the scenery.

The scenery consisted primarily of the northern lights. The night before, in Goose Bay, I had thought they were bright, but tonight they were even brighter. Above the haze of the ground they were clear and crisp. Even though it was now night, the sun was just under the horizon and still lit up part of the sky.

"But wait a minute! Course is 96°, almost due east, and the sun sets in the west. Then how come the sunset is off my left wing and not behind me?" That would have shaken up the passengers if I had had any. But that is where the sun sets when you are this far north.

The northern lights are like the pictures that you have seen. They start as curtains, then begin to move. Just slow oscillations at first, then faster, like waves in the ocean moving at high speed. Then the swaying curtains begin to move across the sky. They travel from the horizon on the left to the horizon on the right in just seconds. They must be moving thousands of miles an hour.

Suddenly they fade into a few balls of light, then into nothing, only to be quickly replaced by a faint line of light which expands and slowly forms a new curtain, and the whole show starts over again. That night they produced so much light that I could read the identification letters on the wing.

This was it. I had arrived. Sitting

in a new \$100,000 Twin Cessna 310 over the North Atlantic on the way to Paris! This certainly was different from instructing in Piper *Cubs*. It was nice and warm in the plane. With my shirt sleeves rolled up, I was sitting back enjoying myself. Outside it was  $-8^{\circ}$  centigrade.

It is amazing how often out over the water one looks at the gas gauges, gets out the computer and figures time to destination and amount of fuel needed. It's a good way to wear out a computer. There is a better way to scan the gas gauges and remain assured that there is sufficient gas left—make a "Howgozit" curve. This is a graph of fuel consumption vs. elapsed time. It shows how the ground speed and fuel consumption are doing. But more important, at a glance it forecasts the amount of fuel remaining upon reaching the destination with the present ground speed and fuel consumption.

At 8:30, 4½ hours out of Narsarsuaq, there was light ahead on the horizon, but it fooled me. It wasn't the light of Reykjavík, but the overcast sitting above Reykjavík, illuminated by the lights below.

Ten minutes later, the ADF needle swung around showing that I was over Keflavik and ahead of my original estimate. With just a hint of apology I called the tower at Reykjavík, requesting a lower altitude and clearance for an approach to the field.

The clearance was for an RNG (range) approach to Runway 14. I had never had the chance to do an RNG approach before, but with the ADF working it turned out to be a standard ADF approach. I broke out of the overcast at 2,500 feet with the runway straight ahead and was on the ground at 8:57 p.m. (1:57 a.m. local time).

Customs officials were not to be found. The airport was almost deserted. No one around could speak English. A quick call from the airplane to the tower produced the response: "Forget about Customs; talk to them tomorrow."

Back at the airport next morning, procedures were different from those in the United States. When I asked about the weather at Prestwick, Scotland, there was a long delay before the rainmaker produced a mass of numbers which, when looked up in a coded table, revealed the forecast for Scotland.

For all practical purposes, there was no weather map. What served as a map contained no useful information for this trip. That didn't bother the rainmaker. He sat down and *drew* me a map that contained the information needed. Imagine asking the weatherman at home to draw you a map!

This procedure took about 45 minutes, and the forecast was not too good, but he suggested that if I could come back in an hour, or just before takeoff, maybe he would have some later information.

Six floors up, the local officials said

that they were sorry but the landing fee was \$7.65. At the fire department my 357.1 liters of gas (about 94 gallons) cost 32 cents a gallon, and oil was sold only by the gallon.

Back at the weather man's a more up-to-date weather map was drawn for me. Prestwick was forecasting snow. The thought of flying around in snow showers with no visibility, no alternate reachable with the present load of gas, and unfamiliar mountains surrounding the airport left me cold. So it was upstairs to the boys at ATC where the flight plan could be filed for Stornoway rather than Prestwick.

This produced a slight problem. Stornoway closes after the last airliner arrives. The ATC men assured me that the airport would remain open if they requested it. The regular flight plan was filed along with some extra points which were needed to keep the officials happy.

The extra points were Victor Mike, Gulf, and 61 North. They sound like secret code names and an address. Victor Mike, or VM, stands for the unpronounceable name of Vestmannaeyjar, a compulsory reporting point for all traffic approaching and departing Reykjavik Airport to and from Europe. Gulf is an imaginary point 50 miles from VM and 61 North is the position 61° north of the equator where Iceland turns over control of the air to Scotland.

In spite of my having gotten up at 7:30, it was after 11 before everything was ready to go.

Over Victor Mike, Reykjavik center forwarded the latest winds aloft. I had a 30-knot head wind, but that was nothing new for this trip. Usually one can count on tail winds the whole way over if the weather is right. The estimate for Gulf intersection was passed on to the center via Icelandic Airways.

During the uneventful leg to Scotland, I couldn't help thinking about a few of some 30 items that are required to be on board aircraft flying the North Atlantic. Some of these items are: a 2½-pound axe with a 28-inch handle, cooking utensils, two days supply of concentrated food per person, a readily accessible portable self-buoyant and water resistant radio transmitter, water resistant pyrotechnical signaling device (a means of electrical illumination for the purpose of facilitating the location of persons in the water) life rafts, each fitted with some 17 items ranging from a police whistle to a book on survival.

All of the above equipment is superfluous if you do go down in the North Atlantic. You might as well carry a Teddy bear. In that cold water it is impossible for the human body to last more than two minutes.

The landing in Stornoway, Scotland, was at 2:55 p.m. A rugged Scot called up the gas man to see that the plane would be fueled, then took me up to the cottage-size main passenger terminal. The Customs official said that the fee would be, in pounds, the equivalent of \$3.50 and asked if I thought I

could handle that amount. I had to chuckle to myself. Yes, with a \$100,000 aircraft I thought I could handle the \$3.50 fee. But this was just the beginning.

The woman at the food counter said that the bill for three postcards, one cup of tea, and three cookies came to so many shillings. When asked how much that would be in American money, she said it was equal to exactly \$1. This was an omen of things to come.

The rugged Scot and I walked back to the tower to file my flight plan. It called for a routing of AD1 to Skipness and A1 to Paris. Only it wasn't that simple. They wanted a listing of every reporting point that I would pass over.

The Europeans love those reporting points. There were more than 15 required, some not even four miles apart, but I was told each one had to be used or the system wouldn't work.

After the needlessly complicated flight plan had been filled out in devilish detail, I found out why my guide had been so kind. He was about to stick me with a landing fee of \$35! When asked how he figured out that amount, he said the airport charged £8 an hour to stay open, I had been charged for 1¼ hours, or £10, and there was also a £1.5 landing fee.

A quick runthrough on the E6B computer revealed that £11.5 should equal \$32.20. When my friend saw that, he said his calculations must have been off and that \$32.20 in cash would be all right. Sorry, but no checks or credit cards.

After takeoff I was switched to Scottish Airways for reporting such interesting names as Morvern, Scarba, Skipness, Prestwick, New Galloway, Dean Cross and Pole Hill. Preston Airways was next and got the report for Oldham. Four miles later they wanted Abeam Oldham. This was followed by Lichfield, which was reported to both Preston Airways and London Airways, then Daventry, three fan markers, and one more low-frequency beacon, all within 48 miles.

That's a reporting point every 12 miles, which makes for a lot of paper work when flying IFR. Something must be wrong with the system if all of these reports are needed. I didn't report once just to see what would happen. Sure enough, London Airways called up wanting to know what time I expected to get there.

There wasn't much other traffic on the radio, only a few jets, making their reports so fast and close together it sounded as if they had been prerecorded and were being played back. If I hear of an accident someday in Europe, my first thought will be that the pilot went out of his mind while using the E6B computer to figure out estimates for all of those position reports.

Paris control sent up the cheerful word that the airport at my destination was closed and asked, "What are your intentions?"

"Well, let's see. How about landing

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at Orly? That's close to where I want to go."

A few minutes later control stated that Orly would not accept my flight plan and asked, "What are your intentions now?" So I told them my intentions. I wanted to land somewhere in or near Paris, and that since the first two places that I had picked hadn't appealed to them, would they please select a place that did appeal to them and let me know about it.

That got a response. I think one person on the ground got the message, because in a most courteous voice he suggested the airport at Le Bourget.

Paris approach control vectored me around for a while, then produced a clearance to the low-frequency beacon just north of the outer marker. Off I went in the direction of the beacon, but couldn't receive it on the ADF. I called to the tower to see if the frequency had been changed. They didn't know. They didn't even know the frequency it was supposed to be.

Later, after riding the ILS and glide slope, I landed in a steady rain, anxious to get the plane parked. It had been a long day.

The next day it was still raining, but in the afternoon it slackened somewhat, so I caught a bus from Paris back to the airport. There the fun started.

It is not possible there to just walk out to the plane, crank it up and go

for a trip around the pattern. I had been using a little French soil and had to pay for it. Landing and parking fees were \$28—\$28 for a normal, soft landing that didn't make a dent in the runway. I suppose if I had run onto the grass there would have been a greens fee.

After paying the fee I received explicit instructions on how to get out of the airport, how to fly around Paris and, most important, how to miss all the jets that were upstairs. There were even elaborate instructions on how to miss the ones on the ground. The only problem was that all of those instructions were in French, which I don't speak, read or understand.

It all boiled down to this: do not fly over the city of Paris; do not fly over the Eiffel Tower; and do not fly higher than 1,000 feet—you may hit a jet.

Once out of that madhouse I studied the map. The destination airport, Toussus Le Noble, on the southwest side of Paris, was only 18 miles southwest of Le Bourget. There was a specific corridor to fly on the way out. I was supposed to fly out that corridor until over a certain airport, then take up another heading until over a lake, then go direct to the airport. With these elaborate instructions I was about to undertake the momentous task of circumnavigating Paris!

After going out the corridor, flying over an airport, looking for a lake, and avoiding a thunderstorm, I couldn't find Toussus Le Noble Airport. How about that? After flying across the Atlantic to Paris, I get lost trying to find an airport only 18 miles away. I was convinced it was invisible.

During this exasperating tour de la countryside where the airport should have been, the scenery was great, and it was fun to be able to have a look at it at the legal but relatively low altitude of only 1,000 feet. But the gas was low, and the possibility of running out was becoming very real.

A call to radar at Orly was typically helpful. Their answer was "wait one." A few seconds later, "contact us on another frequency." On the other frequency I explained the situation again, and asked for a radar steer or just a radar vector to the small airport. Again, "Contact us on another frequency."

When they finally asked for and received my position, all heck broke loose. It appeared that I was too close to Orly Field and might run into jet traffic. Finally they asked for another frequency change. When contact was established on that frequency, they said that I was transmitting on a frequency reserved for jet traffic.

I realized that I could expect no help from them. If I were to continue to play the game and stay at 1,000 feet to avoid jets, I might never find the airport. A quick climb up to 1,500 feet made the omni signals readable. It took only a few minutes to get a triangular fix and strike off in the right direction for the airport.

I had been told that the controllers at this small field, which handles small planes exclusively, didn't speak English. Rather than listen to more French, I turned off the radio, flew over the field, took my place in the traffic pattern behind a small and very slow single-engine trainer, made sure that I didn't cut anybody off, and brought it in.

While taxiing to the ramp (still with the radio off), I could hardly contain my enthusiasm and a grin of success which I'm sure spread from ear to ear. □

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#### THE AUTHOR

*Dr. Paul Hoffman, Jr., is a Washington, D.C., orthodontist and weekend pilot who started his flying activities while in high school, selling household brushes to pay for flying lessons. He has over 2,000 hours of flying time, a commercial license with multi-engine and instrument ratings, and a flight instructor certificate. On weekends when he is not flying for pleasure, he offers instrument instruction at Washington area airports.*

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Most problem and aggravation-laden portion of Hoffman's transatlantic flight came near his destination as he sought to maneuver his way around Paris, shown below the wing of the Cessna 310.