

Pilot Confessions
and Lessons

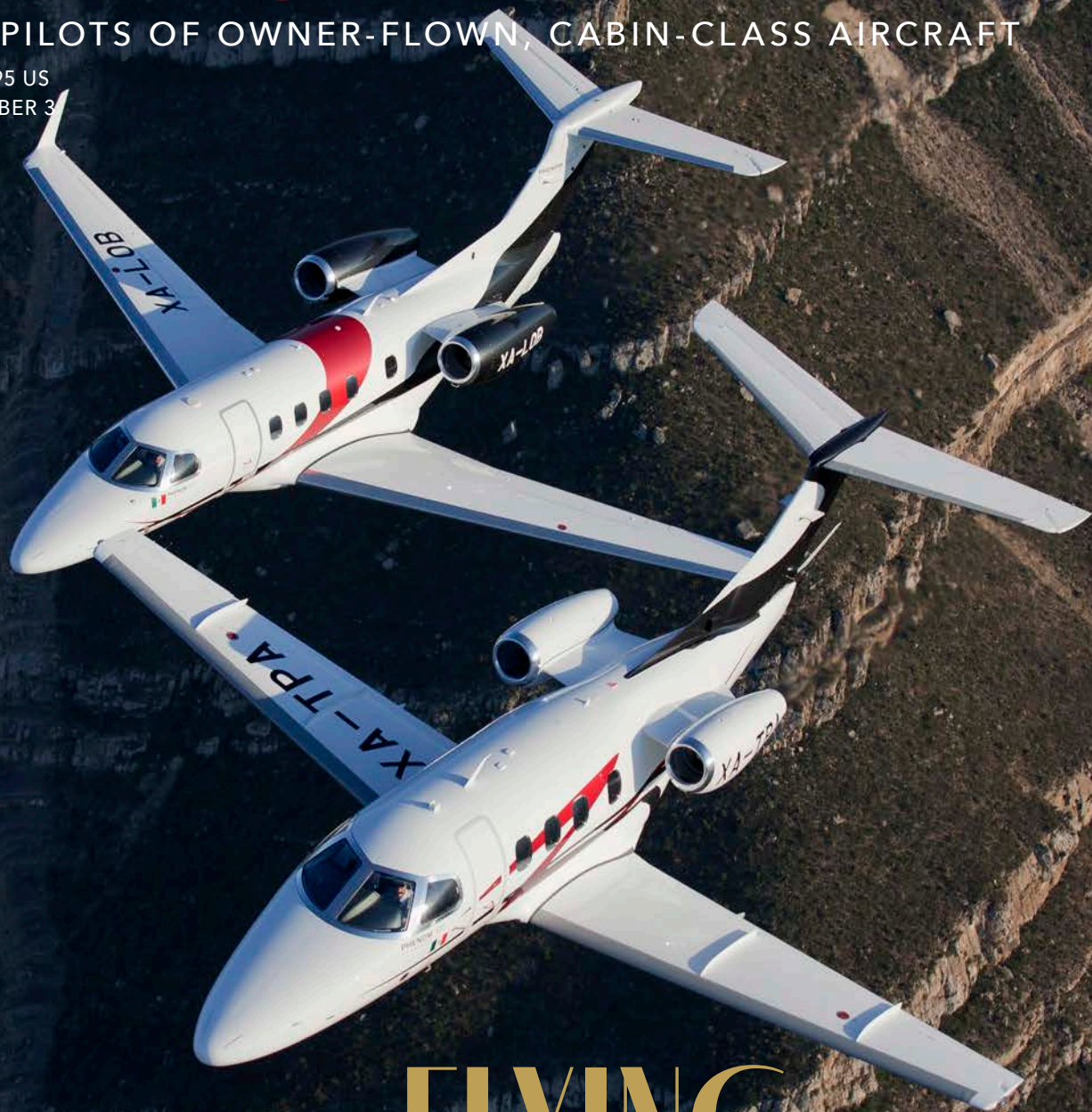
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Twin & Turbine (ISSN 1092-6402), USPS 24432 is published monthly by Village Press, Inc. with advertising offices located at 2779 Aero Park Drive, Traverse City, Michigan 49686. Telephone (231) 946-3712. Printed in the United States of America. All rights reserved. Copyright 2016, Village Press, Inc. Periodical Postage Paid at Traverse City, MI.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: *Twin & Turbine* is distributed at no charge to all registered owners of cabin-class aircraft. The mailing list is updated monthly. All others may subscribe by writing to: *Twin & Turbine*, P.O. Box 968, Traverse City, MI 49685, or by calling 1-800-447-7367. Rates for the United States and its possessions follow: one year \$15.00; two years \$29.00. Canadian subscriptions are one year \$24.00; two years \$46.00, including GST tax. Overseas subscriptions are one year \$52.00; two years \$99.00, U.S. funds. Single copies \$6.50.

ADVERTISING: Advertising in *Twin & Turbine* does not necessarily imply endorsement. Queries, questions, and requests for media kits should be directed to the Advertising Director, *Twin & Turbine*, P.O. Box 968, Traverse City, Michigan 49685. Telephone 1-800-773-7798. Website: www.twinandturbine.com.

MANUSCRIPTS: *Twin & Turbine* assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs, or art work. While unsolicited submissions are welcome, it is best to query first and ask for our Writer's Guidelines. All unassigned submissions must be accompanied by return postage. Address queries and requests for Writer's Guidelines to the editor.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes and inquiries to Twin & Turbine, Village Press, Inc., P.O. Box 968, Traverse City, MI 49685.

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COVER PHOTO:

Monterrey, Mexico

Photo Courtesy of Jessica Ambats

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Pilot Confessions

How many of you have flying stories you rarely or never share because they spark embarrassment, regret or shame?

Maybe it was an item overlooked in preflight, a miscalculation on a trip, a spastic reaction at the controls, a blown check ride...or perhaps it was a totally unpreventable, unpredictable scenario that left you scrambling or head-scratching.

Of course, if we are being honest, every hand is (reluctantly) raised right now. While our instinct might be to hide such stories, it is the Twin & Turbine way to dive right into them. These stories best connect us,

humanize us and teach us. And they are the premise of some upcoming articles you will see from our brave contributor Joe Casey.

Joe has willingly offered to write about experiences where unexpected lessons resulted from unexpected circumstances – situations no POH or training course could have labeled or accounted for. His first “Pilot Confession” found in this issue is the perfect example (page 12). He prefaces the article below:

It has been said that confession is good for the soul, and I believe my soul is about to be refreshed, for I'm going to tell a story that will implicate me in a bad choice. Not a bad choice that displays poor character, but one that highlights how little things can cause big problems.

If the truth be told, we all have stories we wish others didn't know, but these stories are sometimes the best at helping others avoid our mistakes. Sometimes an outside event causes an abnormal situation, and sometimes it is induced by our stupidity. On my day with the panel blackout (covered in this first article), my carelessness was the cause.

What will be the next problem you encounter in flight? You can't know, but you can set the conditions for a good outcome by seeking lots of experiences, learning from others' mistakes, and being really knowledgeable about your airplane. So, with full understanding that I will bare my soul, here's my story and lesson learned with the hope that it helps someone else.

Joe's words perfectly depict our greatest goal at Twin & Turbine: Provide editorial that makes you a better, safer pilot. Pilot Confessions is meant to have you walking away with fresh insights, new considerations and applicable lessons for your own flying (and some laughs too). As always, please feel free to write to us with your comments and feedback – or even your own flying confessions if you're feeling brave! **T&T**

A handwritten signature of Rebecca Groom in black ink.

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Position Report

by Dianne White



Gross and Grosser: Things We Leave Behind

As an editor, I get some interesting and sometimes off-the-wall press releases. Many of them have dubious relevance to aviation or flying. We occasionally get far-fetched story pitches that make you wonder how they possibly found the inbox of an aviation magazine.

Not long ago, I received a press release entitled: "Tissues, Pee Bottles and [BLANK]: The Most Disgusting Things Left in Our Car." The third discarded item in their lead was a word I couldn't contemplate seeing in print within the pages of *Twin & Turbine*. You'll just have to trust me that the "ew" factor was exceedingly high.

The press release breezily described a survey conducted by a UK-based cleaning company that asked more than 3,000 people across the globe what are some of the grossest things you have left behind in your car? In complete seriousness, the press release provided a useful chart to document the findings: No. 1 on the list were old tissues. Sweeping into second place was take-out food containers followed by pee bottles. Yes, really.

Other common items floating around car interiors are old receipts, spare change, make-up, unwashed gym clothes and magazines (hopefully not this one). Nearly 12 percent said they never cleaned their car. I have high confidence that both my daughters fall into that group. However, most people clean out their cars every three and six months. Interestingly (or not), the dirtiest car owners are those who own red vehicles. The cleanest are yellow car owners.

What does any of this have to do with aviation? Hang in there with me. Over the years I have conducted my own non-scientific study and have found that there is a direct correlation between the condition of a pilot's personal car to that of their aircraft's interior. Case in point: My husband and I have a good friend who's in the construction business. The state of the interior of his Super Duty F-250 pickup is exactly what you'd expect from a guy who spends his time driving to and from worksites: empty 7-Eleven Big Gulp cups bouncing around the rear floorboards, petrified French fries in the space between the front seats and center console, and a solid coating of grit on every surface. Even the WeatherTech floor mats are crying.

The condition of his light jet interior? Exactly the same. In his view, both are tools, not toys. They don't have to be pretty or remotely clean to get the job done.

Here's another data point: Growing up, my dad had very strict rules about the interior of our cars that extended to our airplane. Consider eating in a car or plane? Forget it unless you wish to see your French fries become bird food. Touch the inside of a window with your grimy fingers? Do so at your own peril. Any car or plane trip was strictly a pack-in/pack-out arrangement. Whatever you brought in must subsequently leave the car/plane in your possession. No Kleenex left behind.

In our plane, my parents would occasionally take along employees or friends, some of whom were smokers. It was the 1970s, after all, and planes of that vintage came from the Cessna factory with ashtrays. To pre-empt any temptation to light up, my dad installed a highly visible placard that read: "If you must smoke, please step outside." I don't think he was kidding.

When I became a parent myself, I didn't have my dad's ironclad resolve on keeping the family car in showroom-ready condition. I'm guilty of tossing bags of fruit snacks or goldfish into the backseat to buy myself five minutes of peace and quiet. In the airplane? Guilty as charged. On long vacation trips, the back of our plane was a pubescent burrow filled with wadded-up blankets, pillows, wrappers, empty water bottles, books, and uncased DVDs sliding around the floor. Some trips ended with one of us carting out a small Hefty bag of trash. (Sorry, Dad.)


Tying back to the theme of the "grossest thing ever left behind," this one wasn't really my fault. A girlfriend and I were flying to Broomfield, Colorado for a weekend girls' hiking trip. Having ill-timed my arrival to coincide with afternoon summer turbulence that is common along the Front Range, the last 50 miles of our trip was in



Our family on the start of a vacation trip. Trust me, it got worse from here.

light-to-moderate continuous bumps. As I transitioned the Denver Class B airspace to KBJC, which can get busy, my girlfriend urgently announced that she was about to toss her cookies. I reached behind me and pulled out the only thing handy: a 1-quart Ziploc of dubious vintage.

As I turned final, she relieved herself of her breakfast burrito, closed the Ziploc and tucked it under her seat. It wasn't until we were at the hotel that I thought to ask her whether she happened to throw away the Ziploc. Nope, it was still in the plane, now fermenting on the 95-degree airport ramp. I swear I could hear my dad laughing as I raced to the airport to fetch that wretched bag before it exploded.

While our aircraft may not be pristine all the time, my husband and I have tremendous pride of ownership. There's nothing more satisfying than opening your hangar door to a gleaming, spotless airplane without a speck on the carpet. See, Dad, your example did pay off. Just don't look too closely at the trunk of my car... 

Dianne White is the executive director of MMOPA and editor of MMOPA Magazine. For a total of 14 years, she was editor of *Twin & Turbine* and has worked in the business aviation industry for nearly 30 years. She also serves on the board of directors for Angel Flight Central. An active multi-engine, instrument-rated pilot, Dianne lives in Northwest Arkansas and can be reached at editor@diannewhite.com.



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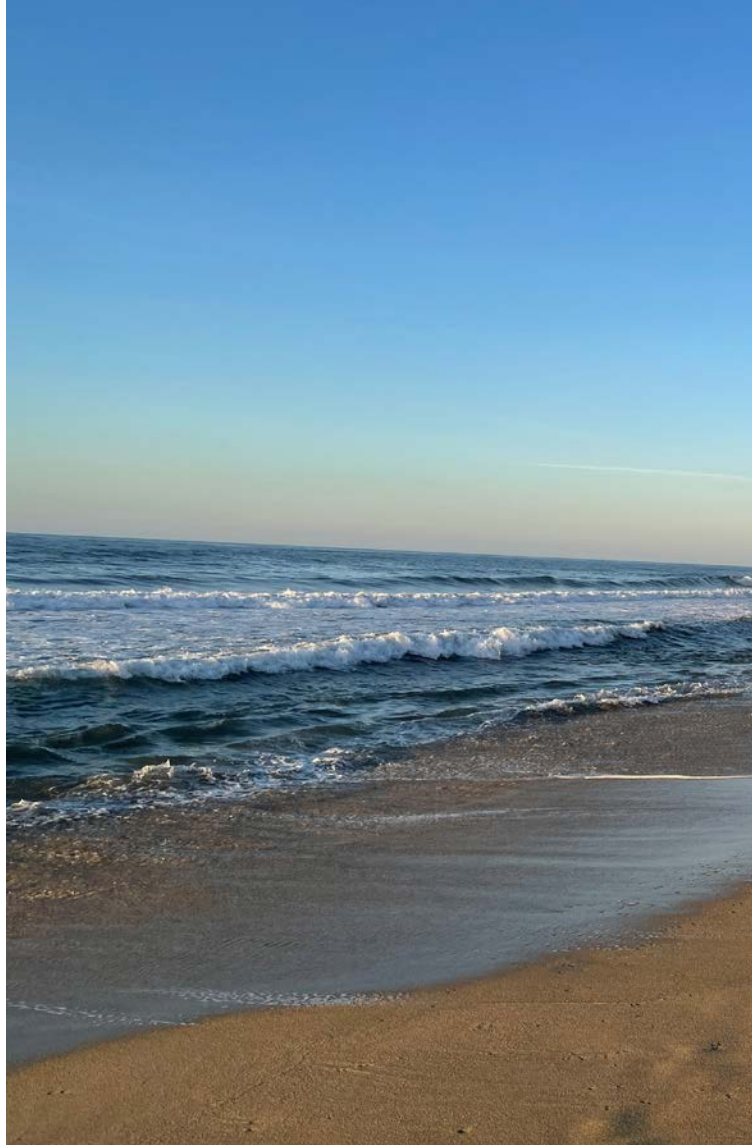


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ARTICLE PHOTOS BY AUTHOR



FLYING TO MEXICO

by Rich Pickett



Mexico has been one of my favorite international destinations for more than 35 years for both business and personal trips. Over the years, some of the processes have changed with the United States and Mexico APIS requirements, but the overall process (especially in Mexico) is more efficient. With the right effort and homework, the procedures are easily mastered.

How to Start

I look at any international trip with the same questions: 1) What do I need to cross a border outbound; 2) What are country-specific ATC requirements for enroute and terminal procedures, especially for IFR flights; 3) What are the destination's procedures and requirements after landing; 4) How soon after landing can I be enjoying the rest of my trip?

If this is your first time flying to Mexico, I highly recommend joining Baja Bush Pilots (BBP) or CST Flight Services (formerly Caribbean Sky Tours) – or ideally both! BBP has a rich forum, free eAPIS and Mexico

APIS filings for members, and focuses primarily on Mexico and Central America. CST also covers Mexico, but offers comprehensive services to a variety of destinations, customized to the specific flight. AOPA is another excellent resource. I could write an entire issue solely on flying to Mexico, but if you start with these resources, you will soon be an expert.

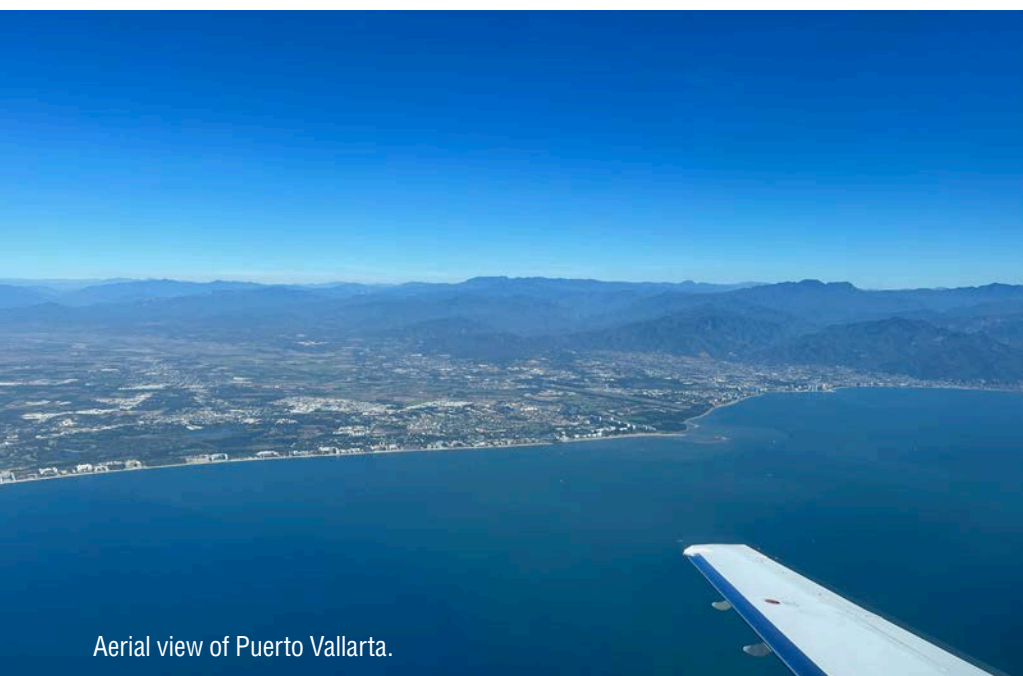
I start my planning early for these flights, gathering all of the required information, including Mexican insurance coverage either within the existing license or a separate policy (check with your insurance broker), pilot licenses/medicals, aircraft registration, and of course, passports. If

your airplane is owned by a company, even your own, make sure you bring along a letter that authorizes you as an individual permitted to fly that plane in Mexico. This is very important, especially if borrowing a friend's airplane or renting one. Officially, you need an FCC license for your plane and yourself. While I have both, I've never been asked to show them. However they are simple to obtain. You will need a CBP aircraft decal, which is an annual permit, for transiting any of our borders, with a current price of \$30. Mexico requires specific liability coverage in their country, which is usually included in the coverage area of your aircraft insurance policy. You can also purchase a separate policy for Mexico at \$250 if desired. I suggest contacting your insurance broker to determine your best options.

Your favorite flight planning app or website can produce the ICAO flight plan you will need to show upon arrival or face a bit of a delay filling one out at your destination. I make a packet of three copies of the flight plan and extra copies of my FAA certificates, aircraft registration and airworthiness, Mexico insurance coverage policy, permission letter if applicable, and a form that includes my aviation information as well as the aircraft's. The latter form facilitates completing the entry permit you purchase in Mexico. You can purchase a six-month single-entry or a calendar year multi-entry permit, which is what I always do.

Flying into Mexico

I fly both IFR and VFR in Mexico, and each has its advantages. Of course, in the turboprops and jets I fly, IFR is the norm. I'll also occasionally fly IFR in my piston aircraft. Again, your favorite aviation app can do the IFR routing and filing for you into Mexico, and you can reach out to Leidos Flight Service as well. VFR flights are simple – just follow the guides. Flight plans within and departing tower airports in Mexico are filed directly at those airports. No flight plans are required departing uncontrolled airports or between them. IFR enroute, instrument procedures and FMS navdata can be obtained through Jeppesen with convenient trip kits. I also always carry



Aerial view of Puerto Vallarta.



Market in San Francisco, Mexico.

VFR charts, which can also be obtained from BBP, CST or other services.

The U.S. ATC will do a hand-off to their Mexican counterparts, sometimes just north of the border. I have found the process simple, and the Mexican officials all speak English and are very patient and accommodating. Whether IFR or VFR, if your destination is a controlled airport in Mexico, you will need to contact their approach facility at least 40 nautical miles out. Of course, your first landing in Mexico has to be at an AOE. If you have filed a U.S. VFR flight plan to Mexico, be sure to close it with Leidos upon landing.

The Flight

On a recent flight in the Beechcraft Premier, we filed IFR from San Diego Montgomery-Gibbs (KMYF) to Obregon (MMCN), the AOE in Mexico and northwest of Alamos, our final destination on this trip. Southern California TRACON (SOCAL) transitioned us to Tijuana Approach a few miles north of the border, quickly transitioning to Mazatlán Center and an unrestricted climb to FL410. Approximately 50 miles from Obregon, we contacted the tower. Mexico has a number of VOR DME approaches, so practice at home. Flying the VOR DME RWY 13 was simple, and shortly we were taxiing to the GA ramp with helpful guidance by the tower.

We were met planeside by customs, immigration, military, and other helpful officials. The military is there to provide security and requested pilot and plane information to record the landing. Customs officials looked at our luggage and airplane while my wife Jane took our passports to Immigration in the terminal to obtain visas. Jane is also a pilot, and crew qualify for free visas valid for seven days. As crew, if you plan to stay longer, make sure you get a tourist visa or it can be a hassle later.

On your first trip in a calendar year, you purchase a multi-entry permit (approximately \$90). The shorter duration permit is the same price, so it

makes sense to purchase the longer permit, which gives you more reason to return. There are landing fees as well as parking charges. They are based upon the size of your aircraft and are minimal. Each airport may have a slightly different process due to staffing, so be patient and simply ask the official where to pay each one. You must pay all the fees and fuel charges before departure.

For turbine aircraft, take anti-icing additive with you if required since none is generally available. Request and make copies of fuel releases and take your fuel cards with you. From my experience, if the releases don't match exactly, including the day you want to fuel, they won't be accepted.

If you fly a piston aircraft, no pre-planning is needed at major airports. If your destination is a smaller airport, confirm ahead of time about fuel availability by checking NOTAMs. I always fuel upon arrival to save time later. Also, take along chocks, tie-downs (if needed) and oil.

On to Alamos

On this particular trip, we completed the entire process in Obregon in less than 40 minutes then were off to Alamos. This town, and the incredible Hacienda de los Santos Resort, is definitely one of our favorites. Located 50 nm southeast of Obregon, in the Sonoran Desert, it is a small town steeped in culture and history and off the beaten path. The Alamos airport



Rich's Top Tips

- Join Baja Bush Pilots or CST Flight Services
- Carry Multiple Copies of Aircraft and Pilot Documents
- Log Book Entries:
 - 406 Mhz ELT Installed In-Aircraft
 - 1090 Mhz ES ADS-B Out
 - Current Annual
- Take Tie-downs and Chocks
- Verify CBP Notification Procedure for Return to U.S.
- Relax and Have Fun!



With a customs agent at Puerto Vallarta Airport.

doesn't have an ICAO code, however, Foreflight lists it as XAL. There is a small hill on the approach end of Runway 13, but with a 5,000-foot runway in good condition, it isn't much of an issue for most aircraft. If you are staying at the resort and let them know your arrival time, they will pick you up after landing.

The airport has a large ramp space on both sides of the airport office, which can accommodate pistons, turboprops and small jets. We've seen a Citation Sovereign parked there on the north ramp, and it took up a substantial amount of space in that area. Daniel Aragon, the resident airport manager, and his family are very helpful when determining the best place to park. Jim Swickard, along with his family, owns the Hacienda de los Santos and also has a large hangar that can hold several smaller aircraft, even our Eclipse during another recent visit. If you are staying at the resort, and there is room, the hangar (complete with art on the walls) is sometimes available for use.

As mentioned, Alamos is definitely one of our top places to visit. Working with Jim, we helped organize a few efforts this past year to provide shoes and dental supplies to hundreds of individuals in the community and surrounding areas, especially children. Many pilots attending last year's Hacienda de los Santos' spring Club Pilots gathering helped significantly with this effort. The Club Pilots event,



Rich and Jane Pickett

scheduled in the spring and fall, is a great opportunity for aviation-minded people to get together in a wonderful setting, attend a few presentations, enjoy amazing food, partake in activities from tequila tasting to hiking, and simply enjoy the environment and community.

Jim and Nancy Swickard founded the resort by purchasing a residence built in the 1600s, then expanding the property. It now offers 34 individualized suites, with the overall capacity to also host very large events, including weddings. Centrally located, within easy walking distance to the town square and businesses, it is a great base to explore the area. Hiking trails in the nearby Parque Colorado offer amazing views of the area. Jane and

I rode mountain bikes along some of those trails and also explored the area by air. On one recent visit, we departed and explored the Copper Canyon, then landed at Los Mochis (MMLM) for fuel before returning to Alamos. It is straightforward to fly within Mexico when you're there. While it involves paperwork at the controlled airports, none of it is difficult. In Los Mochis, we were fueled, paperwork completed, and on our way in 20 minutes.

Puerto Vallarta

At larger airports, such as Puerto Vallarta (MMPR), you have the option of using the General Aviation ramp or FBO. The advantage of the FBO is concierge service, with virtually all of the

services you need, including customs and immigration, are coordinated for you. If you are more of a self-service pilot, then parking on the GA ramp (if there is room) will result in substantial savings but can take more time. I've used both, but at Puerto Vallarta, I always use the GA ramp and it works well. At other airports, when I have a lot of folks with me, I use an FBO. It is best to contact them before your flight to learn their fees and make your decision. If you want to store your airplane in a hangar, there are few options in Mexico, and I've found the rates to be reasonable when available. Rental cars and taxis are available at the MMPR airport. Rideshares such as Lyft and Uber cannot access the airport directly.

Enjoying Mexico

There are many wonderful places to enjoy around Puerto Vallarta (PV), including the city itself and just north in Nuevo Puerto Vallarta, where the large Vidanta resort complex is located with every amenity and is great for families. There are multiple resorts, each with its own character.

We also enjoy more traditional beach stays, and one of our favorites is Sayulita north of PV. Along the way to Sayulita is a very popular area, Punta Mita, with great golf courses and luxury resorts and villas. Sayulita is more relaxed, with nice beaches for walking and surfing. It is easy and safe to walk around town at all hours exploring the variety of restaurants, shops and markets. San Pancho to the north was very enjoyable and offered great beaches, restaurants, hotels and shopping.

Returning Home

The end of our visits to Mexico always come too early. You have to exit the country from an AOE. In the case of flights home from Alamos, for example, you need to clear at Obregon (MMCN), Guaymas (MMGM) or a comparable airport. At the AOE, you pay departure fees, file the international flight plan and you are set. As we did when departing the U.S., we filed an eAPIS report to return. In the U.S., you need to land at an AOE or Landing Rights Airport (LRA). I have an Overflight Exemption and can proceed further inland than the border to clear customs and immigration, which is useful especially when

returning to an airport that is closer to my final destination. Returning to Montgomery (KMYF), I frequently use Brown Field (KSDM) in San Diego to clear U.S. Customs. It is very important to also call customs at the airport where you will arrive to confirm your arrival before departing from Mexico. In some cases, in particular Landing Rights Airports (LRA), KSDM for example, you must contact them for "approval" to be processed through customs at those locations. Check with the appropriate U.S. Customs office to avoid any issues.

Summary

Flying is always an adventure, and piloting an aircraft in Mexico is no exception. I've enjoyed flying on many international trips, and I find it interesting to explore aviation in different environments. Mexico offers a variety of destinations from the tropics to the deserts, each offering unique character. With some patience and extra planning, Mexico offers pilots and their flying companions an experience they will definitely want to repeat. **T&T**

With 12,000 hours piloting more than 110 models of aircraft into nearly 900 airports, **Rich Pickett** has a passion for flying. Rich holds an ATP, CFII SME, SES, glider licenses, and type ratings in the L29, L39, Citation 500/510s/525s, Eclipse 500S, Beechcraft RA390S and DA10. His company, Personal Wings, provides training, mentoring and aircraft services. He is also a proud owner of a Cessna 206. You can contact Rich at Rich@personalwings.com.

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5X	13P	8AL
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6E	13S	4AN
6H	13V	7AN
6N	13Y	8AN
6P	14D	9AN
7G	14E	4AP
7E	14F	6AP
7N	14G	1AQ
7Q	14H	4AQ
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3JW	7SE	4SE
6JW	7SE	4SE
9JW	7SE	4SE
3JX	7SE	4SE
6JX	7SE	4SE
9JX	7SE	4SE
3JY	7SE	4SE
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Pilot Confessions

The Case of the iPhone Blackout

by Joe Casey



PHOTO COURTESY OF CLINT GOFF

Where do you put your phone when flying? In my ground-bound life, it goes in my front pocket. I, probably like you, have joined the river of people that do everything on their phone, so there is no doubt that I'll have the phone in the airplane when flying. I mean, we all use Foreflight or Garmin Pilot on our flights, right?

But, where does that phone get placed when flying? In training, I see pilots balance their phone on a thigh, resulting in it almost always dropping to the floor at the most inopportune time. I have wedged it between my legs, but it seems that either my thigh or the seat (depending upon if the face is up or down) will make inputs to the phone face. I've taken hundreds of black pictures of the seat cushion and pocket-dialed more people in my Rolodex than the law should allow. It could go in a side pocket of the aircraft, but I tend to leave it there when I get out of the airplane, making that a high-risk spot. So, where does it go?

I figured I would get smart and install holders in all the airplanes we manage and fly. I use a "PopSocket" hand

holder on my phone, and I love it. It folds up when you put the phone in your pocket and extends to allow you to insert the socket between your fingers. It is a neat gizmo. Plus, there's also a PopSocket holder to hang the phone. I have holders in all my trucks and motorcycles and decided to put the holders in the airplanes I fly.

So, in one of the King Air 300s that I manage and fly, I found a nice piece of real estate on the left side of the panel. On a flat area where an old instrument had been removed, I installed the holder. That particular spot is on the left side of the yoke, above the array of switches near the pilot's left knee. I loved the location because I could display approach plates for my flights. It worked great until it didn't, and that is where this story begins.

I took off from Lufkin, Texas (KLFK) in the mighty King Air 300 and began to climb out south-

bound. It was a hot, humid day, and the sky was filled with towering cumulus clouds with good (but not great) visibility. I turned on the autopilot and picked up my phone to look at the next flight publication. Then, I put the phone back into the holder, but I missed the holder. It was supposed to latch in, but instead, it fell from my hand down to the floor. On its way to the floor, it hit several other switches on the panel...important switches.

As the phone fell, it first hit the avionics power switch and then bounced off the "gang bar" that guards the battery and generator switches. Effectively, the phone turned off four switches at once...quite the accomplishment for a single fall. It could not have misbehaved more had it an evil mind of its own. The phone promptly shut off all avionics and all electrical equipment in one fell swoop. I can't tell you how disorienting it is for an entire panel to "go dark," to lose the autopilot, and lose the ability to talk inside or outside the cockpit.

As any simulator instructor can advise, there is a great pause when a pilot is first administered an emergency.

It takes a while to assess the situation, figure out what happened, and accomplish the proper corrective action. Adrenaline starts to flow, and the focus narrows. Bottom line, you won't be as good as you think you'll be in an in-flight emergency. I'm not sure how long it took for me to correctly assess the situation, but I know it felt like it took me quite a while.

This airplane has a combination of steam gauges and glass in the panel. So, all the pitot static and vacuum instruments still worked, but which ones are which? I know the flight instruments well and could give a detailed hour-long block of instruction on any one of those instruments on the ground outside of an emergency in flight, but in the fog of battle, everything is confusing. When I lose a whole panel, I'm loathed to trust anything for everything is suspect. The mind can only work so fast.

I got the generators and battery back online and promptly hit the avionics master switch. But, it takes a while for the avionics components to reboot. So, for what was probably an eternal two minutes, I had plenty of time to mentally kick myself in the rear for being so stupid to create such a hazard that could cause a single point of failure. Of course, the PT6's in the cowlings hummed along nicely, and I climbed above the cumulus to the clear and smooth above. All was well, but it could have been much worse.

Fortunately, no one else was on board this particular flight, so no one else knew – until this confession. My job was safe and my reputation unscarred. But what would have happened if I had a crew onboard? What if I had a load of clients? What if it had been IMC? What if it had been at night? What if it had been IMC at night? Yes, it could have been much worse.

What are the lessons learned? There are many. For starters, developing a good plan for cockpit organization is critical. I think the cellphone is one of the most important tools in the cockpit, so find a good place to put it where it won't cause a single-point-of-failure but where it can be a supportive tool. I see clients mount it on the yoke, put a suction mount on the side window, or have some nifty pouches sewn in their interior specifically for the phone. Be intentional. Find a good spot where it can be your friend.

Also, where are the other items needed for flight located? I've seen Velcro used prolifically to hold pens, pencils, and flashlights. Where do you put that cup of coffee or tea? I dislike the taste of coffee but love hot tea on cold mornings. Have you ever spilled hot tea in the airplane? Trust me, you don't want to do that in a critical phase of flight (yes, I could write another article on that experience!).

When ATC says, "N _____, I have routing, advise when ready to copy," do you have a plan for writing that clearance? Is there a pad of paper and a pen in close proximity? I've got large "yellow stickies" (5 in x 8 in) that I use for writing clearances. It is far and away my most popular "giveaway" to clients. The pad is great for writing clearances, but it is also great for sticking on the window to block a sun glare blinding you off one of the wings.

But, most importantly, this experience gave an object lesson on the fact that not all abnormal situations are written

in the "emergency checklist." That's right, there's no "idiot shuts off the avionics, battery, and both generators checklist" in the POH for the airplanes I fly, and I doubt yours has it either. The abnormal (or emergency) checklist is a really good guide when you are in a jam in flight, but it is not exhaustive. It simply cannot illustrate every situation that can go wrong.

Even some emergencies that follow a seemingly well-traveled course of action are situation-dependent. Not all engine failures are identical. Some engine failures are simple failures, but some shoot shrapnel into the fuselage, some pour oil all over the windscreen, some cause a loss of pressurization, and some cause a fire in the cowlings. Multiple emergencies can happen at the same time.

Sometimes, when dealing with an emergency situation, the only thing that will save the day is a pilot with a quiver full of experiences and knowledge of the systems to synthesize a response that is appropriate and best. Chuck Yeager was adamant that the best pilots knew the airplane systems extremely well. I think he is right. When the chips are down and you are in a precarious phase of flight with red and amber lights illuminated on the panel, you had better know what turns those lights on and how other systems in the airplane are adversely affected. Every real pilot has seen the movie "Apollo 13" as they should. It is a wonderful movie in every respect, but it shows how knowledge of the systems and resourcefulness of a whole team (both in the aircraft and on the ground) saved the crew.

And what about those experiences? I believe the best pilots are the ones that are "good at most things, but a master of



The left side of the panel with the PopSocket holder.

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one." Note, I did not say a "master of none," but a "master of one." By this, I mean that the best pilots are true masters of the airplane that is their bread and butter, the airplane they fly the most. But, these stellar pilots will also have a breadth of experiences that are not related to their aircraft.

I'm convinced rebuilding a tractor and my 1968 Chevy truck many years ago helped me in aviation by broadening my mechanical aptitude. Additional ratings are an obvious way to expand your experiences, but so is getting a tailwheel endorsement, parachuting, upset recovery training, learning to fly an underpowered airplane, and learning about powered paragliding. The point is, when the chips are down, you need a wide body of experience. Sometimes an outside event causes an abnormal situation, and sometimes it is induced by our stupidity. On my day with the panel black-out, my carelessness was the cause. (I have since moved my PopSocket holder on my King Air to a place where it cannot cause me grief again). **T&T**

Stay tuned for more "Pilot Confessions" in future T & T issues.

Joe Casey is an FAA-DPE and an ATP, CFI, CFII (A/H), MEI, CFIG, CFIH, as well as a retired U.S. Army UH60 standardization instructor/examiner. An active instructor in the PA46 and King Air markets, he has accumulated 14,300-plus hours of flight time, with more than 5,200 dual-given as a flight instructor. Contact Joe at joe@flycasey.com or 903.721.9549.

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225	CITATION CJ2+
476	CITATION CJ3
174	CITATION CJ3+
368	CITATION CJ4
189	CITATION ENCORE
74	CITATION ENCORE+
392	CITATION EXCEL
14	CITATION I
280	CITATION I/SP
445	CITATION II
54	CITATION II/SP
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124	CITATION LATITUDE
247	CITATION M2
467	CITATION MUSTANG
130	CITATION S/II
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105	CITATION SOVEREIGN+
310	CITATION ULTRA

285	CITATION V
31	CITATION VI
122	CITATION VII
329	CITATION X
38	CITATION X+
253	CITATION XLS
301	CITATION XLS+
1	DIAMOND I
32	DIAMOND IA
16	DORNIER ENVOY 3
304	ECLIPSE EA500
75	EMBRAER LEGACY 500
100	EMBRAER LEGACY 600
53	EMBRAER LEGACY 650
247	EMBRAER PHENOM 100
328	EMBRAER PHENOM 300
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27	FALCON 2000EX
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15	FALCON 20C-5
17	FALCON 20D
1	FALCON 20D-5
10	FALCON 20E
49	FALCON 20F
75	FALCON 20F-5
197	FALCON 50
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2	JET COMMANDER 1121B
2	JETSTAR 731
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12	LEARJET 24
2	LEARJET 24A
7	LEARJET 24B
20	LEARJET 24D
8	LEARJET 24E
6	LEARJET 24F
4	LEARJET 25
19	LEARJET 25B
4	LEARJET 25C
45	LEARJET 25D
4	LEARJET 28
32	LEARJET 31
182	LEARJET 31A
26	LEARJET 35
398	LEARJET 35A
21	LEARJET 36
33	LEARJET 36A

32	LEARJET 40
243	LEARJET 45
225	LEARJET 45XR
92	LEARJET 55
6	LEARJET 55B
8	LEARJET 55C
307	LEARJET 60
623	PILATUS PC-12/45
149	PREMIER I
1	SABRELINER 40
7	SABRELINER 40A
2	SABRELINER 40EL
2	SABRELINER 40R
4	SABRELINER 60
5	SABRELINER 60ELXM
68	SABRELINER 65
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Woodland Aviation

by Lance Phillips



It seems that as we learn more about the companies supporting general aviation in the United States, we can't help but associate corporate growth with evolution at the federal level.

The Federal Aviation Act of 1958 created the Federal Aviation Agency, and by 1967 the agency had adopted its current name, Federal Aviation Administration. The overarching purpose of reassigning the agency from its home at the Commerce Department to the Department of Transportation was safety, but one of its highlighted roles at inception was the encouragement and development of civil aeronautics. The FAA was designed to help foster growth. California harnessed the opportunities provided by the new-found federal support to advance the industry on the west coast. The state developed an education program for high schools and colleges to feed the industry with high-quality, technically skilled workers. Woodland, in the northern part of California, was home to one of the early adopters and

supporters of aviation, taking it to its leading role – not only in the U.S. but, as we'll soon see, in the world.

Dorothy Gray was born in Iowa in 1920, three years before her parents relocated the family to Fort Stockton, Texas, where she grew up and finished high school. After being named school valedictorian, she checked in to the University of Texas as a 16-year-old freshman, eventually earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. Dorothy then went back home to west Texas as a teacher. It was there she met a civilian Army Air Corps flight instructor from Woodland, California, teaching new flight students at Fort Stockton's military training base. Milton Watts didn't know it at that time, but Dorothy was to become instrumental in not only helping him grow a successful aviation business but also to establish California as an aviation leader in our country. The two were married in 1942 right there in west Texas.

Milton was 18 when he soloed in a Velie Monocoupe, later earning an instructor's rating in 1940 and

purchasing that very same model with his brother and fellow aviator, Vern. In 1943, he was commissioned by the U.S. Navy and began flying as an executive transport pilot for the commander of naval air bases. During World War II, while in Florida, he flew and delivered a brand-new Beechcraft Staggerwing to the Navy (after the war, he bought one for himself). He ended up flying many airplanes and lighter-than-air equipment for the U.S. Navy.

Northern California called the young couple back soon enough, and



Dorothy (Gray) Watts

just a few years later they were the owners of Watts Airport. The airport had been established way back in 1919 by the Yolo Fliers Club (Yolo is the name of the county in which Woodland, the county seat, sits). It's now called the Watts-Woodland Airport and is one of the oldest privately owned, public-use airports in the U.S. Coincidentally, in 1919, the first high school in California (this one in Los Angeles) began offering aviation instruction, and it was the year Milton was born. But it was nearby in San Francisco that a true aviation education program was established in 1936, while statewide high school aviation programs were initiated in 1946 – the same year Milton began flying agricultural crop-dusting missions and managing the local flight school. He later acquired 13 Stearman aircraft for crop dusting, and in 1952 Milton and Dorothy bought the airport and started Watts Agricultural Aviation.

They opened Woodland Aviation in 1963 and started a long relationship with Beechcraft as a dealer. Their first Beech ever sold was a Debonair.

Milton and several of his agricultural flyers developed a business called TBM, Inc. Using surplus military aircraft, they met a need fighting California's wildfires. The TBM excelled at firefighting, and its success led Watts to transition to large tanker fire bombers. The fleet included multiple types – B-17, DC-7, C-130, and F7F Tigercats (one of which would later perform at the Reno Air Races).

During the research for this story, I came across a 1972 California State report on aviation education. Milton Watts was highlighted.

The flight experience has resulted from closely working together with the Woodland City Airport Committee and specifically with one of its members, Mr. Milton B. Watts, who is a fixed-base operator at the Woodland Airport. Students fly their orientation flight in a Beechcraft Musketeer. On a voluntary plan students participate by paying only one-third of the gasoline cost of the flight. The operation and school's liability is covered by Woodland Aviation, Inc., and L.E. Wraith & Associates Insurance Company of Woodland, with passenger liability in the amount of \$100,000-\$300,000.

Woodland High School offered an Aeronautical Science program operated by its science department and was accepted to fill the physical science requirements for graduation. The course was offered not only to satisfy students' aviation interests but also to serve a need to inform the general public of the multitude of services provided by aviation in California. On September 6th, 1972, Milton and Dorothy's son, Bruce, turned 16 years old. He would accomplish his first solo flight, go to his first day as a junior at Woodland High, then be driven to the DMV to get his driver's license, all on that same day.

Milton and Dorothy knew that helping to grow aviation from high-school-age students would only help business for everyone in the state. And they were right. Woodland Aviation was expanding its maintenance and sales capabilities. In 1975, Beech gave them the responsibility to work on the King Air line. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, Woodland continued to grow, garnering multiple industry and Beech-specific

awards for excellence. They operated an air ambulance business and built a substantial charter and management fleet, including Falcon Jets, Hawkers and King Airs. It was at this time that Milton opened the Woodland Aviation jet services and management operation at Yolo County Airport, KDWA.

By the 1990s, things were changing at Beechcraft with the OEM bringing its sales in-house. Woodland saw the writing on the wall and joined several of the other dealers in forming the Pinnacle Air Network to have a unified voice in negotiations with Beech's new owners. They continued selling Beechcraft and also worked on Hawker jets and the new Starship. The business continued into the new millennium, but then another acquisition for Beechcraft ended the relationships with its dealers for good. By 2007, Woodland aviation was acquired by Thomas Grant, a former customer and Beechcraft owner.

At the same time, Thomas Grant brought on Gary Pelfrey to head up operations at Yolo. Gary had an operations background without much aviation experience, but he was well known for successfully managing operations for contract manufacturers in the U.S. and abroad. Gary relished the new role and through his many successes is now the vice president of Woodland Aviation and Accountable Manager for its Part 145 repair station, as well as managing their FBO, Davis Flight Support.

After the transition, Gary worked through multiple challenges while



Watts Agricultural Aviation opened in 1952.



Milton Watts and Olive Ann Beech.



Director of Client Services, Marci Ray.



Service scheduling system.

managing the operation. Beechcraft began lowering margins and limiting the types of servicing they could do. The Part 135 charter certificate went to XO Jet. So, they were limited to some pre-owned aircraft sales, avionics work and some organic maintenance business. Gary saw some opportunities, though. With Mr. Grant's investment,

Gary sought to upgrade the facility at Yolo County Airport, bringing in new furniture and contracting a professional interior designer. They wanted to match the level of investment their new Silicon Valley clientele were expecting. Gary began to ask clients what they wanted and actually adjusted rates at the shop to match the level

of expectation. Woodland became a boutique business.

In 2004, Woodland Aviation became a Cirrus Authorized Service Center. By 2012, Cirrus maintenance events surpassed all others. In 2021, Woodland saw 592 Cirrus events versus 103 non-Cirrus events. At the end of 2021, Woodland was recognized at the

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Cirrus annual gathering in Tennessee as the top global ASC. It is an incredible accomplishment, but one that only makes Gary want to improve and grow more.

These days, Woodland works on Cirrus, Textron Aviation and Diamond aircraft. They service Garmin and Avidyne avionics. They employ nine mechanics, three avionics technicians, eleven support staff and speak six languages. A quarter of the workforce are women, and they intend to continue to build diversity among their employees. Recently, when they outgrew their service scheduling system, Gary, seeing an opportunity to improve delivery times, co-wrote and coded his own MRO software system. With 25 to 30 aircraft in the shop at any given time, the new software gives pinpoint accuracy in determining status in a matter of seconds.

Continual improvement is important to Gary and his team. Currently, he is redesigning the hangar layout to reduce the number of employee steps

per day, from 13,000 to 8,000, as part of a lean manufacturing initiative. He will also be introducing a new website for the business this year.

Gary appreciates the history of Woodland Aviation and the true pioneer nature of the Watts family and what they brought to aviation, not only in northern California but to the world. Milton Watts is 102 years old this year, and Bruce Watts is still flying airplanes and managing Watts-Woodland Airport (O41). If you happen to be in Yolo County in the near future, whether you go to KDWA or O41, you can bet that someone or something special is going to greet you when you land. **T&T**

Lance Phillips is an aviation professional, writer, pilot and photographer. He is executive director for the Pinnacle Air Network and owns Phillips Aero Services, an aviation marketing services provider. You can contact Lance at lance@phillipsaeroservices.com.



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From the Flight Deck

by Kevin R. Dingman



Ambiguous Non-pilots Use AiiCD

am-big-u-ous /am'bigyooəs/

Adjective open to more than one interpretation; unclear or inexact because a choice between alternatives has not been made.

Do you get impatient or frustrated when communicating with non-pilots – including your non-pilot significant other? After flying, it takes time to transition back to using Ambiguous, Inaccurate and Inefficient Civilian Dialect (AiiCD® – pronounced Acid). Because, after each radio call, we pilots are conditioned to get or give a response. When conversing with non-aviation people, once we say something to them, we're conditioned to expect a response – ANY response. Like tennis, racquetball or ping-pong, we're waiting for them to hit the communication ball back to us. If not, after a five-second pause, it's a delay of game penalty and we're compelled by our stay-ahead-of-the-airplane patience level to exclaim in a patronizing voice: "Over?"

And for the sake of all things holy in the wide, wide world of aviation, hit the same ball back to me that I hit to you – respond to the question/subject in play. Then, if you must, you can expand with your creative, fluffy, fuzzy-wuzzy, AiiCD interpretation of what you "feel" should be said next. This will give me time to turn down the radio volume or to cover your voice with "bla-bla-bla." Now, before you replace my bio pic with one of ventriloquist Jeff Dunham's "Walter," read on.

I haven't spoken to my wife in years.
I didn't want to interrupt her.

– Rodney Dangerfield

We share radio frequencies with many of our brethren, and pilots learn to be nauseatingly accurate, specific and brief in the way in which we communicate. Nauseating to non-pilots, that is. And the techniques we use on the radio inevitably spill over into our non-flying lives, often making communication with non-pilots a painful volley. Sometimes, however, those around us become "contaminated" by our efficient, pilot-persona and imitate our techniques.

Diamond:	<i>Ring or baseball?</i>
Calf:	<i>Cow or leg?</i>
Ruler:	<i>Measure or King?</i>
Pipe:	<i>Smoke or plumbing?</i>
Deck:	<i>Boat or cards?</i>
Notes:	<i>Writing or music?</i>

There is a story (allegedly true?) that exemplifies this point. To wit: A lady, when asked by her husband if she was secretly seeing the pilot down the road, replied to him, "Say again?" When her confused husband cautiously but sternly repeated the question about her rendezvous with the pilot-neighbor, the reply this time was a resounding, "Negative!" No linguistic CSI needed here. Many of the flight attendants I flew with had not fully adapted to our lingo – or me to theirs – and they sometimes used the "wrong" words. One FA said that she taught yogurt. "Really?" I asked. "Yogurt?" And attempting to place a pre-departure drink request using pilot efficiency is another example:

FA - What can I get you to drink, Captain?

Me - Coffee with one sugar and anything white, please.

FA - You mean cream?

Me - Sure, that's fine.

FA - Well, that's what white is.

Me - No, not always. Sometimes you give me white, non-dairy powdered creamer, sometimes it's cream that's white, sometimes it's half-and-half, also white. Sometimes it's 2 percent milk, sometimes whole milk, sometimes...

FA - OK, OK, OK! I get it! I should have been more specific.

Me - No, you didn't need to be more specific. That's why I was ambiguous and said anything white because any white option is fine.

It would serve me right if she had added mayonnaise or salt to my coffee. Months later, the same FA and I chuckled at our next pre-departure exchange when she returned with my coffee – topped with four tiny white marshmallows. I think she put them in her crew bag and was waiting for the next time we flew together!

Where's the Beef!

If you look upon ham and eggs with lust, you have already committed breakfast in your heart. – C.S. Lewis

Remember the Big Mac jingle, circa 1974: Two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions on a sesame seed bun? Well, I prefer breakfast – almost with lust. But when ordering at the fast-food chain that has sold billions and billions, why can't I order my breakfast with the same unambiguous brevity and clarity in which we talk on the airplane radio? "A number one meal please; one sugar, one cream and an extra hashbrown."

You see, the number one meal (by definition) is the sandwich, one hashbrown, and a regular size coffee. I figure when I order the "meal," add the condiments for the coffee and modify the meal with an extra hashbrown – that's pretty specific, unambiguous and should end the volley. A perfect return of the ball would be, "Thank you, that's \$7.28, please." But no. They have to ask, "What size coffee do you want? How many creams? Did you say sugar?" Then, of course, once delivered, the extra hashbrown is not in the bag. When they see me staring into the bag, they ask, "Is everything okay?" My answer: Negative.

What Happens in Vagueness Stays in Vagueness

No conversation, however, more accurately exemplifies the disparity in conversational comfort level between pilots and non-pilots than the following. While between flights, a flight attendant and I were attempting to make small talk:

Me – Where do you live?

Her – I'm from New York, but my parents moved me back and forth from Phoenix.

Me – OK, but where do you live now?

Her – I said New York.

Me – No, you didn't. You said you were from New York, not that you lived there.

Her – I lived in Phoenix.

Me – Nice. I lived in Glendale, out by Luke Air Force Base.

Her – Oh, I lived in Chandler by Williams Air Force Base.

Me – You said you lived in Phoenix.

Her – Same thing, you don't listen very well, do you?

Me – I was thinking the exact same thing about you.

She was certain that she was making sense, and so was I.

Be Careful What You Say

A few years ago, I had a lady on my flight assigned to escort some property. It was loaded in the aft cargo compartment of my S-80, the one just below the right engine. She was in Coach, just to the left of that same engine, above the cargo compartment. Why she needed to be so near, yet so far, from the cargo was a conundrum. It wasn't as if she could get out and rescue the cargo should the need arise. It wasn't actually her property anyway, or even the property of her employer. It was U.S. government property. Her company

had been hired to transport it with all due diligence, security, and scowling, Walter-like seriousness.

The look on her face was priceless when I, not seriously enough, asked if there were any special considerations for the cargo should I land somewhere unscheduled (divert). I asked jokingly, but I actually wanted to know because the weather was not that good. Apparently, the jovial tone of my interrogative statement was not appreciated. I had the opportunity to carry this type of cargo in the past, and next to transporting a dignitary or ex-president, the cargo gets serious attention, and landing at the "wrong" airport can be problematic. This time the cargo was \$96 million U.S. dollars. My 31-year record for this type of cargo was just under one-half billion.

Rookies from Pros

Even when we deal with other professionals, most are not comfortable with the extreme accuracy and brevity in communication used by aviators. On the other hand, some pilots also slip up and use incorrect terminology and colloquial slang. I can't tell you how many times I've heard a pro in the flight levels answer ATC's request for a ride report by telling them that they were IFR but smooth. Oh, really? How could you get above 18,000 without being IFR? Can you say IMC? I knew you could. And in answering the ATC request to say your airspeed, the response was "point seven-six." No grasshopper, airspeed is three digits with no decimal point and it begins with one through six. Details like this distinguish rookies from pros.



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And this one from ATC: Taxi to Runway 19 via Bravo, hold short of Delta-eight, plan to follow Southwest. Holding short, we waited. Finally, Southwest moved from out of the way of Delta-eight, but the controller hadn't said follow Southwest or continue – they had only said plan to follow. I was on the landline; who else called? Did someone try to check-in? Although, you dare not miss a radio call from ATC. I once heard a controller say, "Pay attention up there; I'm busy down here!" Granted, the pandemic has affected all aspects of our society by causing employee shortages, but I think maybe he just didn't get his extra hashbrown.

Neurosis is the inability to tolerate ambiguity.

– Sigmund Freud

Does cleared to Albuquerque mean the VOR, the airport or the fix? You don't know unless you query ATC. Navigationally speaking, Albuquerque is three places: the airport itself entered into the GPS as KABQ. The second is the ABQ VOR, a physical station transmitting a radio signal – it's on the ground but not on the airport. You need a VOR signal and a receiver to navigate to the VOR. The third is ABQ, the virtual fix, entered into the GPS as ABQ, also not on the field, but not on the ground either – it's a phantom. When directly over a VOR at 60,000 feet, the DME reads 10 nm when we arrive at a GPS fix at any altitude the distance reads zero. If the VOR is the clearance fix, you need a radio signal and a receiver. If you are out of range, you cannot navigate to

the VOR. Nowadays, the assumption is that if you filed with RNAV/GPS capability, you may navigate to any of the three Albuquerque fixes as long as you and ATC agree which one. Just remember the adage about what assumptions make out of you and me.

Pine Tar and Spit Balls

Since we are intelligent enough to learn and speak piloteze, surely, we have the linguistic legerdemain while out of the cockpit to understand the language of neighbors, friends, spouses and those delivering hashbrowns even if they use AiiCD (not really copyrighted, by the way). And if they return the conversation ball out of bounds, off the table or with a double vision, diptych-like spin, it's best we get clarification lest we wander from our prescribed clearance, swing at a bad pitch or end up with marshmallows in our coffee. Happy Saint Patty's Day, my friends. **T&T**

Scheduling note: Don't forget the Sun n Fun Aerospace Expo is next month April 5-10 in Lakeland, Florida.

Kevin Dingman has been flying for more than 40 years. He's an ATP typed in the B737, DC9 and CE-650 with 25,000 hours in his logbook. A retired Air Force major, he flew the F-16 and later performed as an USAF Civil Air Patrol Liaison Officer. He flies volunteer missions for the Christian organization Wings of Mercy, is retired from a major airline, flies the Cessna Citation for RAI Jets, and owns and operates a Beechcraft Duke. Contact Kevin at dinger10d@gmail.com.

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Crimson Tide to Smooth Ride



John Cassimus and father, Marcus.

John Cassimus' story is largely based on how he has enthusiastically applied talents and passions passed down from his parents. From both, he inherited a tireless work ethic, the ability to connect with others, and a keen eye for opportunities. From his mother, Zoë, a love for cooking and the knowledge of how good food can bring people together. And from his father, Marcus, an appreciation for flying and the grit to succeed regardless of circumstances.

Entering his thirties, the lone Cassimus son was already an experienced entrepreneur with a zeal for executing big ideas. In 2000, he approached his parents with his biggest yet – growing the one-location restaurant named after the family's matriarch to become a national brand. And he did just that, with around 300 Zoës Kitchen locations open at its pinnacle. On top of his parents' support bringing legacy family Mediterranean recipes to more people, Cassimus credits another essential aspect to the venture's success: aircraft ownership.

He concedes that owning and operating his own aircraft supercharged his various business interests. As someone in perpetual motion, flying enabled the born and raised Southern Alabamian to speed up the growth for the fast-casual eatery and other companies he has run.

"My dad was a private pilot when I was young and would take me up with him whenever possible," said Cassimus. "I was a football player and got several scholarship opportunities. I had the option of going to the United States Air Force Academy to be a fighter pilot but decided to go to the University of Alabama instead." Subsequently, flying was sidelined for nearly 15 years until Cassimus was well into his entrepreneurial career after graduating with a degree in corporate finance.

On the football field, he dodged defenders as a running back, memories that remain fresh to this day. But the defenders' blows would also be felt years later. As a result, Cassimus had his first back surgery in 2003. On the plus side, the "downtime" allowed him the time to pursue

becoming a pilot. "When building Zoës, I knew that driving would not let me grow it as quickly as I would hope. I knew flying would be the best option. And at the pace of life that I go, flying is a good fit."

Cassimus initially learned to fly in a 1980 Cessna 172 and then purchased a new Cirrus SR22 in 2004 after receiving his Private Pilot Certificate. He flew the aircraft 400 hours in the first year then traded it in for a new 2005 SR22. He put 700 hours on the plane in the following 24 months. "The SR22 was the perfect beginner instrument airplane with a glass cockpit and a solid autopilot. I cut my teeth on instrument flying and always flew around 180 knots."

With these aircraft, he continued examining new cities for potential restaurant locations plus helped run those with existing operations. After playing the restaurant field for a decade, Cassimus saw the opportunity to hand the business to its next owner. While he remained on the team to ensure a successful transition, he concurrently considered his next steps which included moving into a new Piper Meridian in 2008.

Turboprop and pressurized operations in the PA-46 were a big step in terms of range, speed and payload. But Cassimus still had eyes downfield towards the end zone. "The dream my whole aviation life was to have a Pilatus PC-12," he said. "I do a lot of hunting and cycling, so it is a great aircraft for my mission."

That dream became a reality in 2014, the same year that the restaurant he had cultivated was listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

"I was able to design it and get it exactly the way that I wanted," said Cassimus. "Instead of picking a Pilatus design theme, I designed the paint and interior to fit my personality. And I still think it is the best-looking PC-12 ever built."

Even with N33ZB's hand-selected visual appeal, it's the PC-12's payload that best showcases Cassimus' personal and professional identities. Regarding his current mission profile, he said, "From a personal standpoint, I always fly with lots of gear. Whether it's a couple of bikes with me to ride wherever I go, or game (can fit a whole elk) and other gear when coming back from a hunt." He noted that his bird, serial number 1476, has six executive seats, as well as two commuter seats.

Now with seven years of Pilatus operations under his belt, Cassimus noted, "For me, it's the perfect airplane and just once I considered moving up. I think that every pilot would love to grow in speed and range and jump into a jet and go 400 knots but, with how I use it, I haven't been able to find a jet that can do what I can do in my PC-12."



From carrying bikes and hunting gear to friends and family, the PC-12 is a hauler.



John with his mother, Zoë, and father at a University of Alabama football game.

Cassimus recalled a recent trip with five friends, all with their hunting gear, in a chartered super midsize jet. They found themselves wishing they were in the single-engine turboprop instead. The ability to go faster and higher in this scenario didn't outweigh the inflexibility of storage space on the airplane and runway limitations.



A biking adventure with country singers Luke Bryan and Dierks Bentley.

In addition to what he flies with, who he flies with is most important to Cassimus. His passengers range from fellow business executive friends to country singers (in the late 1990s, he started a record label), family members, and fellow cyclists. Often during flights, everyone helps each other identify new business or adventure opportunities. On one particular flight from Bentonville, Arkansas, a friend persuaded Cassimus that he needed to try out another type of flying – a conversation that led to his helicopter rating. “I was able to finish my rotorcraft add-on in 30.3 hours. It has opened up a whole new world for me.”

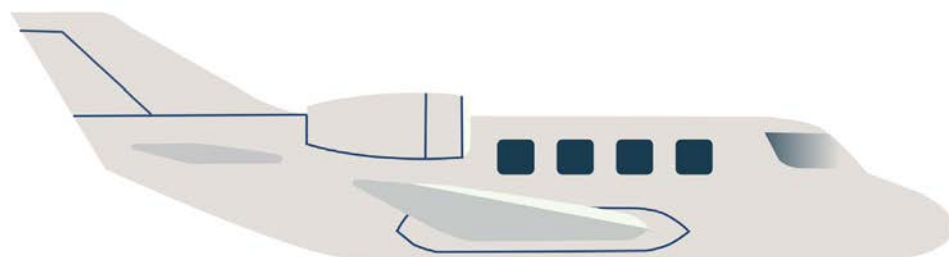
In December of 2021, the former college football player took delivery of a 1984 Bell 206L3 in the Phoenix area, which he promptly flew back to Southern Alabama. After 12 hours of logged time, he, an instructor pilot friend, and his teenage daughter landed the helicopter at Cassimus’ hunting ranch near the town of Eufaula. He plans to use the helicopter there to better survey his acreage and its wildlife, as well as travel locally between various businesses.

One of his newest ventures is Crazy Cazboy’s, founded in 2019. This extreme discount business and warehouse retailer currently has six locations in four states and an established online presence. Undoubtedly, Cassimus will continue employing fixed-wing flight to efficiently scout potential future sites and visit existing ones as the liquidator continues its expansion. “The PC-12



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is an amazing plane for long cross-country flights due to its range, comfort and ability to land at virtually any airport."

In the current unprecedented aircraft marketplace, his critical business tool is worth nearly as much as when he bought it new in 2014. But even with its high resale potential, the PC-12 will stay with him for the foreseeable future because of how well it fits his mission, even allowing access to one of Cassimus' most treasured investments: his hunting ranch Sawtooth Plantation. The 3,200-foot grass strip is a common landing site for the PC-12.

"It performs really well on grass and doing short-field takeoffs when the airplane doesn't have a lot of weight. It will be off the ground today [being repositioned to a nearby airport for fuel] in about 1,200 feet. And landing on the grass with the trailing link landing gear is really great. I haven't once felt shaking."

Today, Cassimus has logged around 3,700 hours of fixed-wing time total and flies around 150 hours to 200 hours per year. Typically, he will fly the Pilatus to various locations within the continental United States but has also flown it to Canada, Mexico, and The Bahamas. Additionally, he anticipates hovering around 150 hours a year.

To sum up his 19 years of aviation experience, Cassimus said, "Flying has allowed me to grow all of my businesses at a rapid pace. And the ability to move quickly anytime fits my personality and allows me to continue to grow personally and professionally." **T&T**



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Jet Lag

Advances in technology during our lifetime have been incredible. As a young kid, I remember being amazed by my father's electronic calculator on his office desk. It was a Hewlett Packard costing over \$400. It added, subtracted, multiplied and divided. That's it.

Years later came the invention of the fax machine. I have no idea how it copied my documents and transported them through a telephone line, but I still have one on the top shelf of my closet, just in case.

Satellites, the internet, the list is endless. Now, we can beam ourselves to multiple places simultaneously. There was a time, however, when this was impossible. A time when you had to go to two places to be in two places.



In 1989, my son's school had a fundraising event. I was the winning bidder of an auction item, a "day" with radio disc jockey Tom Joyner. Tom had become famous, appearing on the cover of People Magazine, as the "Fly Jock." He hosted top-rated FM radio shows in both Dallas and Chicago in person every weekday.

Tom flew from his home in Dallas to Chicago and back five days a week for eight years! Think about that.

I certainly was as I parked in front of his house at 4 a.m. one crisp fall day to begin my adventure. He was standing next to his fax machine gathering material for his Dallas radio show. We jumped in his Cadillac convertible and headed for the studios of KKDA FM. In the darkness, he

called his dad in Alabama from his cellphone attached to a very long cord.

I was the token white guy in the studio that morning. I had a blast.

At 10 a.m., moments after the broadcast concluded, we jumped in his car and sped off to DFW airport. We were fifteen minutes late for the flight to Chicago. At over 100 miles an hour, we hurtled up the entrance road to the American Airlines gate.

No worries, no TSA security, and American held the 727 jet for him! I was impressed. We sat in first-class seats he had purchased five days a week for over \$30,000 (a lot of money in those days). I munched on first-class food while

he ate from a paper bag he brought from home.

We arrived in Chicago on time and were hustled into a waiting limo planeside. Soon we arrived at the downtown studios of WGCI FM for his afternoon three-hour show. And late that day, we retraced our steps back to Dallas.

As I drug myself home after 10 p.m., I was completely exhausted. For Tom, it was only Monday. Over those eight years, Tom reportedly racked up more than 7 million frequent-flyer miles, back and forth, back and forth.

Later, the satellite studio was invented, and he could beam himself to Chicago from his living room. And his American 727 became a Gulfstream. Time flies.

Fly safe. 

David Miller has owned and flown a variety of aircraft from light twins to midsize jets for more than 50 years. With 6,000 plus hours in his logbook, David is the Director of Programs and Safety Education for the Citation Jet Pilot's Safety Foundation. You can contact David at davidmiller1@sbcglobal.net.



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