

## Light Sport Plane Coast to Coast

Two pilots with lots of flight experience were still able to find excitement last month when we flew across the United States in one of the first three aircraft models to be certified as Light Sport Planes by the FAA. Our Fantasy Air Allegro 2000 proved to be strong and dependable as we encountered thunderstorms, severe turbulence, a brush fire, and temperatures up to 117 degrees. During our five day, 2900 mile, cross country trip from east to west against the prevailing winds, one of the most memorable aspects of the saga was the outstanding generosity and friendliness of the folks we met along the way.



We, Fred Parle and Jack Reese both from California, picked up the Allegro 2000 in Sanford, North Carolina on June 17, 2005. We began our trip with a 246-mile flight to Oconee airport in South Carolina where we fuelled up, took a break, and pressed on southwestward to Guntersville, Alabama. This was a beautiful little airport where the approach over the water was almost like landing on an island. We were aware that the Allegro had a range of 350 miles and burned 3.7 gallons per hour in calm winds, but not knowing the airplane that well yet, we fuelled up every 200 miles to be safe. Since we had travelled a little over 200 miles, we added fuel and proceeded on our journey. Our next stop was in Oxford, Mississippi where we got a long and well-deserved night's sleep.

Up the next morning and eager to get started, we crossed over into Arkansas, landing at Helms Airport just a few miles south of Hot Springs where it just so happens that Jack was born. This is where we turned southward crossing through Oklahoma into Texas. We landed at Cox Field for fuel and lunch. Our next stop was Bowie Field, named after frontiersman Jim Bowie. Thanks to their generous airport staff, we drove around in an old police cruiser and spooked several locals when we pulled behind them on the way to the motel.

From there we turned southwest toward Winston Airport in Snyder, Texas, which was about 130 miles ahead. We stopped flying at noon that day after having been scared by the extremely bumpy weather with cells of air rising and sinking at over 2000 feet per minute, and this was where the ground elevation started to rise from 2100 feet to 3200 feet. The wonderful people at the airport offered us a loaner car (with no brakes to speak of), and we had free run of the airport terminal all night where we slept on couches surrounded by the computers and phones of the business, and of course our primary food source, the airport vending machines.

Landing one more time in Wink, Texas before turning due west for a 200 mile stretch, we decided to fuel, get something to drink, and check the maps. During this leg you could see the mountains way off in the distance and the elevation was slowly increasing. Over a fifty-mile range, the ground went from 3700 feet to 5500 feet. Off our right wing was Bush Mountain in Guadalupe Mountain National Park. After getting over the pass, we started a descent for Horizon City Airport near El Paso, Texas. Here we ate the best steak ever, drove an airport loaner car for 50 cents a mile, and spent the night, plan to make an early start the next morning before the desert floor heated up.

From there we set a course northwest for Deming, New Mexico to avoid restricted areas and high mountain ranges. Then it was due west again to Cochise Co, Arizona where the temperature was rising to over 100 degrees, and the elevation was starting to climb to 8000 feet. It was not a good idea to attempt to climb from there because of the high density altitude so we decided to wait. Thankfully one of the local pilots told us of a wash we could take that would lead us through the mountains, so we carefully studied the maps and found it would take us through at an elevation of 3760 feet. After two closed runways that delayed our scheduled landing stop, we finally found fuel at the third airport we tried in Kearny, Arizona where we turned west again for Gila Bend, Arizona. Landing at Gila Bend, we found high winds, hot temperatures of 110 degrees, and no one around. Not wanting to stay there because the airport was filthy and the coke machine was unplugged, we struggled on to Blythe, Arizona, which was about 130 miles away. Looking up ahead in the distance we could see dark clouds building and lightning strikes off to the north of us, but coming our way. We decided to press on to Blythe and get on the ground. We called the Blythe Airport and heard the skies were clear. When we landed in Blythe the temperature was 117 degrees and the winds were strong. There was no restaurant unless we wanted to walk three miles in the excruciating heat, only another vending machine with pre-wrapped sandwiches. We choked down our lunch and determined to head for home.

Crossing the Colorado River, we were relieved to be back in familiar California terrain. As we entered the Banning Pass, there was a lot of smoke coming from a brush fire. Not wanting to fly near this and to avoid fire-fighting aircraft, we changed directions yet again, but twenty minutes later we were thrilled to touch down at Hemet-Ryan Airport in Hemet, California, location of Sport Planes West our home base!

We found the Allegro to be a very tough little sport plane. At temperatures reaching 117 degrees the Rotax engine ran cool. We flew through strong winds and rough turbulence, and the plane handled it nicely. It burned 92 gallons of 100 low-lead avgas and our fuel cost was only \$325. The Allegro is a very economical aircraft at a very reasonable price. We are the dealer for this aircraft for all of California and our coast-to-coast flight put it to the test!

Written by Jack Reese and Fred Parle  
Sport Planes West  
Hemet, California