

Aviate, Navigate, Graduate

Joe Steim

T310R N816GH

[Editor's Note: The following is the travelogue portion of Joe's article on his RSTOL RAM IV T310R which was profiled in the October 2012 issue of The Twin Cessna Flyer magazine.]

Off to California

Departure morning. We waited a couple of hours for the heaviest rain and ceilings to lift a little to allow a return. On departure, CIG VV 400/1100 BR, on top at 9000. TRB NEG.

KFIT - KCAK

May 3 16Z

551 sm. 3hr. 65% power. 185 ktas FL120 36 gph 4.6 nm/g 107g

Nearing Ohio, rapidly building but still scattered CB to 20000 along a weak CDFNT, with numerous deviations heard on the radio just to our south. Fly the canyons - zooming in and out - terrific sensation of speed. Quite a bit quicker flying around buildups than in the 182. Passing the front, clouds gave way to nice weather for our first stop, KCAK.

KCAK - KLIT

742 sm. 4hr

12000 ft. 55% power. 4.6nm/g. headwind 30kt. 177 ktas. 148 ktgs 141g.

KLIT thin overcast. Hi 80's. Humid! Like July at home. We pick up the car from Central Flying Service and head straight to the Capital Hotel for refreshment. A downtown landmark, and a great stay - only 10 minutes or so from the field.. According to the hotel website: "The Capital opened in 1870, with President U.S. Grant staying as a guest not long thereafter [.....] and served as President Bill Clinton's local headquarters during his tenure as President." I can vouch for the most remarkable elevator, nearly capable of fitting the 310. Great restaurant and bar.

KLIT - KDHT May 4

632 sm 3:24 185 ktas 10000 another 30 kt headwind off the nose. 4.4nm/g

Morning -SHRA improved to clear skies and usual afternoon turbulence. We'd stopped at DHT 6 or 7 years ago, and remembered the V-tail Bonanza inside the FBO office.

Although the model of the Bonanza still graces the office, the real thing's been sold and replaced by an Ercoupe, in a nod to the owner's advancing age. Good for the light sport program. Keep 'em flying.

KDHT - KSAF

183 sm. 1hr. SKC! KSAF surface wind G30, but the suave, polished tower controller there smooths the bumpy ride down. Glad we're in the 310. The dry air feels good! We've been coming to NM on and off for business and pleasure for 30 years, and it always feels like home on arrival. Time passes at a different pace here. A couple days R&R. KSAF facilities are great, and we're on our way in a few minutes. SAF is a great place if you like good food. We hike around Baldy and Ghost Ranch. It would be a great spot for an early fall TCF seminar, before the snow flies. We stay at Bishop's Lodge this time, where Herbert Hoover thrashed out the plans for Hoover Dam. Dawn has time for a relaxing trail ride on the morning of our departure. LE takes 1 qt.

KSAF - KTUS May 6

434 sm 2:20

Turbocharging is great! KSAF density alt 8700. plenty of fuel and baggage. 1000fpm 130KIAS, exactly like sea level. To keep my new temporary dental crown attached, we stay above the worst of afternoon turbulence in cool air at 16000 and don the O2 masks. Altitude hold on the 400B gave speeds varying >30 kt over hilly terrain. We stayed high until the last possible minute. S-turns to descend around Rincon Mt and keep the engines warm. Still too high for 29R, switch to left base for 21. No traffic. Back taxi on 21 to Million air. The car is waiting with the A/C on, and we head to Hacienda del Sol, supposed hangout of Tracy and Hepburn. When built, it was an isolated oasis in the Sonoran desert. Surrounded by Tucson now, but still an oasis and the view from cabin #1 and the dining room overlooking the city can't be beat. Been to Pima Air and Space Museum 3 or 4 times, and every time is better than the last. Two lonely 310's, including a "blue canoe" are reverting to aluminum oxide in the outdoor yard. And lest we start thinking "we're pretty good pilots", there's a special aircraft and history there to think about: Louise Timken's (Timken Bearing Co.) red-leather upholstered Lear 23 N88B, that, as the docent explained, she flew to the museum over age 80, saying, "It's time we both had a rest."

KTUS - KPRB May 9

642 sm 3hr

Enjoyed an unusual tailwind westbound, and stayed below 12000 to avoid the nose hose. Nice airport and beautiful countryside - vineyards and grazing cattle. Time for a quick root beer float lunch in town, and back into the air for a late afternoon arrival at Napa.

KPRB - KAPC

204 sm 1hr

Fantastic view of San Francisco on our left, Golden Gate poking up through the haze. Although I didn't hear their radio calls, we were met at KAPC on short final by a squadron of red-winged blackbirds and, once down, a ring-necked pheasant follow-me escort. Good thing, since the escort had us hold on the taxiway for crossing jack-rabbit traffic. All within less than 60s. Welcome to the Napa, Ca, nature preserve and airport.

Made it on schedule for our daughter's graduation. At the same time, staying in touch with Bob Thomason heading for LA on an equally strategic mission. Aviate, navigate, graduate.

We stayed at the head of the Napa Valley in Calistoga, where things are a little quieter, and the weekend traffic on 29 a little less hectic. A nice, quiet group of very well appointed cabins within a few blocks of downtown - Cottage Grove Inn. Lot's of wine tasting (and shipping cases home). Must stop at Buster's BBQ in Calistoga. If you don't like huge slabs of pork or beef cooked to smoky, fall-apart perfection, you shouldn't go there. Catch the Antique and Hot Rod show on Main St. in Calistoga, and grab a burger at Gott's diner. Surfin' USA. Thomas Keller's Ad Hoc in Yountville. Of course all these places are staffed by friends and classmates of our daughter, so we enjoy an "industry discount", meaning we can barely self-navigate after taking full advantage thereof.

The big day, everyone assembled for the graduates - two years of chopping, dissecting, tasting, burning themselves, all at high speed. They're all good kids (some not kids!) with wide-ranging experience. They'll go places. We all assemble at the CIA headquarters, the cavernous former Christian Brothers winery. We sing the CIA anthem, toque's and whites off, a nice luncheon with future power-chefs. Then time to hit the Bocce court, and a last celebratory dinner at Oenotri in Napa.

KAPC - KBUR May14

394 sm 2hr

smooth. HZ. ILS8 circle 15

Top off the O2 at APC, and head down to KBUR for a business meeting. Our company is based in Pasadena, and our sales manager and his wife live in West LA, where the pace is a little quicker. Their daughter is married to a truly major Hollywood star, and they have a beautiful apartment with the patio doors open about 362 days/year overlooking LA. They're always fun to visit. We tour Beverly Hills looking as casual as possible for a couple of nerd Yankee twin Cessna drivers in his rag-top classic Mercedes. We stop for drinks at the Chateau Maremont, and dine at Craft. We do actually discuss business.

KBUR - KABQ May 15

705 sm - 3 1/4 hr

Beautiful warm morning for a trip back to NM. Another business stop this time. More or less direct, great view of Sedona. Large fires burning near Prescott. Climb to 17000 to stay above the smoke. Of course we had to pay for our westbound tailwind earlier with an eastbound headwind. As we exit runway 3 and taxi into Atlantic, I do a double-take. Wait a minute. I know the guy marshalling us in. It's George Slad - friend and colleague (and a great Twin Cessna pilot) who spotted us on Flightaware, and talked the line person into handing over the flashlights. That was fun. Time for a business meeting in the afternoon. Dawn heads to the Bosque del Apache preserve. A remarkable place. We stay at a relatively new hotel downtown, a former psychiatric hospital. Appropriate? Quite a place.

In the morning, I convince myself there is unusual staining of the right nacelle aft of the louvers suggesting an exhaust leak. Exhaust leaks are one of the few things that can bring down a turbocharged TC. Bode sends an A&P, and we decowl the right engine, and inspect thoroughly. No evidence of a leak. Must just be the bright NM sun. We clean the cowl. We top off the O2 and we're ready to go in an hour.

KABQ - KHUT May 16

550 sm 2 3/4 hr

Nice airport at HUT. We have about 80g fuel on board - we need a little reserve for the next leg, 700sm. I discuss with the friendly and alert lineman my fuel needs using the fateful words "top off" in relation to a couple of tanks and we stroll off to the restaurant. After a nice lunch, we're ready to go, and I head in to pay. Hmm. 173 gallons? I ask "where did you put it?". Here's where all 8 fuel tanks on this plane can turn into a liability. I was now carrying more than 250g of fuel, spectacularly over gross. In an effort to be helpful, the line guy topped off every fuel tank he could find. After explaining the problem, the folks there were fine and wheeled the plane into the maintenance hangar to off load about 100g. We all agreed this was a heck of way to earn a discount, and we were cheerfully on our way. They're good folks and we'll be back.

KHUT - KGGP

696 sm 3hr

We stop off to visit our good friends, Ron and Karen Guckien, grain farmers and fellow John Deere collectors in central Indiana. It's always relaxing to fly in low in the late afternoon over the beautiful Indiana farm country, the number of windmills notwithstanding. Logansport prides themselves on cheap fuel, and this was the cheapest of the trip, at \$5.50.

KGGP - KFIT May 17

772 sm 3 1/2 hr

Departing, as we climb out VFR to pick up an airborne clearance from Grissom, the Avidyne TAS620 traffic system earns its purchase price. Traffic! 12 o'clock! 1mi. 500ft above. I stopped the climb, and a Mooney passed directly overhead in a few seconds. The traffic system rarely scores such a save, but we would have surely had a very close call, if not worse. It strikes me that the traffic system should have found that target much sooner, and after taking a deep breath, I make a mental note to look into it. I have a Garmin GTN-800 in our 182, an outstanding system, and it would have seen that target 10 miles out. This July, I find the Avidyne booth at Oshkosh and describe the situation. Apparently a "known problem", and they suggest a return for "re-calibration". I did so this summer and now it works. The active traffic systems are terrific, and have helped avoid what might have been close calls many times, but they have to work right. Buy a Garmin.

On the home leg, we enjoy a nice tailwind. At only 65% power, we hit 221 kts ground speed in level flight. Of course the fastest of the trip, only about 100mi from home.

\$7200 fuel, 6500 mi. 32 1/2 hrs. 36g/hr. 1170g. \$6.15/g avg. 2 weeks. We picked airports and FBO's for convenience, not fuel price. We would have flown the 182 if we wanted to pay less. Great memories and great scenery. Tons of compliments on a great airplane. Several nice conversations struck up at FBO's with jet charter pilots who flew 310's themselves. Not inspected, suspected, or disrespected, or groped, poked or prodded trying to board a commercial flight.

It's been over a year now. About 150 hours. Some not-unexpected maintenance after the plane had not been flown much recently. Generally a clean annual from TAS Aviation. If I can wade into this... I love my 182. Yes, a high-wing is much better for sight seeing, and is a much better umbrella and sun-shade - if you're on the ground. But a low-wing is much more fun to *fly*. Especially a 310. Is it worth it? You bet.



Low and slow over central Indiana farm country.



Departing Albuquerque



Harvesting alfalfa in the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge



N816GH on the ramp at Burbank



The graduate, our daughter Molly on the left, with Master Chef Dieter and a classmate.



The Chapel at Bishop's Lodge made famous in Death Comes for the Archbishop



Final, Runway 20 Santa Fe



Departing right crosswind, Runway 8 Burbank



Departing Napa