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FLIGHT THROUGH THE DISTANT PAST - FLEET MODEL 7 AIRCRAFT

Registration number 788 Victor

-continued from last month's issue

Days past quickly after the repair job as I gathered the necessary aerial charts and spare parts for my coming flight to California. One tool that I had to purchase was a grease gun for this old engine did not have oil pressure to the valve rocker boxes. Every twenty five hours it was necessary to pump grease through zerk fittings into the rocker box housings. As the engine heated the result was to fill the propeller slip stream with drops of grease that flew into my goggles and saturated helmet and clothes with the stench of burned oil. (After a few days of flight I would smell like an owl's nest.) I was packed and ready to depart but foul weather intervened to keep me grounded for several more days. During this period of forced idleness the old timers would drive out in the rain to keep me company and provide all sorts of advice. My RAF friend told me to fly high because if I experienced engine failure over the swamps and did not have altitude to glide to dry ground I would never be heard of again. On the other hand the previous owner told me in a conspiratorial voice to "fly low because the old copper fuel lines might work harden and fail. If this should occur you might have one minute to get on the ground before the aircraft would become a flaming torch. I did not own a parachute and this conflicting advice provided me with some sobering thought in the long damp hanger nights. The days passed with a lot of hanger flying that only served to provide thought for more possible problems. Each evening one of the fellows drove me down to a hamburger joint for dinner and then dropped me off back at the airdrome. I would then face another long damp night on the hanger floor to roll and toss in my sleeping bag.

The cause of my forced entrapment was a hurricane that moved slowly up the Atlantic off the Florida coast. In advance of this tropical disturbance there came low clouds out of which poured steady rainfall. After being marooned in the hanger for several days I began to feel more miserable with each succeeding day. I needed a change and decided to put on my old navy clothes and sneak back on to the navy base at Cecil Field. In the barracks my old bunk was still empty so I slept there the first night and ate hot meals in the mess hall during the second day. I enjoyed a visit with my old shipmates and the joy of staying warm and dry. Later on the second day an officer caught me as I walked into the barracks and said that if I wanted free room and board he would accommodate me with a ticket to Leavenworth Military Prison in Kansas. That provided a quick end to my stay at Navy expense and I made a hasty retreat off the airbase to return to my cold hanger lodging. I decided the following morning that it was time to leave regardless of the continuing rain. It is easy to make poor decisions when one is wet and frustrated.

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IV - WET TAKEOFF

Once I make up my mind to leave, the rush of events takes away the uncertainty that plagues me through this windy rainy period. I poured down two cups of hot coffee and ate the remaining stale bear claw. I ran back through the rain to my aircraft to roll up my sleeping bag which is soon stuffed with my loose gear. The forward cockpit provided space for my few articles and then after wrapping these items in the dirty canvas engine cover I secure them with a tight lash of the forward cockpit seat belt. My aerial charts I carefully put into a large plastic envelope with my first leg of proposed flight visible through the top layer of material. The rain continues to rattle on the corrugated tin overhead as I clean my goggles and zip up my navy foul weather jacket. This arrangement will work well except for my denim pants which I know will soon be sopping wet as I fly through the storm. For the last time I check the fuel strainer, fuel and oil quantities, plus their caps for security. This complete I push the biplane over to the edge of the hanger and chock the wheels with some four by four blocks. With the magneto switch in the "OFF" position, I give the fuel primer two shots and then go to the front of the aircraft to pull the propeller through a few revolutions to check for possible hydraulic lock of the lower cylinder and prime the engine. These items complete I return to the cockpit, turn the mag switch to "BOTH" and then move back to the propeller. Fortunately the engine is equipped with impulse magnetos which allow me to pull the prop slowly, until with a snap the magnitos fire their electrical charge into the proper sparkplugs, and the engine catches and comes to life with a cloud of blue smoke that eddies back into the hanger interior. The engine continues to tick over as I pull the four by four blocks free of the wheels and then move rapidly to the rear cockpit as the machine starts to inch forward. Once in the rear cockpit I stop the forward motion with the heel brakes and proceed to fasten my seat belt, and adjust my goggles. Then a last check to make sure that my map packet is jammed tight between the sidewall fabric and a wooden longeron.

I taxi out, "S" turning to give visibility forward to avoid the low areas that are filled with standing water. On the end of the runway I run the engine up to test the individual magneto sparkplug combinations and now the time to leave has arrived. I push the throttle to its forward stop, and the aircraft begins its takeoff roll. The biplane trundles forward gaining speed and I am fully occupied holding my heading as the wheels slosh and swerve in and out of the deep rain puddles on the runway. As the speed builds up I push the stick forward to raise the tail which improves forward visibility. In moments, with a gentle pull back pull on the joy-stick I am airborne. Now my first difficulty arises as the engine comes up to temperature. The antique rocker boxes begin to throw drops of grease back into the engine slipstream and when they impact with the rain lashed windshield they soon smear the glass with an oily coating that refracts into multiple colors that make forward vision difficult. I proceed to level off a few hundred feet above the ground just below the overcast from which the rain pours. With gentle inputs to the stick and rudder I bring the nose around to my estimated heading enroute to Tallahassee, 153 statute miles ahead.

It is impossible to see much through the smeared windscreen and I am reduced to leaning my head out the side to improve my visibility. This I can do for only a few seconds as the heavy rain drops hitting my face at eighty miles per hour produces a lot of pain, plus my goggles soon begin to smear from the drops of oil that fly aft from the engine. Once behind the windshield I have to wipe my goggles with a rag to clear my vision and of course try to bring the oscillating liquid compass back to my intended heading. Over a

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You can now access the mailing and phone list of your fellow Clipper Pioneers. Go to the Clipper Pioneer website - www.clipperpioneers.com - and scroll down to the bottom of the home page. Click on "Members Only" - when the password box pops up, type in username & password found in your newsletter. You will be able to access the current list of names, address, phone #s, and email addresses there.

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dismal swamp area I look down and see a large black object floating in the water. I immediately decide it is an alligator (although it was probably just a big log).

I determine to spend no more time studying the water below. My flight plan predicts that I will cross the Suwannee River in 55 minutes after takeoff, but because the wind is an unknown variable, it is just an educated guess. With good fortune, the river comes into view near schedule - but to my consternation, it is not at right angle to my flight path! Now am I north or south of my intended track?

I fly in a mist and rain shrouded circle of a few hundred yards of smeared visibility. The highways and small towns that would in clear air mark my progress on the map are just not to be seen. The engine continues to run at 1800 RPM until passing over several miles of swampy forest when without warning it drops back to 1775 RPM, and I reach over to check the magneto switches. I moved the lever from "BOTH" to "LEFT," a slight drop, but when I move on to "RIGHT" position, the engine begins to shake violently and the RPM declines further. I am sure one of the cylinders is not firing when "RIGHT" mag only is selected. I immediately switch back to "BOTH" and the engine returns to 1775 RPM until the throttle is advanced which brings my RPM back to 1800. Further trouble shooting would have to wait until I am once again back on the ground.

With the aid of good fortune, the forest of trees falls behind me, and now the terrain below is a series of small cleared farms. Now my legs are soaked to the skin and my face feels as if it is being sand-papered. This discomfort is forgotten as the engine starts to misfire and shake violently. It is necessary to pull the throttle back to reduce the power further as I am concerned that the heavy vibration will break my engine mounts and I will come down to earth in pieces.

It becomes obvious to me that one of my cylinders is no longer operating. I continue a minute or two further at reduced airspeed while I search for a clear field to land on. There, off to my right I can just make out a clean field with a barn and house. I pass directly over the home and the smoke coming from the chimney indicates that there is no wind. After a short distance, I roll into a 180 degree turn while in descent and come in to land in a clear area next to the barn.

On final approach I keep thinking, "let there be no ditches that I hadn't seen on my downwind sweep of the area." Once on the ground, the biplane rolls to a smooth stop and I am glad to be down in one piece even as the rain continues to fall. The farmer and his wife come out in the weather to see this stranger who has suddenly dropped out of the overcast. I explain my predicament and he suggests that we open the barn door and at least pull my aircraft nose first into the dry area. The wings are too wide to enter the barn but the engine is sheltered from the rain. They invite me in for coffee and hot biscuits with jam. While the lady of the house prepares my food, I have time to change out of my wet pants and socks into my one change of dry clothes. This kind lady hangs my wet clothes and cloth helmet over their pot bellied stove to dry.

As the steam rises from my wet gear, I lay out my maps to discover just where I have chanced to come down. I discover my present location is just south of the small town of Aucilla, Florida. This information places me about seven miles north of my intended track. I am cheered when I consider that I have not seen any recognizable check point in the driving gray rain for the last two hours and ten minutes, with the exception of the crossing of the Suwannee River at an unknown location.

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Be sure to check out "The Maiden of Maiden Flights" slideshow on our website (www.clipperpioneers.com) in the right-hand column - the old photos are amazing - from a bygone era!!

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Now after hot food and coffee, it is time to consider what to do about my sick engine. The farmer and I discuss the problem and he comes up with a possible solution. We will loosen all the ignition harness fittings and take the inspection covers off the magnetos, and with the aid of his workshop blow torch try to dry out the electrical system.

After hour and a half of tinkering, we are ready for a trial. My spirits rise as the engine fires on my first try at starting. I shut down the engine and we proceed to caulk around all the suspected leak points. The only gunk available for caulking is a tube of bathtub and toilet seal that may work. I walk back to their house and work out a new course, time, and distance for my continued flight on to Tallahassee. I change back into my clothes that have been hanging over their stove. They are still damp, but wonderfully warm. After profuse thanks for their hospitality, I clean the oil-streaked windshield and then wrap and reload my few items back into the front cockpit.

Although the rain continues to fall, there is still no wind as the farmer and I shoved the biplane out into the open field to face west. Once again, mercifully, the engine starts and I proceed to run it up to check that all cylinders are firing properly. Then with all checks complete, it is time to fly on toward the west. Once airborne, I am still confronted with the problem of limited visibility, but with good fortune there appeared out of the mist, a few hundred feet below, the "iron compass". The railroad track leads me into Tallahassee and after one square search I locate the local airfield. The airport manager allows me to use an empty hanger for the night, and in addition he locates for me an army surplus cot on which to throw my sleeping bag. This is indeed a blessing (my log book notes that an excess of three inches of rain fell through the night of 27th August 1953). Once old 778 Victor is secure out of the rain, I locate a Doggy Diner and splurge on hamburger steak with coffee. While eating, I visit with a local pilot regarding the route out to the west. Exhausted, I return to my cot in the hanger for a night of much needed rest. The heavy rain thunders on the tin hanger roof and I am soon sound asleep.

I awake early to the steady beat of rain on the tin roof, and breakfast on peanut butter, crackers, and an apple. The weather bureau states that in another two to three hundred miles I will fly free of the warm front and the storm clouds will dissipate and provide CAVU (ceiling and visibility unlimited). What a relief that will be! Next comes the ritual of checking filters, oil, and the addition of all the fuel I can add to my wing tank. Once all is ready and checked, I am soon airborne on a heading for Crestview, Florida. The Apalachicola River is crossed on schedule and all seems well except for the cold that becomes more intense as my clothes soak up the ever present rain. The wind and draft through the open cockpit invade every opening in my clothes. I wish I had taken the time to have stuffed crumpled newspapers up into my sleeves and pants as I have done on past cold flights on other airplanes.

Without warning, the RPM drops once again indicating the start of more engine trouble ahead. Now suddenly there appears a hole up through the clouds ahead and I can see a small patch of blessed sunshine. I make a rapid decision to climb up through the hole into the clear air above. (The old-timers would have called this a *sucker hole*.) The cloud layer I estimate to be not more than 1,500 to 2,000 feet thick and with one or two climbing three hundred and sixty degree turns I will be up in the clear sunshine and certainly there will be more holes to come down through up ahead. Without further thought, I pushed the throttle to its forward stop and climb up through the hole. Once on top I pick up my westerly compass heading and revel in the warm sunshine. Within twenty minutes, the engine picks up the missing RPM indicating that the problem area has dried out once again. The only worrisome item is that there is nothing but a solid undercast below and after an hour, my apprehension grows. I whistle to myself to keep up courage as the biplane continues on its westward flight. I search but can't locate another descent hole

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through the thick clouds below. There is not enough fuel left in the wing tank to overfly Crestview onward to my next stop Mobile, Alabama.

Looking ahead I can see the solid leaden undercast spread across the horizon as far as the eye can see. Now panic begins to set in, as I realize the folly that led me up through the *sucker hole*. Without even the rudimentary needle ball and airspeed instruments, there is no way I can imagine to slide back down through this cloud deck without losing control of my aircraft. I continue to say over and over to myself "think, you stupid bastard, think!" The sweat between my shoulder blades turns cold as ice while my lower end hurts from a terrible pucker factor. My leg muscles spasm making my feet dance on the rudder pedals and I continue to push back fear and think that there has to be a way out of this dilemma. Then out of a dim corner of my mind comes the recollection of an old airmail pilot who had told me a story of how to overcome this plight.

Now with the answer in hand, I began to calm down. Put the aircraft into a tail spin and pass through the undercast in a stabilized condition. (In a properly executed spin an aircraft will turn down an imaginary vertical shaft and will not gain speed above the number it had upon the stall-spin entry.) There are two serious problems with this maneuver. One, if the spin entry is not properly executed the aircraft will enter what is called a graveyard spiral in which the airspeed continues to build while the bank angle and G forces also increase. The result is structural failure or insufficient altitude to recover upon breakout below the clouds. Second, is the possibility that the clouds below continue right down to the ground in the form of thick gray fog.)

On further thought, I decide to climb a few thousand feet above the overcast before entering the spin. This will provide time to evaluate that the biplane is in a stabilized condition. If this proves not the case, I will still have the time to abort in the clear air and climb back to altitude for another try. Once I reach what I guess to be an adequate altitude, I apply carburetor heat for a few seconds before pulling the throttle back to idle.

As the airspeed bleeds off, I pull back on the stick and feed in up elevator, and as the aircraft starts its slight buffet prior to stall I slam in full right rudder and the biplane whips over into a tail spin. I continue to hold the stick full back and the right rudder pedal against its stop as the biplane spins down toward the overcast. In the few seconds remaining before entering the cloud deck, I make my decision to continue. The whistle of the wind through the rigging remains constant and I know that I am still in stabilized fall. I have spent the last two days flying under the overcast, and I guess it will be at least 700 feet above the ground. Now that my life depends on this conjecture the pucker factor returns with renewed vengeance. I know that I am flying over level terrain, so the possibility of hitting an unsuspected mountain is not a factor. "Will I have vertical visibility to make my spin recovery?" That is my gut wrenching question. These items pass through my mind as I lean my head far over the cockpit coaming straining to see the first indication of the hard earth below.

The few seconds that it takes to traverse through the dark cloud deck seems in my fright to last for an interminable time. Then comes the blessed sight of the flat ground rushing toward me. Full left rudder to stop the turning while I move the stick forward to recover from the stall. In a moment I am once again in controlled flight, *level and above the ground*. Fortunately the rain has stopped and I can see two or three miles forward. Up ahead there is a wide dirt road through farm land, and without checking the wind, I come down and land straight ahead on this makeshift runway. Once stopped, I shut down the engine and slide down onto the solid earth.

~ to be continued in next issue

Treasurer's Report by Jerry Holmes

The convention is over for another year. I think everyone had a good time. Bermuda was great, and even New York wasn't too bad!

The entertainment on the ship was superb - right off Broadway, which makes sense, considering where we departed from. (Photos have been posted to the website - be sure to check them out!)

Our annual meeting was short. Officers for next year are the SOFLA Contingent - Stu Archer, Harvey Benefield and Jerry Cassidy. Financial report from yours truly - \$10,000 plus in the checkbook, a CD at Bank of America in the amount of \$39,000. The only expense of any amount is the newsletter at about \$1,100 an issue - once a month. ~Jerry Holmes

ADDENDUM TO TREASURERS NOTES

TO THOSE OF YOU WHO SERVED IN THE MILITARY IN ANY CAPACITY, YOU ARE NOW ELIGIBLE FOR MEMBERSHIP IN USAA---UNITED SERVICES AUTO ASSN--WHICH IS NOW A FULL SERVICES FINANCIAL INSTITUTION..TO THOSE OF US WHO HAVE BEEN MEMBERS FOR A LONG TIME---55 YRS HERE-- THEY CANT BE BEAT.. THEY HAVE A BANK, FINANCIAL SERVICES, AND OF COURSE ALL KINDS OF INSURANCE. THEY HAVE NO AGENTS AND NONE OF THE EMPLOYEES ARE PAID ON COMMISSION. IT USED TO BE FOR MILITARY OFFICERS BUT HAS NOW BEEN EXPANDED TO INCLUDE ALL OF THOSE WHO SERVED IN THE MILITARY., AND THEIR CHILDREN..

USAA.COM ON THE COMPUTER OR 800-531-8111. CALL ME IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS RE THIS ~JERRY

HEALTH RIP-OFF TIP-OFFS

In our computerized world, crime gets ever more conceptual... as with medical identity theft. This is a type of fraud that occurs when someone "steals" the identity of a person with health insurance and then uses his/her name -- and, in the latest twist, insurance coverage -- to get treatment that can include doctor visits, drugs and even hospital stays.

This can become very costly to you and to your insurance company.

There's another kind of health insurance fraud that you have to be alert to as well -- in which, appallingly, the criminal is your doctor. Physicians may fabricate diagnoses... engage in a practice called "upcoding" (falsely billing for a higher-priced treatment than was provided)... or "unbundling" (billing each stage of treatment as if it were a separate procedure). These aren't victimless crimes either -- such fraud boosts the cost of health care, translating into higher premiums and out-of-pocket payments and reduced benefits or coverage.

UNDER THE RADAR

Health insurance fraud is a fast-growing and highly underreported type of white-collar crime, warns Eduard F. Goodman, JD, LLM, an expert in privacy and personal data protection law and chief privacy officer at Identity Theft 911, LLC in Scottsdale, Arizona. The most recent estimate from the National Health Care Anti-Fraud Association is that about 3% of annual health-care spending in the US goes down the drain in the form of fraud, resulting in costs of about \$70 billion. Medicare schemes are prevalent.

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*...and God will lift you up on Eagle's Wings, bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun and hold you in the palm of His hand.*

IN MEMORIAM

Donald James Reid - November 17, 1936 ~ May 29, 2010. Following an honorable discharge from the Navy, Don worked in the engineering and architectural design fields for several years while pursuing civilian flight training. Don went on to have a 25 year career as a commercial airline pilot with Pan American World Airways. Don was initially based in Seattle and flew Boeing 707s.

Thad Eksrand passed away recently (June 2010). Although not a PAA crewmember, Thad was a past president/boardmember of the Outrigger Canoe Club in HNL, and was 'instrumental in the admission of over 100 Pan Am cockpit crew-members during the 50's and 60's. He was a true friend and supporter of Pan Am.

For more information about each of these friends who will be missed, click on "In Memory Of..." at our website: www.clipperpioneers.com. Know of someone from Pan Am who has passed? Email the obit to Jerry Holmes at jerry747@copper.net

HOW TO AVOID GETTING RIPPED OFF

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Some red flags that someone has stolen, or is trying to steal, your medical identity might include:

You are offered a "free" medical screening or equipment (such as a wheelchair, walker or diabetic supplies) - all you have to do is provide your Social Security number, Medicare information and/or health insurance policy number. Sometimes such offers are legitimate -- for example, your community hospital may offer periodic free or discounted health screenings, such as mammograms or blood pressure tests. Be suspicious, however, of such offers at or near commercial settings such as shopping malls or health clubs -- they may be "rolling lab" schemes in which scammers skip from mall to mall or gym to gym, administer tests (which may themselves be bogus), then bill them to your insurance or Medicare. And, as for that free wheelchair, why would a company simply give you medical equipment? Once an unscrupulous company has your signature, it can try to bill Medicare for equipment or services you do not need or do not receive.

You (and/or your insurance company) are charged for services that were not provided. Crooked physicians involve themselves in schemes to obtain "reimbursement" for medical visits you never made or tests you never had. They assume that you won't look closely at your statements and that if you do, you won't know one treatment from another. You can protect yourself by keeping careful records of all medical appointments and procedures and comparing them with statements from your doctor and insurer. If you detect a discrepancy, immediately contact your insurance company to challenge it. Many companies offer ways to report suspected fraud on their Web sites.

VICTIM-PROOF YOURSELF

Minimize the likelihood that you will become a victim of health insurance fraud...

Request copies of your current medical files from all medical providers. You have a legal right to these documents under HIPAA (the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996). Carefully review them and correct any false or incorrect information.

Be careful with your Social Security, Medicare and insurance policy information -- these are the tools thieves

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HEALTH RIP-OFF TIP-OFFS

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use to steal medical identities. Though you can do little to keep them from gaining access by hacking into a company's database or breaking into a doctor's office, you should protect this information in every way you can. Shred all documents with these numbers so that they can't get them from your trash.

A common trick: Calling and requesting a policy number or other private information because it is necessary "in order to process a payment or claim." If someone wants your Social Security number or other such information, always ask why. Sometimes there are legitimate reasons -- for instance, perhaps a hospital requires this information to be paid for treating you. In that event, verify that it is a legitimate request by asking for the caller's name -- then you can call the hospital and ask to speak to that person. If you discover that there's no such person, promptly report the incident to your insurance company (as you should with any suspected fraud).

Never sign a blank insurance form. Fill out, sign and date only one claim form at a time. Giving blanket authorization to providers to bill for services can lead to overcharges and other abuses. Keep copies of all such forms.

Don't agree to let your health-care provider keep your credit card number on file. When you conduct medical transactions online -- such as refilling prescriptions or purchasing contact lenses -- Goodman advises minimizing data exposure by typing in your information each time you order. When you trust your credit/debit card data to these institutions, you are also trusting that they are safeguarding it adequately, and all too often that is not the case.

Use care when disposing of confidential information since any private information can be used to get more. Shred ATM and credit card receipts and take security measures with stored paper documents, computers, iPods, PDAs, smart phones, computer printers and other electronic devices that can store personal data.

Do not assume that all is well because you don't owe money. Once every few months, make a point of sitting down to compare your medical bills with the Explanation of Benefits (EOB) statements from your insurer. Follow up on any discrepancies, such as services you did not get, office visits you did not make or medical equipment you did not use.

Always scrutinize your monthly credit card statements, including health-care charges. Promptly report any unauthorized transactions to the issuer and any instance of suspected fraud to your insurer.

Monitor your credit report. Request a free copy from each of the three nationwide consumer credit-reporting agencies at least once a year and review it for suspicious entries. If you detect any, challenge them. If necessary, file a police report. To get your report, go to www.annualcreditreport.com or call 877-322-8228.

Source(s): Eduard F. Goodman, JD, LLM, CIPP, chief privacy officer, Identity Theft 911, LLC, Scottsdale, Arizona. Goodman is an expert in privacy and personal data protection, wireless networking liabilities and cyber-terrorism. He served as the 2008-2009 Section chair of the State Bar of Arizona's Internet, E-Commerce & Technology Law Practice Section.

Upcoming Pan Am Events

If you have an upcoming event you'd like everyone to know about, please send it to us at least a month ahead for the next newsletter. Thanks!