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**Destination:
2,000 Miles in
a 1958 Pacer,
Part One**
p. 46

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FLIGHT TEST

Piper PA-32R-300

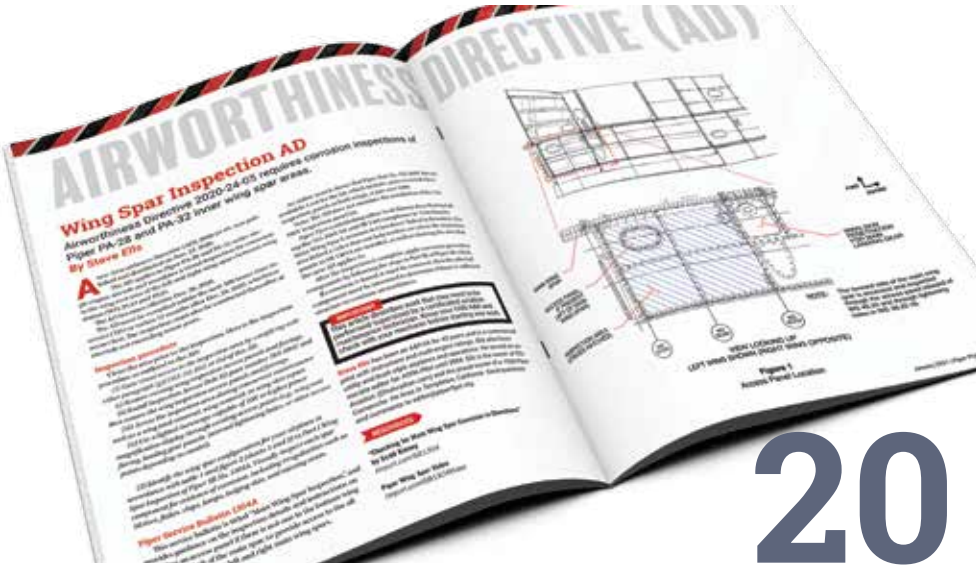
Lance

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**The (Not So)
Impossible Turn**
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Photo Keith Wilson.

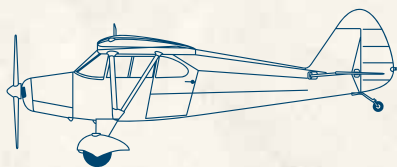
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SETTING THE PACE, PART ONE: 2,000 MILES IN A 1958 PACER

ION

Garrett McDaniel



Join **MATTHEW McDANIEL** on the start of a 10-state adventure, as he explores the freedom and adventure of flying a vintage airplane from California to his home in Wisconsin.

Aviation and aviating are not new to me. I've been around small airplanes since childhood. I earned a degree in Aerospace Technology and made professional piloting and instructing my career. In the 34 years since my first solo, I've logged almost 22,000 hours and flown 135 aircraft types.

Yet, that one deep-seated desire that every pilot harbors had remained unfulfilled. Aircraft ownership had eluded me.

There were always good reasons to avoid it—college debt to repay, new CFI wages, relatively young marriage, and terrible charter and regional airline pilot pay. Then, two multi-year airline furloughs, building a business, raising two kids (including saving for their college), home ownership, etc. I'd always tried to prioritize appropriately, and since I got to fly for a living, owning an airplane never seemed high on a priority list filled with work and family commitments.

Alas, time and circumstances change. Eventually, kids grow up, mortgages get paid off, college funds grow, job seniority and schedules improve, and excuses gradually fade. This is where I found myself a couple of years ago: out of reasons to tell the little devil on my shoulder, "Not yet." Thus, the search was on.

Over the course of two years, I shopped, researched, and test-flew multiple aircraft types. I narrowed my focus and eventually decided I needed a classic short-wing Piper. My criteria got rather specific: I wanted a tailwheel-converted PA-22 Tri-Pacer (often referred to as a PA-22/20) with at least 150 hp, a 1956 model year or newer, and at least basic IFR capabilities. I just missed out on a couple of really nice ones due to the fast-moving market. Finally, my timing aligned with what appeared to be a great choice. A deal was struck.

The only problem was that the plane was in San Diego, California, almost 2,000 statute miles from my home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Goal setting

I'd ferried literally dozens of General Aviation aircraft across the Rockies in years past. Each trip was unique and was always a learning experience. However,

all were in high-performance singles; mostly various Cirrus and Piper PA-46 models. Each aircraft type offered different challenges, but all were easily capable of climbing into at least the mid-teens.

In contrast, the 150 hp Pacer would likely struggle above 10,000 feet, get tossed about more readily in bumpy air, and have much tighter crosswind limits. With all that in mind, my route planning focused more on going *around* the Rockies versus across them.

My primary goal was safety, first and foremost. I didn't want to overcomplicate the planning, though. It was my intention to make this trip an adventure, to have fun, and to remain flexible to change routing and timing as weather (or other factors) dictated. So, I considered my route planning to be a guideline, versus set in stone. Not wanting to be pressured to reach any specific airport because I had hotel or car reservations waiting, I simply made no reservations whatsoever. Instead, I planned to utilize the truly unique system that exists at GA airports across the U.S.: courtesy, hospitality, and self-service.

The general route would take me over (or very near) 10 states. So, I decided, weather permitting, that I'd land in them all. This would have the added benefit of shortening individual legs, preventing me from having to push the little Pacer to its fuel-range limits (or my bladder to its man-of-a-certain-age limits).

In my past long ferry flight experience, the planning was as enjoyable as the flight (often more so). But, in this case, I wanted to extract the most joy from the flight itself as the adventure unfolded in an organic manner. Spontaneity, I hoped, would not be stifled by OCD-level flight planning.

False start and Day One

Initially, the plan was to complete the ferry with a friend/co-pilot. He and I had attended college together and progressed through our pilot training and ratings together. We'd remained friends for three decades since and looked forward to the shared escapade to come. As it often does, fate had other plans.

While we met as planned in San Diego, California, prepared and excited to begin the journey, a brake problem kept interrupting the local shakedown flights. After a frustrating three days, we made



Michael Tracy

The author offers a thumbs-up as his journey begins from Gillespie Field (KSEE) in San Diego, California.



The Glamis Dunes of California extend from the Salton Sea southeast to the U.S./Mexico border, near Yuma, Arizona. Also visible are the Pacer's aftermarket drooped wingtips and Cessna-style heated pitot tube. Both are STC modifications.



Nearing Imperial, California.

the hard decision to scrub the entire mission until the problem could be resolved completely. Leaving my newly acquired Piper in the seller's hangar at Gillespie Field (KSEE) in San Diego, we shared a row in the back of a northeast-bound Boeing that evening instead.

As soon as word came that the brake issues had been corrected, I looked for another hole in my busy schedule. This time, I'd be solo though, as my friend's schedule wouldn't align with mine.

The first opportunity was at the back end of one of my airline trips. The last day of that trip had me departing Indianapolis International (KIND) at oh-dark-thirty for Seattle-Tacoma International (KSEA). I'd gain three hours of daylight en route from Eastern to Pacific time and land in Seattle mid morning. From there, I jumped on a flight to San Diego International (KSAN) and arrived at Gillespie Field around noon. The Pacer was patiently waiting.

Having already had a fairly full day, I had no intention of using all the daylight remaining. Instead, I wanted the first leg to be relatively short. This would keep me close enough to return to Gillespie should any problem arise that day or the next morning while also putting me on the ground for the night before my energy tank got too close to empty. Thus, I chose to proceed only as far as Gila Bend Municipal Airport (E63) in Gila Bend, Arizona; a flight of around two hours.

The flight to Gila Bend was uneventful as I quickly learned to trim the Pacer to minimize my workload and fiddled with the power and mixture to determine where the engine seemed happiest. A small tailwind pushed me along as I paralleled the U.S./Mexico border. Abundant cabin air circulation kept me comfortable in the scorching heat.

Upon touchdown in Gila Bend, I felt three things: (1) Great satisfaction in having completed the first leg of my first-ever journey in a plane carrying my name on the title. (2) Pleasant surprise at how well the little Pacer had responded to my inputs to manage the afternoon turbulence en route and the stiff crosswinds at landing. (3) The oppressive heat on the ground! Upon landing, the temperature was 107 F, and the heat index approached 130 F!



The agricultural lands of California's Imperial Valley.



The author elected to use supplemental oxygen for all flight time above 8,000 feet msl. While not legally required, doing so greatly reduces fatigue, flying at altitudes well above his near-sea-level home area in Wisconsin.



Approaching Gila Bend, Arizona, doing 115 knots over the ground.



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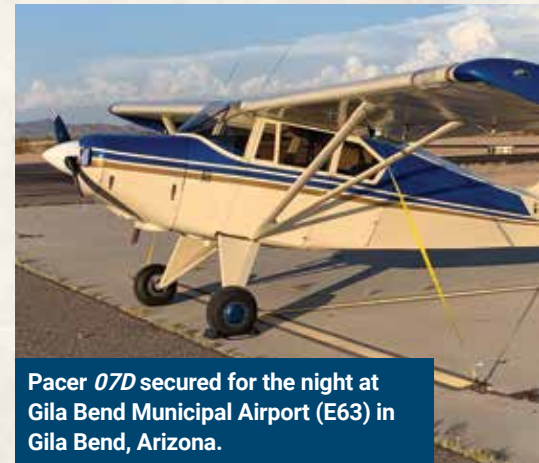
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Pacer 07D secured for the night at Gila Bend Municipal Airport (E63) in Gila Bend, Arizona.

By the time I had the plane chocked and grounded, with the fueling hose extended and the ladder in place, I was drenched with sweat. The little airport service building's air conditioning was struggling, but it was still refreshingly cooler than the blazing ramp. Seeing no signs of life, I used my phone to locate and call the nearest hotel.

When I asked if getting an Uber or taxi was a possibility, the reply I got was, "You must be at the airport." I laughed and confirmed I was indeed. She continued, "I heard you fly over. Only pilots ever ask for rides around here. I'll have the manager come and get you when you're ready." I thanked her and ventured back into the heat to top the tanks and secure the plane for the overnight. The hotel manager arrived within 10 minutes of my callback. Score one for small-town hospitality.

The hotel was nothing special and most of the guests were workers associated with a massive solar farm nearby. But the room was clean and comfortable, and the nearby convenience store would have to do for my dinner. I was too tired to care anyway. When I inquired about a ride back to the airport, I was simply asked, "What time?" I told them I hoped to take off at dawn. "No problem," came the reply. "I have to stay in the office all night in case of after-hours guests. Just call the office whenever you're ready."

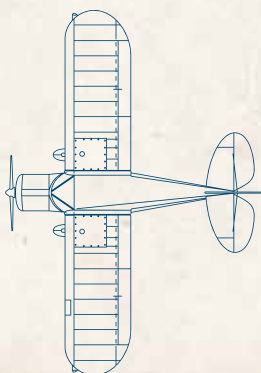
We'll pick up next month with Matthew's second day, where he ventures from Gila Bend across the vast expanses of the Southwest, with stops in New Mexico and Texas, before turning north-east toward Wisconsin.

..... DESTINATION



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Matthew McDaniel is a Master & Gold Seal CFII, ATP, MEI, AGI, IGI, and Platinum CSIP. In 34 years of flying, he has logged nearly 22,000 hours total and over 5,900 hours of instruction given. As owner of Progressive Aviation Services LLC (progaviation.com), he has specialized in Technically Advanced Aircraft and Glass Cockpit instruction since 2001 yet retains a passion for teaching in and learning about antique taildraggers. Currently, he's also a Boeing 737-series Captain for an international airline, holds eight turbine aircraft type ratings, and has flown over 135 aircraft types. Matt is one of less than 15 instructors in the world to have earned the Master CFI designation for 11 consecutive two-year terms. Send questions and comments to editor@piperflyer.com.



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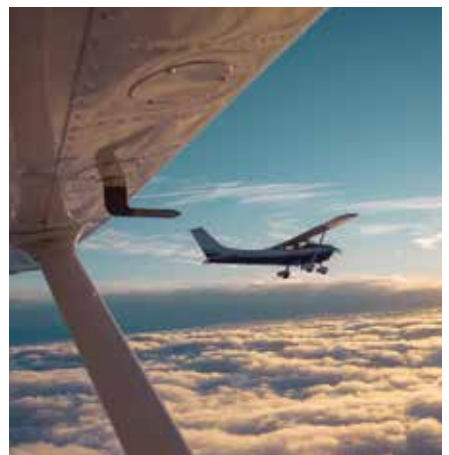
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**IS THE
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Cover: A Piper PA-19 of Aéroclub Renault, flying over the Seine. Photo Yves Chanoit.

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THE PACE,
PART TWO:

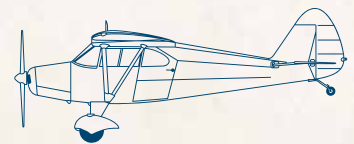
2,000

MILES

IN A

1958

PACER



**MATTHEW
McDANIEL**'s cross-
country odyssey in
his newly acquired
PA-22/20 Pacer
continues, from
Arizona onward
to his home in
Wisconsin.



Last month, we followed Matthew McDaniel's purchase of a 1958 Piper PA-22/20 Pacer, and the first steps of his 2,000-plus mile journey from California back to his home base in Racine, Wisconsin. We rejoin his adventure in Gila Bend, Arizona.

Day Two began at 0400. I was back on the ramp. The temp had only fallen to 91 F, but at least there was no abusive sun out yet. The weather forecast was excellent. I preflighted using an LED headlamp and taxied out in the dark, trying to time my takeoff to first light. As I applied take-off power, a red glow was just peaking across the eastern horizon and providing enough light for an emergency landing

should that need arise. I made a downwind departure and turned southeast, destined for state No. 3.

While I needed to reach 9,500 feet msl on this leg, I had plenty of time to make the climb from the 789-foot elevation of Gila Bend. I would pass north of Tuscon and the 9,157-foot Mt. Lemmon. The little Pacer went directly to 9,500 feet and was still climbing well when I leveled off there. This, in spite of the 11,300-foot density altitude and the OAT of +14 C (18 C above standard for that altitude!). Tracking roughly along Victor 94, I maintained at least 2,000 feet agl across the Galiuro and Winchester Mountains.

The terrain became relatively flat again as I approached my morning fuel stop at Deming City Airport (KDMN) in Deming, New Mexico. The descent was only half

as far as I'd climbed, thanks to Deming's 4,314-foot elevation. While descending, an inbound Citabria and I traded CTAF calls, but he was much further out, giving me the pattern to myself.

After I'd been refueled, the Citabria parked next to me. The pilot was ferrying the airplane from northern Indiana to Arizona and much of his route was identical to mine. I had to laugh when he implied my Pacer wasn't a safe choice for crossing this part of the country. I certainly felt I was at least as safe as he was in his vintage, VFR-only, Bellanca-built Citabria!

Deming quickly fell away as I climbed to 7,500 feet and headed towards Texas on what would be the only maximum-range leg of my journey. Going further south was required both to avoid large Restricted areas north of El Paso and to



West of Lubbock, Texas, is the appropriately named town of Levelland. The flatlands of West Texas are a mix of thousands of gas and oil fields and croplands with center-pivot irrigation systems.



The author enjoys the color palette of Caprock Canyons State Park (at the base of Texas' panhandle area).

reach the most significant milestone of my flight: Guadalupe Pass.

While Guadalupe Peak is 8,750 feet msl and the area south of it is often referred to as a “pass,” it really isn’t in a traditional sense. The terrain drops off sharply south of Guadalupe Mountains National Park and remains relatively low south of that. The Sectional shows that the Delaware Mountains south of Guadalupe only have peaks in the 5,500 to 5,800-foot range.

Southeast of Guadalupe, I turned the corner and began tracking a relatively direct course for home. With plenty of fuel left in the tanks, and only light turbulence, I flew another 200 nm to Hale County Airport (KPVW) in Plainview, Texas, where I landed after 3 hours, 15 minutes in the air (with 45 minutes of fuel remaining). The FBO lineman complimented my airplane and offered to fuel it for the same price as self-serve.

My original goal for the day had been to reach Plainview. But the weather was just too clear and beautiful to waste. So, in keeping with the spirit of the adventure, I decided to make one more leg and spend the night in state No. 5 instead. Elk City, Oklahoma, was just a bit over an hour’s flight time away, so I set off across the beautiful red rocks of the Texas Hill Country. It was a peaceful leg of sightseeing, capped off by the most sporty landing I’d had yet in the Pacer. Strong and gusty winds made for a humbling landing at Elk City Regional Business Airport (KELK). Welcome to the Great Plains!



As I was crossing the Illinois/Wisconsin border, one of the most amazing and memorable things in my entire flying career happened...

Parked at the self-serve pumps, I went inside to inquire about staying the night. The only person around told me the normal attendant was a friend of his who'd been called out of town on an emergency. He said, "I'm minding the store for him." He briefed me on the top-secret location of the courtesy car keys, the sneaky after-hours way back into the building on my return, the transient aircraft tiedown spots (front and center, basically), hotel choices, and his favorite dinner spots.

Then, he said he'd be leaving soon and to have a great night. After refueling and securing my PA-22/20, I headed to the nearest hotel and then walked across the street for takeout. With 8.0 hours logged that day, re-hydrated, and a full belly, I was asleep by sunset.

Day Three

Again, I woke hours before official sunrise, intending to be airborne at the beginning of morning civil twilight. Checking out before the hotel's continental breakfast began, and after learning of my journey, the motherly clerks insisted on assembling a to-go bag for me. Thanking

Descending into Keokuk Municipal Airport (KEOK). The city of Keokuk is situated in the extreme southeastern corner of Iowa, on the western banks of the Mississippi River.



Crossing the Mississippi River while climbing out of Keokuk Municipal Airport (KEOK). Departing Keokuk, pilots can be in Missouri, Illinois, Iowa (or all three states) within mere minutes of liftoff.



them sincerely, I loaded up the airport's old SUV and drove the short distance back to the airport.

I preflighted under the floodlights of the ramp and tried to return the hospitality by carefully replacing the chocks and tiedown ropes as I'd found them (woven through the fence rails to prevent the plains' winds from carrying them away).

The first leg would carry me 250 miles northeast, to Allen County Airport (K88), near Iola, Kansas. The whole flight was done with the sun low, in glassy smooth air. The Pacer trimmed out to hands off flying with only an occasional nudge of a rudder pedal required to stay the course. After a brief exchange with a local pilot near the fuel pump, I was there and gone before the

first airport employee arrived for the day.

From Iola, I could have easily made it directly home. But as you'll recall, I wanted to land in every state I crossed (just because I could). So, I picked an airport in Missouri under my otherwise direct route and headed for Lewis County Regional Airport (6M6), near tiny Monticello, Missouri. It was on this leg that I encountered the first real weather of any kind on the trip, though VFR conditions prevailed.

Based on the cloud bases and tops forecasts, I selected 5,500 feet as my cruise altitude. This allowed me to cruise in smooth air above the scattered to broken clouds for about an hour. After that, the clouds dissipated again, allowing a clear descent into Lewis County. I



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practiced a couple of landings there, then followed the Mississippi River about 20 miles north into Iowa, where I landed at Keokuk Municipal Airport (KEOK) in the town of Keokuk.

There, the AWOS transmission taught me the correct pronunciation of this picturesque river town is “Key-okay.” I self-fueled, addressed a minor cowl latch problem, conversed with a couple of local pilots milling about, and then launched for home.

A crossing of Illinois and the southeastern corner of Wisconsin is all that remained. But how could I fly an antique taildragger 2,000 miles without landing on a single non-paved runway? I simply couldn’t! Just east of the Quad Cities of Illinois and Iowa (can you name the four cities?) is the little town of Geneseo, Illinois.

Only 84 miles from Keokuk, the public-use airfield known as Gen-Air (3G8) would ensure I rolled the Pacer’s tires in fresh-cut grass as I checked off state No. 9. While no other planes were using Gen-Air, I shared the runway with a large tractor on mowing duty. I completed two full stop, taxi back landings, plus one touch-and-go, while the mower graciously kept clear of my path as necessary.

Departing Gen-Air, I set my course for the Pacer’s new home base of Batten International Airport (KRAC) in Racine, Wisconsin. Deciding to make the most of this final leg of my adventure, I leveled at 2,500 feet msl. Fair-weather cumulus clouds developed overhead while I

enjoyed the scenery of northern Illinois’ green farmlands, red barns, white wind turbines, and quaint little towns.

Then, as I was crossing the Illinois/Wisconsin border, one of the most amazing and memorable things in my entire flying career happened. Ahead, I noticed a large bird soaring at about my 10 o’clock position.

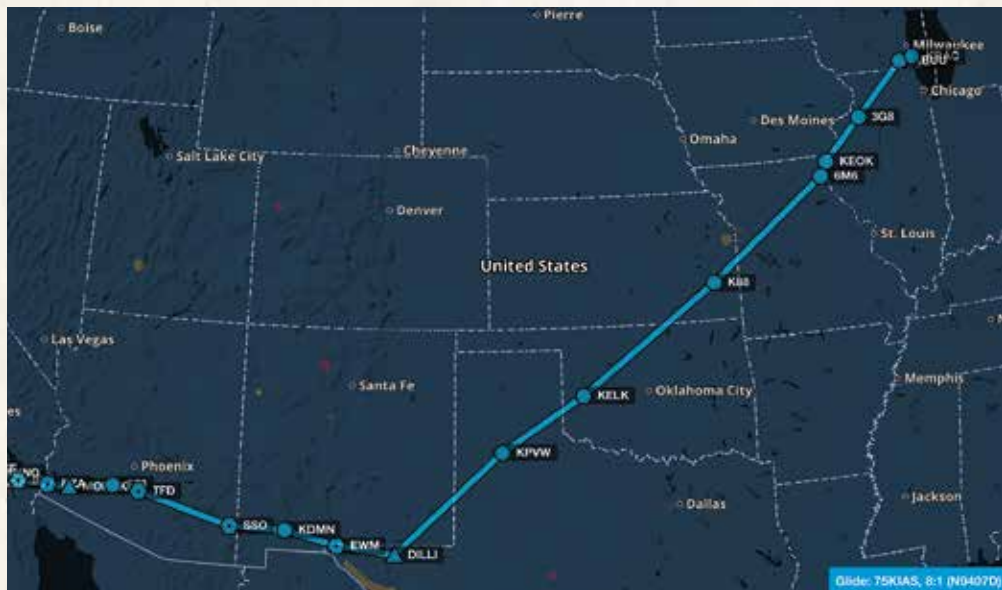
At first, I assumed it was a vulture or hawk searching for its next meal. But, as the Pacer closed the distance, the bird grew in size and detail, and its snow-white head and tail became unmistakable. As the bald eagle was being overtaken, I felt it would fold its wings and dive away at any moment (as most birds do when frightened).

The difference that day was that the great raptor was not in the least bit frightened. Instead, it continued effortlessly soaring along, level with me. As we were directly abeam one another, the graceful creature turned its head, looked directly at me, held its gaze for a moment, then re-streamlined itself and continued without the slightest adjustment to its flight path.

At the risk of sounding corny, I felt I was being welcomed home and Pacer *Zero-Seven-Delta* had been cleared to enter Wisconsin airspace by the mightiest of its winged inhabitants.

Post-flight (epilogue)

In retrospect, I could not have asked for better weather. That would not have been the case if the trip had happened



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a couple of weeks earlier as originally planned. During that time, Arizona and New Mexico were experiencing a truly blistering heatwave and squall lines battered the Plains states.

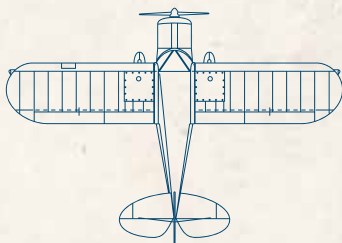
My little Pacer proved to be incredibly reliable during 17 hours of flying across 2.5 days, requiring only a minor adjustment to a cowl latch along the way. A post-flight inspection at home revealed a tailwheel steering chain connector needed to be replaced before another flight. Otherwise, not a mechanical hiccup of any kind was encountered.

I met a few airport characters along the way and encountered nothing but hospitality and good wishes everywhere I stopped. I paid for fuel, two hotel rooms, two dinners... and nothing more!

Any regrets? Just one.

I'd been so mesmerized by the stately presence of the bald eagle that I never even thought to get a picture or video to capture the moment until the moment was past. Some things are better captured by the human eye than a camera lens, anyway.

Matthew McDaniel is a Master & Gold Seal CFII, ATP, MEI, AGI, IGI, and Platinum CSIP. In 34 years of flying, he has logged nearly 22,000 hours total and over 5,900 hours of instruction given. As owner of Progressive Aviation Services LLC (progaviation.com), he has specialized in Technically Advanced Aircraft and Glass Cockpit instruction since 2001 yet retains a passion for teaching in and learning about antique taildraggers. Currently, he's also a Boeing 737-series Captain for an international airline, holds eight turbine aircraft type ratings, and has flown over 135 aircraft types. Matt is one of less than 15 instructors in the world to have earned the Master CFI designation for 11 consecutive two-year terms. Send questions and comments to editor@piperflyer.com.



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