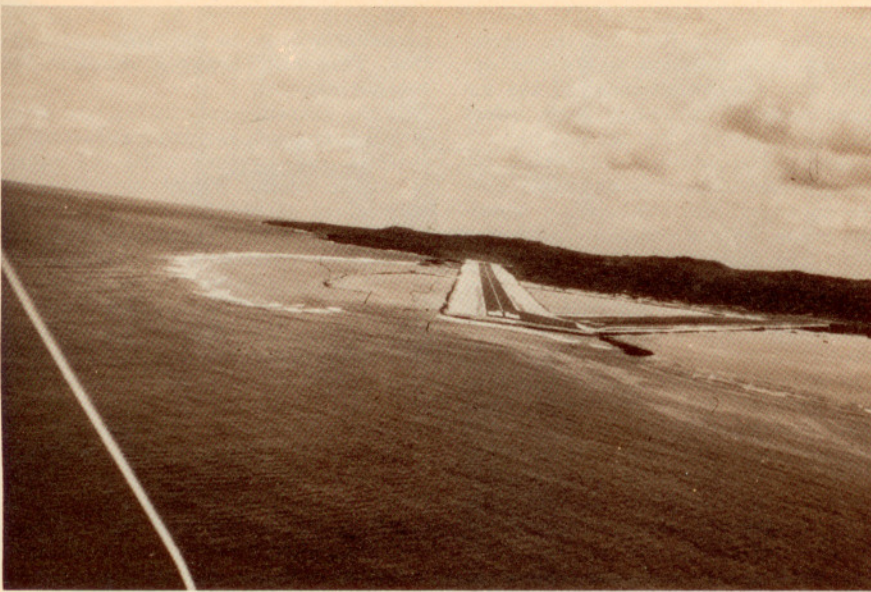


Around

Part 2



This Faa'a Airport (not to be confused with FAA), the leading airfield on the South Sea island of Tahiti. This picture was taken as the Balz Twin-Bonanza was preparing to land. Faa'a has a 11,200-foot hard-surfaced runway and is prepared to handle all sizes of planes up to airline jets

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second of three articles by Gunther Blaz on the around-the-world flight he and his wife Alice completed last July 1. The "dream" flight in a Twin-Bonanza started from Kalamazoo, Mich., on Oct. 17, 1962.

Twenty-four hours without sleep including an all-night flight from California to Hawaii was not enough to overcome the coffee, oxygen and general excitement. We slept only two hours after arrival in Hilo.

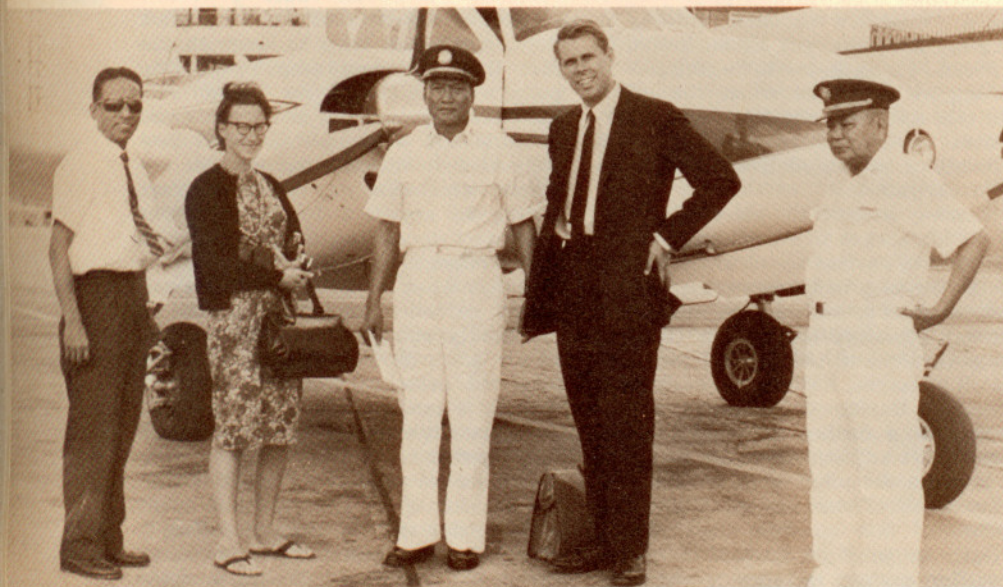
Alice and I rolled out of bed in the morning and went back out to Hilo airport, enjoying the semitropical sunshine and Hawaiian greenery along the way. A quick check showed we had landed with five hours fuel remaining after a 14-hour, 31-minute flight. We had burned less than two quarts of oil in each engine.

After takeoff at Hilo we turned left, following the shoreline toward Upolu Point. Mauna Loa showed herself briefly before retiring into the clouds which almost always cap the island of Hawaii. Crossing the Alenuihaha Channel, a 90-mile flight, it hardly seemed like over-water flying after the previous night's vigil. Even 71D without her big gas load seemed elated. I rolled her from wingtip to wingtip a few times to express my satisfaction.

Maui then Molokai slipped by our right wing. Before us Diamond Head jutted out from the glistening sea. Honolulu Approach boomed in on 119.7, clearing us for a right approach to Runway 4L. (You have to keep your eyes peeled in this area because of the jet traffic from Barbers Point and the endless succession of commercial jets into Honolulu.)

We received taxi clearance to the Hawaiian Aircraft Sales hangar where we were eager to confront Bob Carter with our presence. Sure enough, Bob uttered some appropriate expletives before pumping our hands in welcome. We sported around Oahu in Bob's little Fiat while 71D had the 55-gallon drum removed from the aft baggage compartment, plugs cleaned and a general inspection.

Tahiti was our next objective, 2,400 miles south. We could have made it non-stop (our all-out range was 3,600



Gunther and Alice Balz arrive at Manila International Airport from Cebu. On hand to greet them was Jess Nievera (left), Beechcraft sales representative. The other two men in the photograph are customs officials

Wellington, New Zealand, coastline as seen from the Twin-Bonanza. A part of the city may be seen in the upper left-hand corner of the photo



The World In A Twin-Bonanza

Gunther Balz tells about N4371D's flight from Honolulu to Taipei, Formosa. He and Alice Balz experience thrills in flight over picturesque highlands of New Guinea

miles), but there were some intriguing islands on the lower part of Chart VR-202, about midway to Tahiti—Palmyra, Fanning and Christmas Island. A stop at one of these would break our Tahiti flight into two 8-hour hops.

Christmas, of atomic testing fame, seemed out of the question, being a strictly military installation. Fanning, we found out, had a small strip but no fuel and no nondirectional beacon (NDB). Palmyra, privately owned by a Hawaiian family, had a leftover Navy strip of 7,000 feet, no fuel and no NDB. A construction crew was working at Palmyra, we learned, on the beginnings of a millionaire's resort. The construction company agreed to let us land there—if we could find it—a cluster of reefs 10 miles across, 1,000 miles south of Hawaii. Nothing to it, we decided. Go at night, use our trusty sextant, arrive at first light and land. It was about this time we first heard of something called the Intertropical Front.

Our Palmyra plan seemed feasible, but we would still need fuel. I checked on Christmas Island as well while investigating the Palmyra radio and airport facilities. The duty dispatcher at Barbers Point gave me the name of Squadron Leader Holden, RAF liaison officer in Honolulu. The British were in charge at Christmas, he said.

Squadron Leader Holden gave us tea while we described our predicament. It sounded like a "good show" to him, and, as a matter of fact, he was going to Christmas the next day, he said, and would see what could be done about fuel and overnight accommodations.

Our plan, then, was to take off at midnight in Honolulu, arrive over Palmyra at dawn, spend the day poking around the reefs (we were warned about poisonous fish), refuel at Christmas and on to Tahiti the next day. Squadron Leader Holden would be back in a day or so and had promised to telephone.

"It's all fixed, old boy," came the call. "When are you going?" he wanted to know. "Tomorrow? Good, I'll send a signal straight away."

We thanked Squadron Leader Holden (Squadron Leader is a real mouthful, but there is no abbreviation) profusely

and got back to our preparations. I had spent the previous three nights on top of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel Annex (the assistant manager was a friend and gave us a special rate for impoverished world travelers) locating stars and practicing star sights. I had no intention of being caught again unable to tell one star from another.

The night of departure we tried to sleep for a few hours, which turned out to be hopeless. At the hangar, in Bob Carter's office, Max Conrad (AOPA 95611) was sound asleep, resting on his way through with an *Aztec*.

I picked up the weather forecast. Good all the way with local thunder showers predicted at Palmyra and Christmas. The Intertropical Front was well south of Christmas. Part of the briefing was a photo taken from the weather satellite Tiros showing strings of broken clouds over a large Pacific region. There had not been any

commercial flights across the route in the last few days so no debriefing information was available.

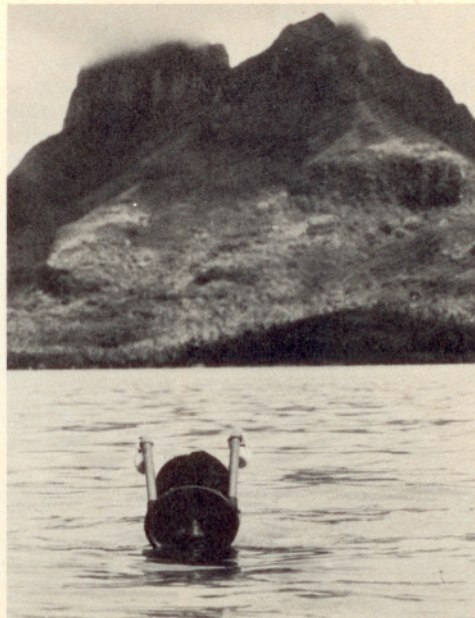
The night before our departure there had been an atomic blast at Johnston Island, but the airways were open again. (In the back of my mind something mumbled a warning about communications being disrupted by these atmospheric blasts.)

The flight service and weather people didn't seem worried about anything, however. Perhaps they didn't realize that a *Twin-Bonanza* has two 295 h.p. Lycomings instead of four 14,000-pound thrust fan jets.

"Cleared to Palmyra Island, via direct. South Honolulu intersection, flight plan route. Maintain 8000."

We acknowledged the clearance, shifted to tower on 118.1 and took off at 0132 local. We were 1,200 pounds over gross with 12 hours of fuel on board. We climbed, banking gently

That strange-looking creature you see in the water is one of our world-travelers, Alice Balz, doing a bit of skin diving at Bora Bora, in the Society Islands



"Captain" Balz flew the mail from Aitutaki (Cook Islands) to Fiji. Here he is delivering the mail pouch to an official at the Suva, Fiji, Airport



left, into the peaceful moonless night. Our eyes adjusted rapidly. The starlight was so bright it glistened on the easy swells of the ocean below.

We reported South Honolulu intersection and took up a magnetic heading of 192°. Using my old hotel-top friends Rigel, Canopus and Sirius, I took a star fix which checked when DR'd to our last VOR position. 8845.5 would be our control frequency on HF, but we were too close in to use it. We relayed our first and second position reports on 131.9 via Nandi-bound Pan Am Clipper Flight 811.

After an hour and a half we were flying in and out of the tops at 8,000. Nothing to worry about, but unexpected. We were unable to raise Honolulu or any one else for our next position report. Briefly we heard Bombay and then nothing but static. We were flying through light to moderate rain by then, continuously in the clouds. Nothing serious, I thought. Local disturbance. Alice was getting nervous. The staccato of the rain increased. I was so busy flying that I forgot about position reports even though our last contact had been one-an-a-half hours before. The turbulence gave us some concern because of the cabin fuel—we thought we smelled gas.

"What's that?"

I looked up from the instruments. The airplane appeared to be on fire. Green glowed off every rivet. The propeller arcs were pinwheels of eerie flame.

"St. Elmo's fire," I said, my voice a mixture of raw fear and curiosity.

We banged along for another 10 minutes. Lightning flashes detonated ahead. I put the plane in a left bank flying with both hands to keep control.

"We're going back," I said. Alice's teeth chattered a reply.

After 45 minutes on a reverse course we could see the stars occasionally. I DR'd our last known position and tried the HF. No contact. I tried "any station" on 121.5. No contact. It was

getting light in the east. We looked at the back-lighted towering Cu's behind us. The Intertropical Front had moved north.

Ninety minutes out we got Honolulu on 121.5 and reported our position. We received a new clearance, and after 7½ hours, we touched down at Honolulu on 4R, glad to be alive and not the least bit sheepish about the log book entry—N4371D, 7½ hours local.

Past Palmyra, South Pacific flying settled down to an easy-going routine of 8,000 feet on-top cruising.

Nov. 1: Honolulu to Christmas Island. The American base commander vacates his quarters for us. Alice, fifth white woman to set foot on Christmas Island, is thrilled to be guarded by MP's. I am thrilled to get aviation gas for 16½¢ per gallon.

Nov. 2: Christmas to Tahiti. We think Tahiti is enchanting beyond belief until we fly north 150 miles to Bora Bora. This is paradise.

Nov. 14: Bora Bora to Rarotonga. The French *douaniers* in Bora Bora allow us to clear customs direct to Rarotonga, saving us the trouble of returning to Papeete. Rarotonga not spectacular but interesting (administered by New Zealand). We wait two days for cabled permission from Auckland officials to buy gas from local emergency stock pumped from drums (how old?) at 60¢ per gallon.

Nov. 17: En route to Aitutaki, an atoll 200 miles north of Rarotonga. We quickly test gas—no sputtering. We spend delightful evening hunting odd snails by torch light in reefs around Aitutaki. No hotel. Radio station operator and family put us up at their home. We are persuaded to fly the air mail to Fiji.

Nov. 18: Aitutaki to Pago Pago. Not as romantic as it sounds. Too "Americanized."

Nov. 20: Pago to Apia, western Samoa. This newly (1962) independent island nation introduces us to eating palolo—worms to you, friend.

Nov. 25: We cross International Dateline. "Captain" Balz turns over sack of Aitutaki airmail to Her Majesty's duly authorized representative in Suva, Fiji. We are introduced to Kava, a local drink tasting like Fels Naptha soap.

Dec. 3 to 7: We are buffeted for three hours in a front containing occasionally severe turbulence and heavy rain enroute from Nandi to New Caledonia. We visit Ile des Pins (the most beautiful island in the world) and Norfolk, administered by Australia. We land in New Zealand at Whenuapai, Maori name for Auckland Airport.

Auckland was a welcome breath of civilization after our Pacific odyssey. We caught up on news, replaced worn-out clothing, appeared on television and lolled around in general before flying off to visit Mr. and Mrs. Bill Mudford at their farm in Paeroa. Bill had written to "the pilot of the American *Twin-Bonanza*" in care of Auckland tower inviting us to visit. We telephoned to learn he had a 1,500-foot grass strip, an ancient de Havilland *Moth Minor* and a keen interest in aviation. N4371D's fancy radios were no help finding Bill's pasture 100 miles southeast of Auckland.

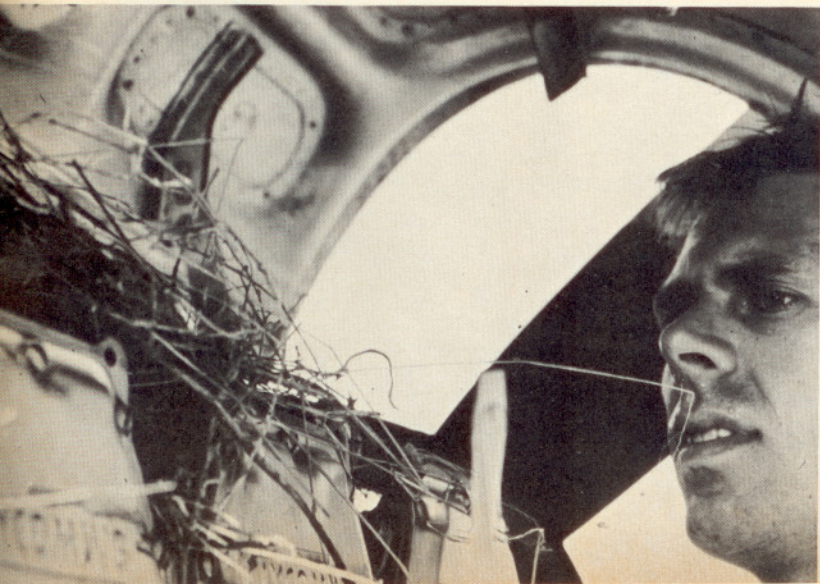
I assured Alice that a normally loaded *Twin-Bonanza* could easily get into a 1,500-foot strip, which turned out to be true. Bill might have told us that cows had been freshly pastured on the strip, however. The airplane was a mess.

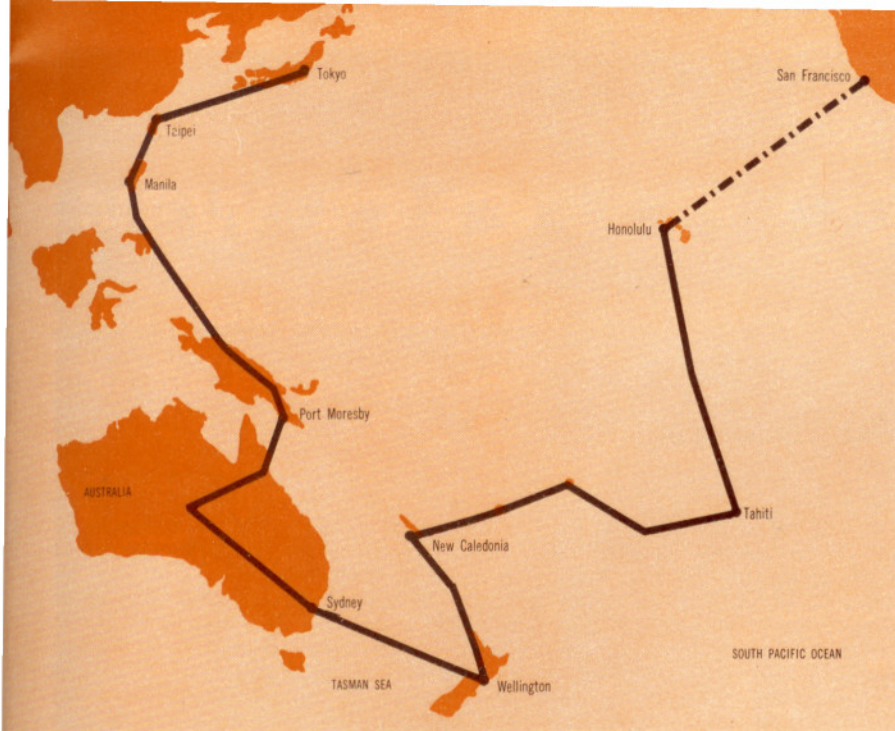
For lunch Mrs. Mudford fixed us a special shell fish soup called Taheroa. We chatted, met friends and received instruction on how to find Lake Taupo where Bill's son was expecting us to land to show off 71D and say hello. Bill assured me that no cows were allowed on the strip there, so we set off.

New Zealand scenery is a gorgeous combination of green valleys, snow-capped peaks and sandy beaches. We took all this in, finally spotting the

A persistent Bora Bora seagull that insisted upon building nests on Lycoming engines seems to be trying the patience of Author Balz. Wrecking the nest didn't appear to discourage the gull. This is the second nest to appear on the engine during one week

The *Twin-Bonanza* is serviced at Lae, New Guinea. Touring out of Lae on a Trans-Australia Airlines' DC-3, the two around-the-world flyers experienced some of the most thrilling flying of their entire trip. The flight was over highland country, where 9,000-foot ridges were common





Heavy line shows the route covered by Balz on this portion of the trip

steaming hot springs which feed Lake Taupo, habitat of the world's largest and fightingest trout. After a whirlwind stopover with Mr. Mudford, Jr., and his friends, we headed south to Wellington, lovely capital of New Zealand.

Joeko Lorenz, manager of de Havilland's of New Zealand, and his friends graciously wined and dined us, making our Wellington stay memorable. A good many of the de Havilland group throughout the world are former Battle-of-Britain pilots and can really spellbind you with flying lore, particularly when primed with a few whiskeys. N4371D received a well-earned, 100-hour inspection at de Havilland, which turned out routine. On Dec. 12

we bade farewell to our friends (and Blossom, the 6,000 pound sea lion which napped daily on the Wellington public beach).

We overnighted at Auckland before stopping at Norfolk Island once again to pick up extra fuel for the hop across the Tasman Sea to Sydney, Australia.

The radio operator at Norfolk Island took my flight plan and lethargically showed me the jumble of code groups which I had learned to recognize as a weather forecast. This one said cold front across path, 10-knot headwinds, Sydney terminal OK.

Leaving Norfolk's 6,000-foot grass strip behind at 0135Z, we climbed through a 300-foot broken-cloud deck. We estimated six hours enroute to Sydney. Nandi radio was loud and clear on 8845.5. An hour out we crossed the cold front, a narrow played-out series of thunderstorms. After frontal transit, we applied a course correction and tuned in Lord Howe Island on the ADF. I didn't pay too much attention to our first sunline which showed us only doing 110 knots. We were trueing out 157. The next LOP showed a ground speed of 102. Lord Howe Island, an airportless rock, halfway to Sydney, confirmed our fears by appearing hull down on the horizon 45 minutes behind schedule. We descended to 1,500 feet from flight level 80 to observe the white caps. The direction and degree of spray looked like a headwind of 15 knots. We stayed low, sacrificing true airspeed for known winds. Sure enough, our next speed check figured at 140 knots. Eventually, we rolled into Sydney one and a half hours late, still with two hours fuel on board. We dashed through customs, immigration and newspaper reporters. It was

rapidly growing dark, and Bankstown, the airport with private facilities near Sydney, would close at dark. We just made it, and while taxiing up to the de Havilland hangar at Bankstown, we had a vague premonition that red tape was about to rear its ugly head.

A friend we had met in Bora Bora showed us a good time, including sailing in Sydney Harbour. I had lunch with Australia's de Havilland boss, Rollo Kingsford-Smith, nephew of the first trans-Pacific pilot, Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith.

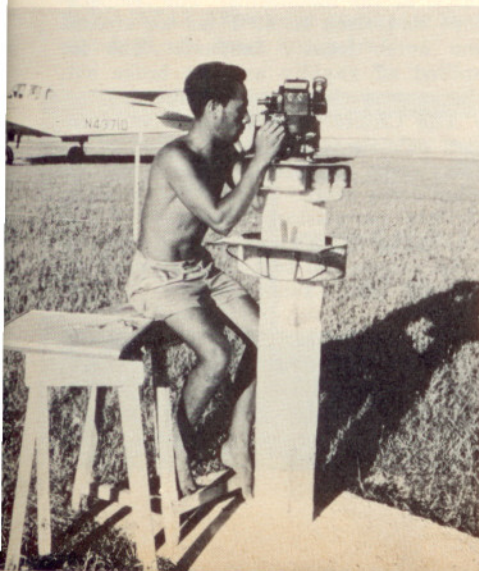
We were due in Melbourne Dec. 18, so we showed up at Bankstown after lunch that day figuring an easy 2½ hour flight. I taxied from de Havilland's over to the tower to check the weather and to file my VFR flight plan. The weather briefing consisted of listening to an endless series of numerals on the telephone, most of which were air temperatures at different elevations up to and including 30,000 feet. Eventually I gathered that Melbourne was VFR and predicted to stay that way. Fine. I started to fill out the flight plan (no two airports in the world seem to use the same form) and the flight service man asked casually if I was familiar with the VFR departure procedures for Bankstown. Lord help me, I said, no, and for 45 minutes I made notes and sketches on the most wildly complicated three-dimensional procedure I have ever encountered. Highly irritated, I thanked the man, realizing instantly that I was trapped when he inquired if I was familiar with the VFR entry procedure at Morabin airport in Melbourne. More sketches and irritation. At 1610 local we took off. I was a nervous wreck in my highly overbriefed condition.

About 75 miles out of Sydney we saw stretched before us the wall of towering cumulus with black boiling bottoms known as a squall line. I knew the temperature at 30,000 feet from my weather briefing, but the weather chap had forgotten to mention the squall line (or perhaps during our lengthy departure briefing, it had had time to generate). We sniffed tentatively for a hole, got well knocked around and turned back. I did not know whether or not I could preserve sanity and temper through another departure briefing. Alice suggested returning to the main Sydney airport, which we did.

After dinner that night we had a glorious view from our hotel room of the squall line fireworks. The storm swept through Sydney leaving severe damage in its wake. (We saved the newspaper clipping to verify this tale.)

Next morning, secure in the knowledge of the simplicity of IFR procedures, I filed our flight plan at Kingsford-Smith. The man asked how many instrument-rated pilots would be on board. I said "one" before realizing the inevitable. IFR take-off minimums for twin-engine single-pilot flights were 1,500 feet and three miles. In stark disbelief I asked him to show me this in writing. He could not find it. A consultation took place between a num-

Winds aloft are being measured at the Aitutaki Airport. The Balz Twin-Bonanza, N4371D, may be seen in the background





N4371D is given an assist by airport attendants prior to takeoff at Aitutaki

ber of DCA men (Australian equivalent of the FAA). I was asked if we had an autopilot to which I said yes. Then, the requirements would be 600 feet and three miles (actual conditions were 700 feet and three miles). Fine, I said, and completed my flight plan. The phone rang and I was informed, regretfully, that actual regulation was 600 feet over the highest obstacle within a three-mile radius (in this case a 380 foot tower) and three miles visibility. At 1600 that afternoon when the ceiling lifted to 1,000 feet, we were given clearance to leave. We broke out on top at 1,500 feet and used the VAR system of navigation on a scenic ride to Melbourne, where we were greeted by extremely pleasant people. That evening was spent drowning our frustrations in beer at the Light Car Club as guests of Bill Prouse and Terry Brain. We soon learned that Australian flyers are as pleasant and unique a group of individuals as Australian DCA officials are unbending.

This belief was furthered after we flew over the Australian interior to Alice Springs, there meeting Damion and Ann Miller. Damion had many stories to tell of rugged flying in the "outback" and in New Guinea during WW II.

After many tiresome battles with Australian government officials, we finally cleared Cairns on the northeastern coast of Australia for a double cold front crossing to Port Moresby, New Guinea. Tas Dalton of de Havilland had given us letters of introduction to numerous Trans-Australia Airlines people who treated us like royalty. Capt. Lionel Thrift of TAA, Port Moresby, told us about the fascinating New Guinea highlands and sent us off to Jeff Jones, Lae operations manager for TAA. The flight across the murk-covered New Guinea mountains to Lae was done at 14,500. We were in and out of clouds, trying to recognize something on the ground. We were fumbling along when we saw a DC-6B below us going in the opposite direction. We couldn't recognize a thing on the ground and were really getting a little bit edgy when we finally picked up Lae on the ADF.

TAA took care of us upon landing, and Jeff Jones fixed us up with com-

plimentary tickets on company DC-3's into Mt. Hagen in the interior. This turned out to be some of the most thrilling flying of the entire trip. I was allowed in the cockpit as we sailed over 9,000-foot ridges with 100-foot clearance (not any downdrafts, thank God!). We saw some of the world's most primitive people gawking around the makeshift interior strips (one of these strips sloped up toward a mountain so steeply that I was told full power is applied briefly on landing to keep from backsliding until the aircraft is turned perpendicular to the runway). We never asked if we would have been allowed to fly N4371D into this wild country, and we were just as glad for fear they might have said yes.

Reluctantly, on Jan. 8 we left the fabulous contrasts of highland New Guinea and proceeded up the coast to a fuel stop at Hollandia, and then on to Biak, the famous World War II airbase. The Indonesians were in the process of taking over from the Dutch and a very uneasy atmosphere prevailed.

An officious pipsqueak soaked us \$20 for cargo and passenger handling after I passed him signed manifests stating no passengers, no cargo. The nearby guard sporting a tommy gun gave me a persuasive glance, however.

A group of American Air Force pilots supporting the UN mission in Biak with DC-3's gave us some charts to get us to the Philippines. They called themselves TITS (Tropical Inter-island Transports).

After a 7½-hour, no-radio contact flight to Cebu (on an IFR flight plan), we finally raised a drowsy sounding fellow on Cebu tower frequency and made an ADF approach, breaking out over Maktan Island (where Magellan was killed in 1521). Although the FAA International Flight Manual lists Cebu as a port of entry, we turned out to be the first international private flight ever to have landed there. After an hour or so talking to an American contractor, Paul Kiener, a *Navion*

pilot, two puzzled-looking customs agents arrived from the Cebu Port Authority. I answered some questions about our gross tonnage and intended ports of call on the voyage, and signed the papers as ship's master. They informed me that 71D was in quarantine and thereupon pasted a bonding seal over the baggage compartment door.

The flight to Manila was a bumpy IFR affair although we were informed that the weather was generally quite good. Mike Campos, Beech dealer in Manila, met us at the airport and painted such a glowing picture of the Philippines that we resolved to spend a week there on our way back from Tokyo where I was already late for an appointment. We were nearly shaken down for \$10 by the Manila customs agents, but Mike intercepted and took care of them. Then, next day, Jan. 11, we took off for Taipei, Formosa, about 1030 local time. We climbed on top at 9,000 feet, minimum instrument altitude for this mountainous area. We went on solid instruments over the Bashi Channel. The outside air temperature was 38°F. No ice yet. Also no contact on the radio (by then we never expected to talk to anybody on the radio). We kept our eyes peeled for anti-aircraft fire as we flew up the west coast of Formosa. For a brief period, we were VFR on top and noticed two F-86's with the markings of Nationalist China shadowing us at a respectful distance. Back into the soup. I finally raised Taipei approach and got a descent clearance. Temperature 34°F. No ice. We were cleared to 5,000 feet. I looked at the Jeppesen ILS approach plate for Taipei and noticed that the airport was surrounded on three sides by mountains. Passing through 7,000 feet, the ice hit. The temperature had dropped to 30°F and clear ice was forming rapidly on the windshield and leading edges. I double checked for pitot and fuel vent heat as well as prop alcohol. The HF antenna was whipping so badly I thought the rudder would come off. The standby ADF antenna on the nose was lashing back and forth making a disconcerting noise as it hit the fuselage.

"Navy 71D, you cleared now for ILS approach. Over."

"November 4371D. Roger."

We made a tight procedure turn because of the mountains. The temperature had risen to 40°F as we crossed the outer locator inbound. The ice spilled off rapidly and we broke out, the runway clearly visible ahead.

The Chinese customs and immigration officials were friendly enough but completely perplexed as to what we were doing there. We showed them our written permission to land at Taipei and after signing a few documents were ushered off to a taxi. It was cold. We had finally found winter. ●

Next month, Gunther Balz will conclude his series of articles on the flight he and his wife Alice made around the world. The final installment will cover N4371D's flight from Taipei, Formosa, to Kalamazoo, Mich., including stopovers in the Middle East, Africa and Europe.