

# The Flight Line

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## *Onward To Heavenly Skies!*

Last month many of us here at SAAPA were saddened to hear that one of our dear members had suddenly passed away.

Robert Maurice Fleming, age 69, a soft spoken warm hearted man, who was always there to lend a helping hand, and who served as one of SAAPA's board members (VP Comm/Newsletter), died at his home from an acute heart attack on Friday March 12, 2004.

He is survived by his wife, Dorothy Castor Fleming of St Augustine FL, his son, Todd Fleming, and grandchildren, Scott Robert Fleming, Erin Nicole Fleming of Carpinteria, CA, and a large extended family, with loving step-children and step-grandchildren.

Robert was born 1934 in Pepin WI, his family moved to North Hollywood CA, where he became an Eagle Scout, attended North Hollywood High School, and graduated from the University of Southern California, with a BS Degree in Biochemistry, giving him a long career as VA Administrator for medical research programs at the Gainesville FL, Veteran's Administration Hospital.

It was there while at the VA in Gainesville, that he met his lovely wife Dorothy, (both working in civil service) where one of Dot's girl friends had arranged a home dinner party that included the both of them. Where Dot said she immediately liked Robert with his warm gentile personality, but more so because he mostly talked about her. That was 15 years ago, of which 13 of

these past years were spent happily married to each other.

As many of us know, Robert was born with a debilitating handicap at birth (having no thumb on either hand, and a right arm shortened with deformity at the wrist) which gave him limited use of this right arm and hand. Yet it never seemed to stop Robert from doing anything. Like flying airplanes, or sailing his 22 foot Catalina sailboat, Robert always seemed to be engaged in life.

His wife Dorothy says, it wasn't always this way at first, as there were earlier times when he was always teased about his physical handicap, and he really felt bad about it. She remembers Robert telling her that when he was in the 4th grade (about 10 years old) he would wear long sleeve shirts, as "he did not want to be stared at, or talked about."

However, it was at this time when an older cousin (who Robert really appreciated for doing so) came over and told him "you just can't do that" and to "be what you are", and "you are what you are." Robert took his cousin's words to heart and would recall this event on many occasions as a turning point in his life.

Also, Dot says that he had wonderful parents. She recalls Robert saying, his parents always told him "Robert you are going to have to do it yourself," "nobody will do it for you," and so he did.

Dot Fleming, goes on to say that

**Robert Fleming  
In Memoriam 1934 - 2004**



***Robert, just before departing for his  
"Solo" cross country trip  
October 2003***

despite having no thumbs, and a bad right arm, Robert had other physical problems that weren't always so obvious to the rest of us.

He was always in some sort of physical pain, (spinal and other skeletal problems) that he lived with his whole life, of which he always had to take pain medication. She said, even standing for any length of time eventually became very difficult for him.

Therefore, she said nothing could have been more pleasing to Robert, than that of passing his FAA flight medical, of which he had done so, just 1 week prior to his death.

Robert who had this great love of flight, had obtained his pilots license in 1968 at the age of 34, and as it happens to many of us from time to time, fell out of flying for awhile. But it was while living in Gainesville, that his wife heard about "Top Gun" flights here in St Augustine, and purchased a flight as a gift for Robert's birthday.

Dot says he really enjoyed this "Top Gun" flight, which re-kindled his flying again in Gainesville, and eventually led them to move to St. Augustine where he purchased his



*Chuck Elliott, (Prescott AZ)  
A childhood friend who became a Boy Scout "Eagle" with Robert*

current aircraft a Piper Cherokee 140, and where he also joined the local CAP (Civil Air Patrol), as well as our organization here at SAAPA.

In the fall of 2003, Robert's desire to look up an old childhood friend (a boy that he became an Eagle Scout with) whom he hadn't seen in 51 years, has lead Robert onto "a journey of a lifetime!" His first initial interest to see Chuck Elliott now living in Prescott AZ, had now turned into an Air Adventure across America, of which he refers to as "Two Months and 5300 Miles!"

Robert had flown as PIC (Pilot in Command) in his younger years on long cross country flights, such as LA to Chicago, but never "solo!" Therefore, this was to be "his 1st" long distance "solo" cross country flight, and he was truly excited to say the least.

What had turned out as a general interest to look up an old Boy Scout friend, had now turned into a 2 month "solo" flight across America to visit other Boy Scout friends, childhood neighbors, university classmates, co-workers, and his son and grand children.

Dorothy says he had charts spread out everywhere, as he prepared for this journey of a lifetime. She says Robert loved this part of the process, and was

meticulous in his planning and preparation.

Yes, Robert wasn't afraid to try anything. Wherever he went, he would share his excitement for life with everyone. Whether it be with us, his fellow friends and members of SAAPA, or with youngsters in the local Civil Air Patrol (where he also served as Treasurer), Robert was truly a young boy at heart.

He had a way of making everybody around him feel so wonderful. He had that special gift of looking for the good in people, and telling them so, as well as showing them.

As a tribute and a lasting memory of Robert Maurice Fleming (who wrote SAAPA's newsletter over the years), enclosed here in his own words "in its entirety" is Robert's final story to us all, "Two Months and 5300 Miles!"

And as you will see, Robert continues learning and sharing with us his love for flying, and his flight knowledge to the very end.

Dear Robert we will miss you, as you fly onward to "Heavenly" skies!

Happy Flying... Robert!

Your friends at SAAPA

Bill Gardner

## *So Sorry Tower Troops*

Under the heading of "I am sorry", I am sorry that an article I had written about NASA reports was miss understood by our guys in the tower. It was a poorly written and I should have been more to the point. Please accept my apology my friends.

As a pilot, if you miss understand a clearance and are at the wrong altitude or are involved in a situation where you have made a mistake in understanding a clearance, you can protect yourself by filing a NASA Report. This system was started by the NASA safety folks to educate all pilots as to problems that exist and how these situations developed. If you ever do file a report, you will get monthly correspondence from them with different situations that have happened to our fellow pilots out there.

Normally, even if you, let's say, misunderstood an altitude clearance and a controller (any controller) calls you on it, you will not be violated unless your mistake involves a near miss or another type of safety of flight problem. I hope this makes it all clear. If you ever have any questions, please feel free to call me. I have had extensive experience in this field.

Break Break

As this years club President, I want to say that I welcome all positive suggestions for any improvements. Jim is a hard act to follow and I will try to maintain the same type of fellowship that this club has enjoyed in the past. We basically have the same board with a few new faces. Dave Knight, Randy Brunson, and Rita Ludlow are new and we welcome their coming on board.

We have been given the green light on a club sign for the outside of our building and some low shrubs for around our patio and along the wall of our club by Ed and I have already gotten some very good ideas from you all. As SAAPA members, I would encourage all of us to support all of our members. I have been eating lunch at the Fly By Café and the food is good and the staff are great.

I have been around some other "start up tower operations" and this crew we have is about as good a group as it gets. We are very fortunate. Let's let them know it and work with them.

See you at the club and try and make our happy hours. It's fun.

Fly safe.

Warren E. RauHofer *President*

# **Two Months and 5300 Miles!**

**An Air Adventure  
By Robert Fleming**



Robert, visiting with his 14 yr old Grandson Robert Scott Fleming, at OXR (Oxnard CA), November

I am so pleased to share with you, a pilots ultimate experience, a 5300 NM solo cross country flight from east to west coast in a single engine 150 HP Cherokee 140 (N6962W). The idea for the trip came about when I was contacted by Chuck Elliott, a former Boy Scout friend whom I had not seen in 51 years. We and 6 others had earned the highest rank of Eagle Scout at the same time in North Hollywood California when we were in our mid teens.

From the initial idea I expanded the trip to include visits to family members in Georgia, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona. Then on to visit the other scouts, a university classmate, former neighbors, co-workers, my son, and grand children around Los Angeles and San Diego, California.

Now the fun and challenging part started: to plan the various routes for VFR, determine fuel stops, headings, segment distances, time en route, which VOR's to use, mountain flying, and safety considerations, etc. I also wanted to consider my personal situation related to pilot experience, my physical disability, plane performance and equipment.

Trip planning started by obtaining needed items, US Government IFR, VFR Low Altitude Planning Chart, Air Chart Systems Spiral Bound "Aviation Topographical Atlas" with WAC Charts for entire US. It has a complete index including airport identifiers, class C and B airspace, MOA's, Tower Frequencies etc. I subscribed to the 3 (Eastern Central and Western) AirGuide "Airport and Frequency Manuals". In addition I purchased and studied every aspect (cover to cover) of Sparky Imeson's book on "Mountain Flying."

The trip plan evolved into making 7 separate 6x9 manila envelope packets. Each packet contained an overall route for the day's flight with magnetic headings, frequencies for airports, VOR, recorded weather, distances and times considering an average of 100kt ground speed. I took the "AirGuide" airport information for the airports en route for the day and made 3x5 color coded cards, with frequencies for VOR, airport, AWOS /ATIS / Approach Departure Control, CTAF, Tower, Ground, VOR identifiers,

ceiling limitations, if the airport was class B, C, or TRSA. I also included the airport pattern altitude, and runway direction. All the information was paper clipped together and placed in a cockpit organizer (with packets) I placed over the left PIC seat (per my disability I fly right seat). The color codes for the cards were: Green – for take off and landing airports, Yellow – for alternate airports, Pink – for class C, B, TRSA.

With my disability, it is a challenge to do everything with one hand when you are airborne unless you are organized. I planned for safety in the event of a problem. I had a 2nd headset, cell phone, handheld radio, lots of bottled water, warm clothes, binoculars, signaling mirror, matches in a water container, nourishment for several days, and a US “Road Atlas.” The other significant safety measure was to file a flight plan for each flight segment and get flight following when available.

Now, just a little information about me to make you aware of the need to plan the way I did. I am 69 years old and earned my private pilot’s license in 1968 at the Van Nuys Airport in California. I have a disability with my hands that restrict me to fly with a left hand throttle (thus the right seat). I have been in several plane partnerships in the past with 2 C-172’s, a 1960 C-210, and a 1968 Mooney executive. At the start of this adventure, I had 409 hours PIC and a Private Pilot SEL rating. I had flown several cross countries in my younger years as PIC but not solo: LA to Spokane; LA to Chicago and Twin Cities (twice); St. Augustine to LaJunta CO, with plans to fly to Sterling CO, and Rapid City SD, except the trip was interrupted by a hydraulic leak that resulted in an emergency landing in Pueblo CO. Although it was a gear up landing, there wasn’t any major damage to the C-210 or the occupants (me and my wife).

The plane I flew on this trip is a 1965 PA-28-140 (N6962W) with 3900 TT and 390 Time on a rebuilt O-320 Lycoming. The plane has several modifications for utility and performance: dual brakes, wing root fairings, flap, aileron, stabilator, gap seals, Metco wing tips, Laminar Flow Fancy Pants, and the Power Flow Tuned Exhaust (more about the tuned exhaust later in the article).

The panel has the usual early Cherokee model instruments, a KX155 with GS, a King 125, a Loran, and a Mode C transponder. I used a Lowrance 300 Handheld GPS for navigation with an updated database. The unit was very user friendly for me.

The route of the flight would take me to FFC (Falcon south of Atlanta GA), PNC (Ponca City OK), STK (Sterling CO), LHX (LaJunta CO), AEG (Double Eagle II/West Albuquerque NM), PRC (Prescott AZ), OXR (Oxnard CA), HMT (Hemet CA), CRQ (McClellan Palomar/Carlsbad CA), SAD (Safford AZ), and return to SGJ (St. Augustine FL) by way of Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. En route I had several additional stops for fuel or overnight lodging in GLH (Greenville MS), GLD (Goodland KS), INW (Winslow AZ), RYN (Tucson AZ), INK (Winkler County/Wink TX), 6R9 (LLANA TX), CXO (Conroe Montgomery County TX), GPT (Gulfport/Biloxi MS), and MAI (Marianna FL).

The FBO at every airport except one CRQ (Carlsbad CA) gave me a free tie down for 1 night if I purchased fuel there. At OXR (Oxnard CA), I had the oil changed and the plane washed to remove the ashes from the recent forest fires. As a result, the FBO did not charge me any fee for my 9 day stay. It was a major financial help since I was using a rental car to visit family and friends in the Los Angeles area. At GPT (Gulfport MS) the FBO AvCenter has a very nice facility. In addition, they will help with lodging if you have a need. There is “Sky Rate” with a local Holiday Inn that has free shuttle service to the Inn.

When we learn to fly, our instructors tell us “Fly BY The Numbers.” Well here are some numbers for this flight.

- (SGJ) Date for take off: 10/14/03
- (SGJ) Date for landing: 11/30/03
- Number of Days for trip: 48
- Solo Hours Flown: 50.9 (tach time)
- Number Take Off/Landings: 23
- Distance Flown: 5300 nm
- Fuel Used: 478 gallons
- Fuel Rate avg. gallons/hour: 9.4
- Fuel Price avg. per gallon: \$2.48 (Highest \$3.10 @ CRQ, Lowest \$1.90 @ LHX)
- Highest density Altitude: 7900 ft @ LHX
- Highest Observed GS: 140 kts from GPS
- Lowest Observed GS: 65 kts from GPS
- Highest En route Altitude: 9500 ft
- Lowest En route Altitude: 3500 ft
- Number of States flown: 13
- Number of people visited: 65 (Oldest 90 yrs, Youngest 3 days old)
- Airspace Flown In or Adjacent to:
  - Class B: Atlanta, Los Angeles, Houston, San Diego
  - Class C: Jacksonville, Birmingham, Albuquerque, Ontario CA, Tucson
  - TRSA: Gulfport

It is hard to explain to non-pilots the exhilaration you feel flying a mile, to a mile and a half above our earth’s surface. The beauty you see on a CAVU day with patchwork quilt type farm fields, majestic cities, curving rivers like the great Mississippi and Colorado, desolate high and low desert expanses, the towering “Rockies”, and the security that comes over you when you see the friendly airport runways in the distance. I consider myself very fortunate because I experienced all the above in addition to enjoying the sights of the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans and the Gulf of Mexico.

For such an extended period, I had allowed several days delay for segments due to bad weather. I was an avid Weather Channel viewer for overall trends, and used WX Brief for most current weather the evening before and the morning of flight, that gave me the opportunity to make a Go/No Go decision for each day. During the briefings I also received information on NOTAMS, TFR’s, and MOA activity, etc. I then filed a flight plan for each segment of the day’s flight.

The weather Gods must have been looking after me because on this 48 day trip, I had only 1 day weather delay. It was in Prescott AZ, with an extensive 3500 ft cloud cover over the city and surrounding area. It was VFR but I didn’t feel comfortable climbing out or over the 6000 ft mountains surrounding PRC. It allowed me 1 more day to spend with my dear Boy Scout friend who started this entire adventure.

In the evening after each day’s flight, I reviewed the events with several things in mind: 1) How was my cockpit resource management, flying techniques, decision making, communications? 2) What did I learn today and how could I use the new experience in the future? 3) Was there a need to change my flight plan based in 1 and 2?

I want to give you 2 examples of my experience and the value of this review process:

Example 1: As I approached the towered airport at CRQ (Carlsbad CA) on a short flight from HMT (Hemet CA), the recorded weather at CRQ reported a strong offshore wind and gusts. Although this favored Runway 24, the tower was using Runway 6. This would result in a quartering tailwind on landing. After calling in, I was put on an extended downwind out to the ocean. When cleared to land, I stayed at pattern altitude longer than usual for safety, and noise abatement. This resulted in a steep descent until very close to touchdown, and a not very perfect landing. Consideration: In the future with similar conditions, request a go-around to set-up for the landing with better preparation or land at an alternate airport.

Example 2: On the flight from RYN (Tucson AZ) to my destination SAD (Safford AZ - Uncontrolled Airport), I listened to the SAD recorded weather 15 miles out to determine field conditions. The wind was 10 kts at 312 degrees, which favored Runway 30. Ten miles out I called my location, altitude, and intentions to land on Runway 30 based on the wind conditions. I heard a Cessna holding at SAD on Runway 12 for takeoff. At 5 miles I called again giving my altitude, distance, time from the airport, for landing Runway 30 based on the wind. As I called in entering at 45 degree to pattern altitude, the Cessna said he was rolling on Runway 12. I made an extended downwind so I could keep him in sight before turning a base leg for final approach to landing. The Cessna made a straight out departure without even acknowledging my presence. After landing I asked the line boy about the situation. He replied "People do that all the time here." Consideration: Be alert for unusual and unexpected flying habits at non towered airports.

In closing I want to make another comment about safety and planning. A major consideration for me was the confidence I had in my N6962W and the performance improvement as a result of the Power Flow Tuned Exhaust System. Robin Thomas and his company used my plane to obtain the FAA STC for the PA-28-140. This tuned exhaust system has performed flawlessly since it was installed several years ago. The performance improvement has been remarkable, and I get many inquiries about the exhaust system at airports I visit. Climb rate in the hot Florida summer with full tanks and 2 persons on board is in excess of 1000 ft/min at Vy. The plane flies with cooler oil temperature, reduced fuel consumption, and a gain in airspeed, etc.

I would not have made this trip in N6962W if I had not had the Power Flow Exhaust. It gave me the feeling of safety to climb over the mountainous terrain even in high density altitude conditions. As an example, at LHX (LaJunta CO) the Density Altitude was 7700 ft at takeoff, and I still was able to climb at 400 ft/min to get over the high mountains en route to Albuquerque NM.

If you have an interest in learning more about my experience or the plane, please feel free to contact me.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Robert Fleming





*By N. Patrick Hale M.D.,  
Senior FAA Aviation Medical Examiner*



I have seasonal allergies that require medication. What medicines may I take and which ones are not allowed?



Medicines that have a sedative affect such as Zyrtec or Cetirizine and Benadryl or Diphenhydramine are not approved. Claritin and Allegra are acceptable for seasonal allergy control. You should take no medicines which have sedative side effects or otherwise affect your ability to fly safely.



May I take Zyban or Wellbutrin to help me to quit smoking?



No. This medication may have a side effect of causing seizures in higher doses and should not be taken when flying.



Is it OK to take Viagra and fly?



The half life of Viagra is about 4 hours and in the past the FAA has recommended you not fly for at least 6 or 8 hours after taking it. You should be alert for side effects. Adverse side effects include a decrease in blood pressure, transient impairment of color vision, headache and dyspepsia.



I have just been diagnosed with Glaucoma. Is it OK to continuing flying?



No, it is a disqualifying condition, but it is possible to obtain a waiver from the FAA. Your Ophthalmologist should complete an ophthalmic evaluation form FAA form 8500-14. Your FAA Medical Examiner can supply this form to you. Special waivers may be granted if eye pressure is well controlled, there is little visual field loss and you have good visual acuity.



Does the FAA allow pilot's with only one eye to fly?



There are over 3,000 pilots in the United States that are monocular and are represented in all three classes of medical certificates.



If I have to take insulin for diabetes is it possible to get my medical certificate?



The FAA has approved over 200 pilots on insulin through the special issuance process.



I need to contact the FAA and can't find their address. How do I contact them?



You may use this address for regular mail: FAA Aeromedical Certification Division, P.O. Box 26080, Oklahoma City, OK 73126. Always keep copies of everything you send to the FAA in case the records are misplaced. Also send mail certified with a return receipt requested.

**If you have questions  
you would like answered  
in future issues of the newsletter  
please send  
them on to me at  
[phale175@aol.com](mailto:phale175@aol.com).**

*Good luck, good health  
and fly safely!*

*N. Patrick Hale, M.D.*

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