
Around The World

In A Twin-Bonanza

PART 3

Formosa was cold; Japan would be colder. Winter: the season when a pilot's thoughts turn to icing and cold water survival.

On Jan. 12 we showed up at Taipei Airport ready for the 1,500-mile flight to Tokyo. T. C. Whoo, Taipei operator of an air transport company, was our guardian angel through local red tape. The weather forecasting service at Taipei was the best since leaving the USA (not surprising, since it was run by the military under U.S. guidance). The forecast: two cold fronts en route, freezing rain with freezing level 3,500 feet descending to the surface. No thank you.

We spent another day sightseeing in Taipei, biting our fingernails and madly sending wires to our Japanese friends to explain our delay. Jan. 14 at 0730 we drove to the airport in light rain. Locally it was 2,200 overcast with icing to 9,000. T. C. Whoo had cancelled two of his DC-3 flights. At 0930, no improvement. To every private pilot there comes a time to tie down the machine and proceed by airline. CAT flew us that evening to Tokyo on a *Convair 880*. We stayed in Japan until Feb. 2. Our visit was interesting and enjoyable, but traveling like normal tourists lacked the sparkle provided by 71D.

After a Hong Kong visit, we arrived back in Taipei on Feb. 6, hardly able to contain ourselves so delighted were we to be back to our own ship. T. C. Whoo charged us \$84 for watching our airplane, and the officials hit us for a \$20 weather and communication charge.

The flight to Manila was uneventful excepting loss of communications for three hours, which was particularly irritating after just having paid \$20 for communications. Mike Campos and Leland Archer made our Philippine visit fascinating. While his mechanics worked on 4371D, Mike let us fly his *Musketeer*, *Debonair* and *Baron*. We visited the copper mine at Lepanto, the country club at Baguio and flew 500 miles each way to have lunch at the Boelsterli plantation, Mangal, on Basilan Island which is one of the extreme southern islands of the 7,000-island Philippine group.

The Boelsterlis, Swiss immigrants to the Philippines, nonchalantly told us about repelling the last pirate attack

and other problems of back-country life. They have a Model P *Bonanza* and a narrow grass strip (the wing tips of the *Baron* seemed to clear the trees on either side by about two feet).

Amusingly enough, our old friends, the Manila customs officials, kept trying to make appointments to come to our hotel room to "discuss certain over-time charges." Mike ran interference for us again, however, and we escaped unscathed. All too soon departure time arrived. As a final gesture of friendship, the Philippine Airman's Organization made us honorary members. Mike would not let us pay for the 100-hour inspection on our *Twin-Bonanza*.

Our route of flight took us south to Borneo, Brunei and Singapore. All of this was pretty routine except for the revolution in progress in Brunei. There was an interesting assortment of British military hardware lined up at the Brunei airport and a number of tough looking paratroops were shuttling back and forth into the interior in *Beavers* and *Twin Pioneers*.

We received a rather indifferent reception from the Royal Aero Club at Singapore Airport although they did manage to find us a room for the night (no small task at the time with 6,000 doctors in town to discuss over-popula-

tion and birth control). The next morning we said nuts to it and shoved off for Bangkok, 1,000 miles north, hoping that Thailand would not be sticky about visas. They were not, and we had a delightful time for five days in that truly enchanting country, including getting a Buddhist priest to bless 4371D. When we were ready to leave, a small man with a permanent smile asked me for a \$100 communication fee (it was the same for *Super Cubs* and 707's, he explained). I refused to pay. He called his boss who politely reduced the fee to \$20 which I paid, figuring I was ahead of the game.

Flying across Thailand, Burma and on to Calcutta you don't see much from the air. This was field-burning time and the haze layer went up to 10,000 feet. We tried to get permission to fly into the interior of Burma to Mandalay and Lashio, but no soap. Revolution was brewing and John Everton, the American Ambassador, advised us to forget it. So did U Tin Thein, assistant DCA chief.

The approach to Dum Dum airport in Calcutta was routine enough but involved some abrupt maneuvering to avoid the hundred of vultures spiraling about the vicinity.

Indians are both friendly and tedious in their attitude toward private flying. You have to clear customs and immigration in every city. We visited Benares and then New Delhi. We tried to get permission to fly to Agra but were refused on the grounds that it would breach national security, so we

Gunther and Alice Balz complete the last leg of their 'dream' flight around the world. N4371D carries them from Taipei around Africa and through Europe and back to Kalamazoo, Mich.

by GUNTHER BALZ • AOPA 153788



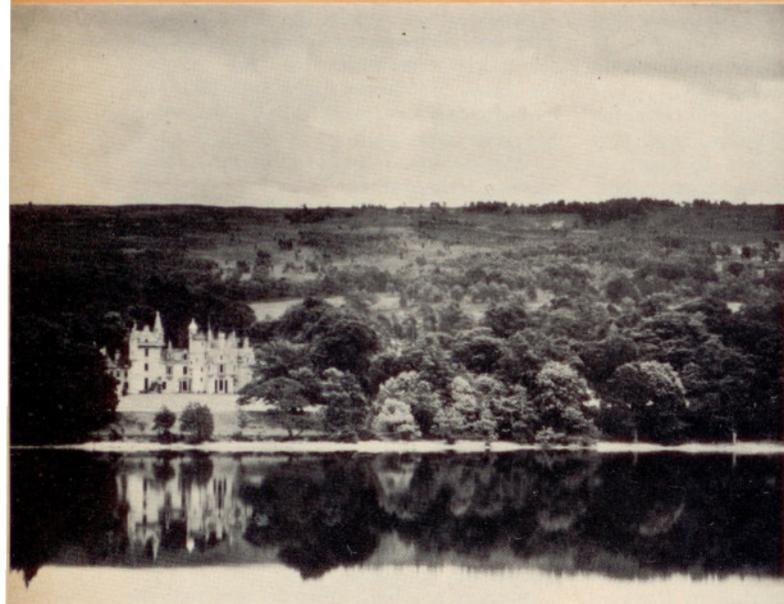
Gunther has his picture taken (by Alice) with royalty in Abomey, in Dahomey



N4371D had a 100-hour check at Neuchatel, Switzerland. Here, the Balz plane is shown flying over the Swiss city. Gunther speaks highly of the service received at Transair in that city

This Scottish landscape was photographed from N4371D as the plane prepared to start its transatlantic flight to Keflavik, Iceland, and then on to Kalamazoo

Gunther and Alice dine in Tokyo. They flew commercial to Japan from Taipei because of bad weather, just like any other tourists



boycotted the Taj Mahal. We were also refused permission to fly north to Kashmir because of the Chinese war. Oh well! By this time we had initiated efforts to get clearance through the Persian Gulf area, having heard hairy tales about the trigger-happy shieks. On one such visit to the Government Office in New Delhi we got a close look at Mr. Nehru.

Bombay provided the lengthiest red tape of the trip and local private pilots there deserve some sort of international award for perseverance in the face of hopeless odds. The Indian mind enjoys form and detail to the point where the examination and stamping of routine documents, such as general declarations, take on a new and personal dimension.

On March 7 we arrived at the Indamer hangar (Bombay Beech dealer) at

0730. I checked the plane over and found they had welded a cracked exhaust stack, changed the oil without pulling the screens and had failed to clean the air filters. OK, so what do you expect for \$50?

0745—Get met briefing and file complete flight plan for Santa Cruz International Airport, two minutes flying time away.

0830—Off Juhu Airport, Bombay.

0835—Land Santa Cruz Airport, Bombay.

0845—Get meteorological briefing and file flight plan for Karachi, Pakistan, our destination.

0900-1000—We go from office to office (five in all) to find right man to give customs clearance. We go to plane with official to view cameras and spare parts. Official expresses desire for ride.

1005—Fill out five general decs.

1010—Receive lecture on why we should have cleared customs at Juhu which has no customs.

1015—We fill out forms for health officer.

1020—We fill out forms for immigration officer.

1035—We take off, glad in the knowledge that they have forgotten to ask for our currency declaration forms.

Karachi airport was unexpectedly modern, efficient and red-tape free. We scrounged the latest edition of the Air Almanac from Pakistan Airlines and verified our clearance for landing at Sharja. Alice was half frightened to death at the KLM rest house by a menacing Pakistani brandishing a small steel instrument. All he wanted to do, as it turned out, was remove corns for a slight fee.

We were off Karachi at 0800 local

time on March 8 for a real grind to Bahrain Island with a fuel stop at Sharja, Oman. Shortly after takeoff the forward visibility reduced to one mile at flight level 85. We were bucking a 40-knot headwind and would be all day. As we headed out over the Gulf of Oman, our sun lines showed a ground speed of 109 knots. After six hours, turbulence signalled our approach to the unseen 7,000-foot mountains of Oman. We were in contact with a reassuringly crisp British approach controller at Sharja as we crossed the mountains (at 10,000 feet for insurance), who informed us local conditions were sky obscured, visibility one-half mile and blowing sand. A military *Dove* was making an approach as we started our letdown. He radioed back that field was in sight, visibility two miles. Not knowing what to expect, we continued through the thick yellow haze, fairly certain our gas would get us to Bahrain in a pinch. The visibility was at least 10 miles when we touched down at that bleak RAF outpost.

We refueled with what seemed equal parts of sand and gas, so filled with swirling dust and sand was the air. We felt rather sorry for the tower personnel as we taxied out on departure. They seemed overjoyed to see a new face.

After much the same conditions going into Bahrain Island, we learned the strong westerlies and blowing sand constitute a *schamal*. They occur four or five times a year and last about four days.

I almost got in a fist fight with an Arab taxi driver in Bahrain, saved only by the BOAC Speedbird House manager who summarily applied his foot to the man's behind. Neither Alice nor I ever really became accustomed to this Arab approach to business during our travels through Asia Minor and North Africa.

The large polyethylene bags which we had used throughout the Pacific to keep our charts and books from mildewing, served in Bahrain as engine covers to keep out the sand. Masking tape held them in place. As a precaution, I cleaned the filters and changed the oil every 8 to 10 hours throughout the desert flying.

March 9—Bahrain Island to Baghdad. We enjoy sightseeing at Babylon but cannot get accustomed to mixture of poverty and machine guns in this revolutionary area. No particular red tape or flying problems. Desert flying is like water flying—it's better not to look down.

March 13—Baghdad to Damascus. We try to sneak across Syria which was undergoing a revolution. Our bluff about having verbal permission doesn't work and Damascus radio commands us to land. Alice can see anti-aircraft guns and jet fighters below. The snow-topped mountains of Lebanon and safety loom ahead.

We look at the guns 8,000 feet below. "N4371D, I repeat—you have no overflight permission. Land immediately."

"71D, roger. Commencing descent."

We land and are tracked by the turret-mounted guns of tanks parked alongside the runway as we complete our landing roll. We are cleared immediately and given permission to take a taxi into Damascus to check for mail, after which we proceed unmolested to Beirut.

March 18—Civilized European ways of Lebanon revive us and we fly to Alexandria, Egypt. Entire trip from Alexandria to Cairo to Luxor to Khartoum is easy desert flying, the monotony broken by the Nile snaking back and forth across our track (you are required to stay on the airways). Outside air temperature at 10,000 feet is 90°F and engine temperatures are barely in the green.

March 24 and 25—We cross Sudan, a desert wasteland sparsely populated with mud-hut villages. Khartoum charges us a \$25 landing fee. Juba, a dirt strip in the extreme south of the Sudan charges us \$36 for use of navigational facilities. Suggest you overfly Sudan.

March 26—We hit green Africa at Entebbe, Uganda, on the shores of Lake Victoria.

The psychological transition from the barren expanses of sand in Egypt and Sudan to the green rolling highlands of Central Africa is like feeling spring in the air. Central and South Africa are endowed with some of the most beautiful country in the world—vast plains, snow-capped mountains, countless animals, friendly people (the political situation and race issue have been grossly exaggerated, it seemed to us) and plenty of facilities for private flying.

We flew out to the east coast at Zan-zibar and then down to Beira, Mozambique; from there, inland to Johannesburg. At Beira an over-enthusiastic gas attendant put two gallons of gas in our prop alcohol tank when I wasn't watching.

In Mozambique, the NDB's were all 327 kcs, but this wasn't as confusing as it sounds since none of them was turned on.

In Johannesburg, Wing Commander Wally Sterne took care of us. Wally is the Beech dealer for Africa and had the formidable advance billing of being the oldest *Spitfire* pilot during the Battle of Britain. He lived up to his reputation, and we enjoyed a tremendously rewarding sojourn in the Union of South Africa. Wally took us to visit friends, the David Mostarts, who have a private game preserve adjacent to Kruger National Park. In the private preserve we were able to get out of the car and examine the game at eye level, something verboten in public game parks.

Many adventures later, we proceeded up the west coast of Africa, bucking constant tropical rain showers. In Luanda, Angola, both generators went up in smoke during our pretakeoff run up. Luanda, lucky for us, had a extensive overhaul facility maintained by Director dos Transportas Aeria, a Portuguese feeder airline. We got both

Balz Around-The-World Statistics

Time: Oct. 17, 1962, to July 1, 1963.
Naut. miles flown in N4371D: 48,000.
Naut. miles flown in other aircraft: 6,500.
Naut. miles traveled on ground (estimated): 10,000.
Total flying hours in N4371D: 320.
Average ground speed: 150 knots; average TAS: 157 knots.
Longest trip (2,100 n.m.): 14 hours, 31 minutes.
Shortest trip (1 n.m.): 2 minutes.
Average trip: 4 hours.
Number of countries visited: 58.
Takeoffs: 125.
Average fuel consumption: 31 gal./hr.
Average fuel cost: 40¢/gal.
Night flying: 20 hours.
Instrument flying: 44 hours.
Cost, exclusive of airplane depreciation: \$25,875.
Maintenance (included in above): \$5,645.
Type aircraft: D-50, Serial DH-131.
Radios: ARC-210, Collins 17L8A, Dual ARC 15D, ARC 21A, Motorola T12B, Sunair 22R HF, ARC CD-1, Lear L-2C, Dare GS.
Average landing fee: \$1 (approximately ½ of airports had no landing fees).
Highest landing fee: \$36.

generators rebuilt and installed in two days, strictly by sign language, at approximately one-third the price for a similar job in the U.S.

Our route took us to the Portuguese Island of São Tomé (hotel room \$1.25; customs fee, \$16.50), where we hit two large birds on takeoff, just as the gear was coming up. Two imposing leading-edge dents accompanied us to Switzerland where we had them removed.

Easy flying and interesting sights were the order of the day all the way up the west coast of Africa to Rabat, Morocco, with a few days' detour to Las Palmas in the Canaries.

The morning of May 4 we flew from Rabat to Seville, Spain, mostly on instruments. We got a glimpse of the Straits of Gibraltar and suddenly realized that we had made Europe! (A little sadly, too, because the end was in sight.)

The biggest change from the flying of the previous months in Asia and Africa was that the Europeans maintained radio contact and acted interested in our whereabouts. The red tape increased, too. On the entire trip thus far only the customs man at Abidjan, Ivory Coast, had asked to see our FAI carnet. Now, in Europe, it became part of the paper work ritual.

There is no better way to experience spring in Europe than by private plane. 71D touched down at Granada, Madrid and Barcelona before heading out for a week's stay on Corsica. Spanish air traffic control procedures are similar to those in the United States, and it is just as well to file IFR if planning to go into big airports, since local VFR procedures are complex.

Corsica is a Mediterranean jewel. We rented a tiny *deux chevaux* Citroen

and drove around the island using our Guide Michelin to select hotels and restaurants. In St. Florent, a picturesque fishing village at the foot of Cap Corse, we stayed at an inn which was owned and run by a French electrical engineer who was, of course, a pilot. We swapped tales for most of an evening.

Milan, Italy, was next. We landed at Linate airport which is close to the city. The main airport is way out in the sticks. Red tape ran heavy at Linate, and although very polite, the Italian customs and immigration people almost wore us out running back and forth across the airport. Fortunately, friends had met us and assisted with language difficulties.

We left Milan with Stuttgart, Germany, as destination. The met forecast indicated thunderstorms in the Alps with icing to 20,000 feet. On good days, you can cross the Alps through the passes at 12,000. (I noticed all the local executive aircraft had deicing boots and were super-charged.) After a close look at the weather chart, it looked passable to go south around the Maritime Alps and then proceed north to Germany. We filed a VFR flight plan because of local thunderstorms. We figured our chances would be better to pick our way around them rather than by boring through them.

Twisting and turning, up and down, we got abeam Nice, 1½ hours after a radio argument with Milan departure control. We had not followed the local VFR departure pattern which nobody had bothered to tell us about. (Customs, immigration, local VFR regulations and general red tape make European private and business flying an occupation for only the most stalwart.)

Abeam Nice, we attempted to cut north but faced a wall of towering cumulus. We climbed to 16,000 but still couldn't get through the valleys between the thunderheads. Back to

Nice. We stayed there overnight and enjoyed a good bottle of wine and a bouillabaisse.

The next day we had a beautiful flight across the Maritimes at 12,500. We took a good look at Mt. Blanc and flew on into Germany.

After Stuttgart we took 71D to Neuchatel, Switzerland, for a 100-hour check at Transair, the Swiss Beech dealer. They very kindly worked us into their tight schedule at the request of Mr. Prosperpina, Beech agent in Milan. To watch this group of watchmakers work on an airplane is a sight to behold. The Transair mechanics under the direction of Adolphe Hohl, practically rebuilt our airplane. I instructed them to fix anything even remotely suspicious since we still had the Atlantic to cross.

Alice and I jetted off to Paris to see friends and spend a few days at the Paris Air Show, an affair totally eclipsing anything in this country for aviation interest. We were the grateful guests of Lycoming and the French aviation manufacturer, Henry Potez. We were reunited with our friend from Johannesburg, Wally Sterne, and appropriately celebrated the occasion several times.

Upon our return to Neuchatel to pick up 71D, one sour note was struck. I looked over the shop work sheets and noticed the compression was extremely low on one cylinder. I consulted with Mr. Hohl who agreed that with ocean flying ahead it might be better to check further. Three days later the exhaust valve and seat were reground and the cylinder reinstalled. Off we went on a turbulent instrument flight to Amsterdam, where we made the one really low approach of the trip—300 feet and three-quarters mile visibility. It was a rather sloppy ILS approach, too, since radar did not tell me to take over and complete the approach, something I am accustomed to hearing in the United

States. We didn't overshoot the localizer too far before getting this clarified, however.

The flight to Gatwick, London (we were not allowed to file for Heathrow—too much traffic was the excuse), was IFR all the way and we got a little rime ice at 6,000. As you may have gathered, the weather throughout Europe after Spain was rotten.

London was a 45-minute taxi ride from Gatwick. We spent a stimulating week staying at the Royal Aero Club with guest privileges, thanks to Wally Sterne.

On June 22 more instrument work and ice on the way to Prestwick, Scotland. (English air traffic control was impeccable, partly because there was hardly any traffic.) We had decided on the North Atlantic crossing because we thought it would more interesting than the grind from the Azores to Gander. This decision was, all things considered, a mistake. North Atlantic weather, even in summer, is unpredictable. Icing conditions and low-water temperatures prevail so that survival at sea would be doubtful even if a successful ditching were accomplished.

The minimum en route altitude across Greenland ice cap to Sonderstrom Airbase is 14,000; so Keflavik to Goose Bay or Gander is the best route for a nonsupercharged aircraft.

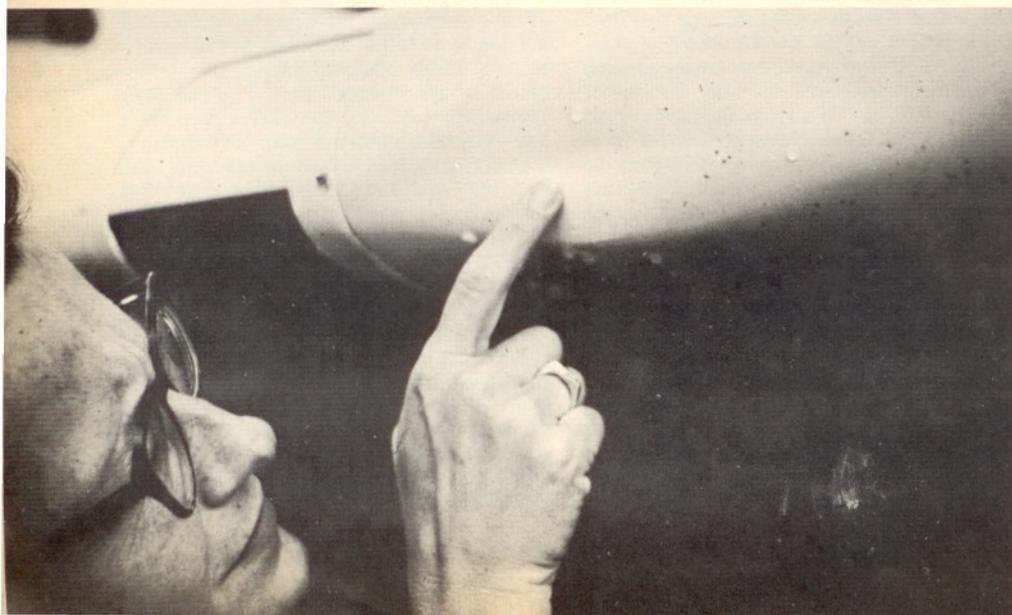
We made Keflavik, Iceland, without difficulty and spent a few days roaming around this dreary volcanic island where in summer it never gets dark. The night before our planned takeoff, the Keflavik Fishing Club had an outing at the airport hotel which did no permanent damage to the hotel but did prevent us from getting a minute's sleep.

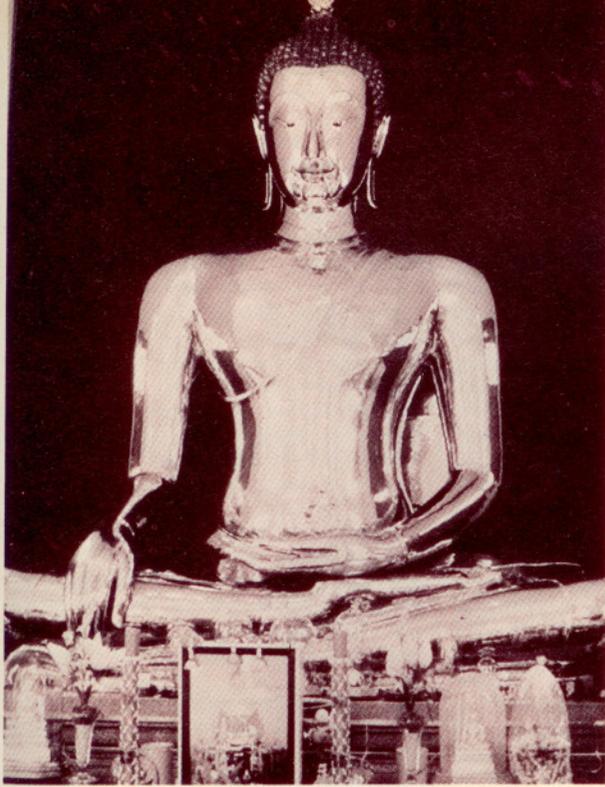
The next morning, June 29, the weather forecaster said we would have a negative component and intermittent icing in two cold fronts at 8,000. This was about the best we could hope for on this route for the next week. Alice and I were determined to die rather than spend another night in Iceland.

We took off at 0944Z with 430 gallons of gas. It was overcast, ceiling 800 feet and raining. We broke out on top at 3,000 feet, air temperature 40°F. A slow climb to flight level 80 kept our forward speed up. We reported 100 miles out and shifted to 8913.5 on the HF. About 1100Z we went on instruments, entering the first cold front. Temperature at flight level 80 was 34°F. No ice. Since having the L-2 fixed in Switzerland, it was holding heading and altitude but could not be used for turns. For long range cruising this was enough.

We crossed over Ocean Station Alfa at 1300Z on instruments. Thirty minutes later we broke out between layers and stayed that way for another 45 minutes. Inevitably, the layers merged and we were back in the clouds, temperature 35°F. We passed the southern tip of Greenland on instruments and never got a glimpse of the terrain we had hoped to see by flying the northern route. At 1530Z we broke out on top

Alice Balz points to one of the two leading-edge dents N4371D received when it hit two large birds on takeoff on the Portuguese Island of São Tomé. The dents were removed when the flight reached Switzerland





Gunther and Alice took this shot of a golden religious figure while sightseeing in Bangkok, Thailand. They reported a "delightful time" in that enchanting country



Mt. Blanc, highest and most noted Alpine peak, received proper attention when N4371D passed by. This picture was taken from the plane
Photos by Alice and Gunther Balz

after a few suspenseful moments of rime icing. Outside air temperature—28°F and dropping.

We had trouble picking up Station Ship Bravo but finally made contact on VHF and got a radar fix, 45 miles south of the ship. Before that I hadn't been able to convince anyone with whom we had radio contact that Bravo did not have her NDB on. When we finally passed abeam and had VHF contact, we asked about the NDB. They said it was on. Mysteriously, both of 71D's ADF needles swung around and locked on. Oh well, we had only missed them 48 miles by DR navigation.

By 1830Z we could occasionally see the water and what looked like fishing boats until Alice pointed out that they were icebergs.

An overcast sky ahead had us guessing. I rechecked our weather map. Nothing was shown for the Goose Bay or Gander area. We were unable to raise anyone on HF to check. About the time we spotted the Newfoundland shoreline, the snow started. We let down to stay VFR. I checked the approach plate for Goose Bay. Several 3,000 to 4,000-foot mountains in the vicinity. With no further delay we decided to proceed to our alternate, Gander, which at least had flat, low approaches. Visibility was about two miles in wet snow and rain near Cartwright, Newfoundland.

"Any station, any station, this is N4371D," I called on 121.5.

"N4371D, this is Air France 003," came the most beautiful French accent I've ever heard.

Air France relayed our predicament and revised flight plan to Gander and got us the Goose Bay weather (bad) and the Gander weather (good).

We staggered into Gander 11 hours and 20 minutes out of Keflavik with five hours' fuel remaining.

The next two days we ground out the miles from Gander to Kalamazoo, arriving home around noon on July 1 after 24 hours' flying in three days. The L-2 aileron servo had frozen during our descent over Jackson, Mich., giving us a few sweaty moments. We remedied this by turning the whole autopilot off and wrenching the controls free.

We hadn't told anyone when to expect us so we taxied in at Kalamazoo, simply another routine flight. In the preceding nine months, the fixed-base operator at Kalamazoo had changed so no questions were asked there. A pilot friend was in the waiting room. He gave us a ride home.

The impact of the trip didn't hit until about a month later when we started to look at the 8,000 35mm slides we had taken.

As I sit at my desk these days, occasionally glancing at the world map on the wall, I find myself daydreaming about the possibility of taking N9574Y, our new *Baron*, around South America.

"Would you do it again?" I have been asked hundreds of times since our return.

With a few exceptions, we would enthusiastically revisit every place on our itinerary, and add several hundred more as well. But having done it, the

prospect of hour after hour of over-water flying looms more as work than pleasure. (Alice thinks we should make the next trip in a PBY.)

In the meantime, we lay claim to eight-and-a-half months of travel at its best. This should last a lifetime. ●

The Balz flight was held up at Luanda, Angola, Africa, while generators were repaired. Both generators "went up in smoke" during pretakeoff runup. Here, a repairman is holding one of the disabled armatures

