

I departed Pensacola bound for a spot near St. Augustine, Florida. I got as far as Cross City and rain and thunderheads loomed. I spent the night at a motel within walking distance from the airport. The next day was clear so I left, going by way of Gainesville, landing at Larkin field at Palatka, Florida.

The gas boy started to fuel the Osprey and said, "you have lost your gas cap". He was right and I asked him if he had any spare gas caps. As luck would have it he found a used Cessna cap which fit perfectly! Then I noticed that my propeller had some of its tip missing. The cap had knocked off about 7/8 of an inch as it flew off into space.

I arranged to tie the plane down and rent a car. I found a motel in Palatka and placed a call to Fred Griffith, president of the Great American Propeller Company of Oceano, Calif. They made my propeller and also make props for many other home built planes. He suggested that I cut off the splintered end squarely and to cut off exactly the same amount from the other end and cover the new cuts with spar varnish.

I called up another builder, Alex Alexa and asked him if I could see his project. He picked me up in a short while and took me to his home at Hastings, Fl. It is an air strip 2300 ft long with owner lots bordering the air strip. Alex had his Osprey about ready to fly. He had done some taxi tests already but his right gear had collapsed also during a left turn on his grass runway. He planned to beef up the actuating rods with chromealloy to solve his problem. He and his charming wife entertained me and promised to help me get Exacto-saws, brushes and varnish, resin and cloth to effect repairs on my bird.

The next day Alex and I went into St. Augustine for tools and materials. Back at the field, I evened up the propeller tips and varnished the cut ends. Next I chained the gas cap to the gas tank then I painted, with resin, the bottom of the hull, about 25 square inches, where fiberglass had been worn away during my landing incident at Pensacola. The wooden skeg had taken the brunt of the landing damage. Only about 16" had been worn off as I skidded to a stop on the keel. A very sturdy hull! After several more coats of spar varnish was applied I test flew the Osprey with my new 64" prop. It flew fine and I headed off for Tampa, Florida to visit a cousin and her family. I had a nice visit with them and looked up a friend living on the boat I sold him four years previously. He was quite surprised to see me but glad to talk about this adventures triling his 21 ft sloop to St. Petersburg and living aboard it.

Next it was off to Winterhaven Fl and the Brown Seaplane School to see if I could find a suitable place to taxi from airport to water. I wanted to do this in order to gradually make the transition from land plane to seaplane. I am a seaplane rated and checked out in the Lake amphibian but did not want to explore the Osprey's water reactions the first time at an 80mph touchdown.

Winterhaven and Brown school did not have the ramp or lake that I deemed necessary for my taste so I flew on north to Norfolk, Va.

There I spent a pleasant ten days with another cousin and his lovely family. While there, Bob Wilson, my cousin, drove me to Kitty Hawk to see the Wright Monument and the place from which the first heavier than air flight took place. The airport nearby is paved and 3000ft long but I was amazed to see the original launching rail the Wrights used and was impressed with their accomplishment on that cold December day in 1903.

I also took the opportunity to visit the Smithsonian Aero Space museum in Washington, DC. A person could spend weeks there and not see all of the Smithsonian!

Upon my return trip to California only a few events stand out from the routine. At Roanoke, Va I had difficulty starting the engine. Since the people at Beechcraft were not able to look at my engine for a few days, they gladly let me have space to trouble shoot. I found that the electric auxiliary fuel pump had failed and was leaking gas in the cockpit. I removed the pump and located a replacement in an auto parts store. Beechcraft only has 24 volt pumps and I needed a 12 volt one. Once replaced everything was fine.

Another experience was landing at Gila Bend, Arizona. The flight service station at Tucson said it was open when I left Tucson but big x's said it closed when I arrived. Since I didn't want to try for Yuma, I looked over the field carefully and saw equipment and men working on one end of the taxiway. I elected to land and pulled up to the gas pump. The construction crew said I could get gas by calling the county office, which I did. Shortly thereafter, a man and truck arrived and pumped gas for me and took me to town for a motel. The temperature was 110 degrees and field 3800 ft long. I decided air temperature would be better the next dawn and stayed overnight in an air conditioned room.

The next day it was on to Yuma, Palm Springs, Lancaster and finally San Luis Obispo. Seven thousand miles and two months later!

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