

# J-2 Trek!

Episode #22; "Do I or Don't I??"  
Les "Col. Sparky" Gaskill



## Captain's Log;

Start Date: Thursday June 12th, 2008

Five plus inches of rain in Iowa. It's flooding and almost time to go.

Friday June 13th, 2008

Good or bad omen?? No matter. Off work at 3:30 pm, in the air at 6:00 pm. Clear skies, little to no wind, first stop Muscatine, I.A. Already farther from home than I've ever been in this airplane. Some car gas and on my way. Stop at Kewanee, IL at sunset. Secure use of courtesy car and off to the local country club for beer and a sandwich. Party with Amy and friends. Her birthday. I guess 39 she says 37. Still given all the birthday cake I can eat, fun time. Slept good under wing.

Saturday June 14th, 2008

In the air with the sunrise, looks to be another good day. Traditional stops at Morris, IL for breakfast and fuel. Restaurant closed. Secure use of courtesy car to IHOP and two more gallons of Car gas. Valpo (Valparaiso, IN) next. Three trips for car gas at truck stop a hundred yards away followed by fifteen minute nap then on my way. Kendalville, IN just after lunch. Annual Airport Day in progress. Secure one hot dog, one hamburger and more car gas. Say Hello/Goodbye to Jim and friends and on my way. It appears I am making about 70 mph, just barely faster than the trucks I see. Bowling Green OH. Secure use of courtesy car for two more gallons of car gas. Temperature approaching 75 degrees and getting windier. Still perfect though as I remain behind the big front from last Thursday. Norwalk, OH. My first 100LL. Three gallons from the credit card pump. Heading towards my first new airport of the trip, Akron,

*O.H. I am spotted by another aircraft that does a 180 and quickly catches me (easy to do) for a quick formation. This L-4 Cub, the "Maytag Messerschmitt", I've seen before and will again soon. Akron airport is loaded with all kinds of heavy iron. It's 7:00 pm and appears to be a good place to stop. Airshow is over for the day but the locals are not. I meet some neat people at this historic airport that night. Stories about the Rubber Bowl, Soap Box Derby track and of course the huge blimp hangar all literally within the boundaries of the field. Another cool night under the wing,*

Sunday June 15th, 2008

*On my way at sunrise once again, want to tackle the P.A. Mountains in the am. No wind, clear skies, still behind front. First stop Grove City, P.A. Local Life Flight helicopter pilot shuttles me three times for gar gas. I'd better go, temps 70 degrees plus, no wind, field elevation 1500 ft and density altitude increasing. Not my favorite airport as it's not always easy to climb up out of. I launch westward and uphill. The 40 hp Continental does its job. Clear trees by at least 100 ft. off this 4000 ft plus runway. Only one more takeoff planned, DuBois, P.A. with its higher elevation but longer runway and no trees. Then it's on to the terminus for this leg of my trip, Lockhaven, P.A. But wait, thirty miles short of DuBois its solid cloud cover (Fog!) on the mountains as far East as is visible. Divert to Franklin, P.A. Nice Airport and restaurant closed until 11:00 am, a 45 min wait. Let's try again. Slow, easy climbout (density altitude again). It looks clear back to DuBois. To late for breakfast so I have a salad for lunch. Cub gets three gallons of 100LL again, quick nap but right leg is hurting. Engine running great but has a squeak at idle, pukka, pukka, pukka, squeak! I'm sure I know the problem and will fix once at Lockhaven. After ten minute wide open throttle climbout I am high enough to cross the Eastern divide (approx. 2800 ft) and all towers in the area. Uneventful hour and ten minutes later arrive at Lockhaven. First comment heard from a line-man/friend "You flew that S\*#@box from Iowa??" Good to see you too buddy. Call to wife, "I've arrived". Call to my father as well. It's Father's Day. Now I can relax.*

Monday June 16th, 2008

*Relax, Re-acquaint and Rake (dead grass at campsite). Interviewed by local media. Cravings of breakfast scrapple and Genesee beer satiated. Leg really hurting. Don't sleep well.*



Tuesday June 17th, 2008

*Breakfast at "Second Cup" then off to Lockhaven hospital. Examination, X-rays. Diagnosis, pinched nerve in back. Issued pain pills, told to relax. No lifting, no alcohol. Back to airport to find engine squeak is being remedied. Gene Breiner has head removed from right bank and is searching for usable gaskets. "Thanks" Gene! Serviceable head gasket located, cylinder head bead blasted, surfaced and new nuts, washers, pal nuts plus copper spray gasket acquired. By early evening this apprentice learns proper maintenance from the expert (Gene). Cylinder heads were not torqued tight enough. I've still a lot to learn. Soon it's ready and it's off to Cal Arters party. No Genesee for me this evening but still it was a good time*

Wednesday June 18th, 2008

*Road trip. Gene and I head to Coudersport, P.A. Gene is a D.A.R. and has invited me to go along while he inspects and re-certifies a J-3 in that area. The Cub fine needed only minor adjustments. After an unexpected lunch a quick four wheeler trip is made on some local trails in this beautiful area. I really enjoyed the stories and knowledge Gene shared with me on the 180 mile round trip.*

Thursday June 19th, 2008

Time to Fly. The Cub runs fine. I fly it then Gene the Bill and Joel. All pronounce it a good flying A-40. I take some cute girls for their first J-2 ride and put the plane away with but one gallon of gas left in the fuel tank.

Friday June 20th, 2008

Breakfast with good friend Tom then back to work, Gene wants to do the other cylinder head. Same as before, blast, surface, condition gaskets, re-torque and fly. More rides given. Some J-2 formation flights. I believe the crowd likes this plane. Tonight I eat in Mill Hall, PA with local friends and I drink my Gennessee.

Saturday June 21st, 2008

Turnout for the big day of "Sentimental Journey" is smaller the year. Weather is the culprit. We have had rain and storms almost every night. I do a local sight seeing flight then park on the fly-in side for the day. A quick afternoon storm and many start heading for home. I here there is more bad weather coming. The local band tonight is very good (they have a different band each night of the fly-in) and after topping off my last "Genny" it's time for bed.



Sunday June 22nd, 2008

I say goodbye to lots of friends as they leave for home today. Not me though, I always stay late and do not plan to leave for a couple of days.

Monday & Tuesday June 23rd & 24th, 2008

I spend two days visiting local friends I've made in the last 20 plus years saying hello and goodbye to all. The last night I spend in the Greystone for my final good-byes and beers. The plane is ready and I'm ready for the trip home.

Wednesday June 25th, 2008

Rise, break camp, in the air and it's only 5:45 am. It's too early for this but I know I've got to get as far as I can in the cool, calm morning air. I follow I80 west for peace of mind and easier navigation. The seventy five miles to DuBois, PA takes one hour forty five minutes and is also my longest non stop flight yet. I arrive ten minutes after the lineman opens. Fuel, bathroom break and depart. Next stop Clarion, PA. Secure use of courtesy car for breakfast, fuel then on my way towards New Castle, PA. I look back one last time at the mountains and state that I probably won't see for another year. Depart New Castle at 12:30 pm. It's warming u outside but still CAVU. I feel good, plane is running great and flatland lies ahead. If next stop is last of day I've achieved my goal of getting out of the mountains early. Stop at Akron, OH once again for fuel. There is weather brewing out in Western, OH. Airborne again I can see darkness far ahead. Twenty miles further I stop at Wadsworth, OH to wait out the afternoon storm. Smart move. I quickly learn in this slow plane you must watch weather one state ahead as I feel this is not the plane to be flying in or around weather. At around 5:00 pm I meet the "Maytag Messerschmitt" pilot and his wife. They invite me to stay in their hangar and offer a car to drive. Tempting.... but It looks good so I head out. Forty minutes later it's getting rougher and dark ahead. I think I will go back for the sure thing. Ken and his friend Brian take me out for supper and hangar flying session.

Thursday June 26th, 2008

Yucky! It's going to be one of those days. Fast moving low scuddy clouds will turn into big storms as the heat and humidity of the day comes on. I end up hanging with the locals at the strip and catching up on my missed sleep from the night before. That night it rains like the floods of Iowa have moved to Ohio!

Friday June 27th, 2008

Low ceilings and haze. No bother to a slow Cub. Off I go and it's improving all the while. I stop at Willard, OH for two gallons of car gas and one gallon of 100LL. Nice airport but I can't stay. On the next leg something happens that I've not prepared for or given much thought to. I'm tooling along over beautiful countryside on an equally beautiful day, waving at smiling farmers and ladies hanging out clothes to dry. I reminisce of my friend Wayne Amelang who did the beautiful job of restoring this plane. Who granted me the next ownership. Oh how happy he would be knowing his ship is on this journey. I am a lucky man to live in this day and this country where I can still fly on such grand adventures. It hits me, and I am welling up inside, there is a lump forming in my throat. I am shouting as loud as I can....."THIS IS SO COOL.....THIS IS SO COOL!!" and even the tears were flowing. Several miles go by before I compose myself and get back to flying. Findlay, OH is dead ahead and I suspect there's weather looming. Fuel, bathroom and a cursory glance at radar shows weather ahead in Indiana. I won't get much father today. Heading SW (to keep Lima, OH as an alternate) I scoot to Van Wert, OH. The airport manager is so happy to see my neat airplane and goes out of his way to help me (more of why this is so cool!). Hangar for the night, a courtesy van, shower and a couch to sleep on in the CAP office. Quick trip



to town renders the only souvenirs for my wife. Two cookie cutters, light (important) and small. Also stop in the restaurant that serves the best pie in Ohio. Mmm good. Later that evening I again bicycle to town to listen to a local band in the park and drink a couple of beers. I like this town of Van Wert.

Saturday June 28th, 2008

Lousy morning. Windy, rainy. After trip to town for breakfast and killing time I depart around 2:00 pm. Now it's windy and hot. Forty miles to Ft. Wayne, IN, Smith Field, and it takes slightly over one hour. Not fun, but making headway. Courtesy car secured to get fuel and take a break. Not eager to go on but daylight is burning. A precarious takeoff and I'm on my way. It's rough and WINDY! Navigation is easy and skies are clear. I keep looking back at Ft. Wayne sky scrapers. Am I moving?? My goal Warsaw, IN thirty five miles distant. I estimate one hour flying time. Wrong! It takes one hour twelve minutes for the lowest ground-speed of the whole trip, 29 mph. I'm done. Maybe tomorrow will be better. Super at the sub-shop then sleep on the hangar couch.

Sunday June 29th, 2008

I wake and start to wonder. Four days headed home and I'm just over halfway. When will I get home? I miss my wife. My weather window out opens again in the afternoon but I see weather forming in Illinois on radar. Up route 30 I head to Plymouth, IN and an unattended airfield. No bother, gas station is across the street. Will I make Valparaiso, IN my next stop? It's still warm but not as windy and looks clear. It soon changes ten miles out and looks dark up ahead. Ten more miles and I know I will not make it. I head towards Knox, IN and hope someone is there. Near town I pass my first auto headed my direction, a Model A Ford. For a moment it's just him and I back in the 30's again. The airport assistant manager gets me a hangar and van for the night. I watch the storm build and it unloads big time just east of my location. Glad I've stopped. I've gotten fifty more miles under my belt. How far will I get tomorrow?? Pizza and beer in town and tonight I sleep in the van.

Monday June 30th, 2008

It looks good out, CAVU and light winds. I opt for breakfast in town and bring more fuel than away I go. Head straight for Kankakee, IL. Arrive and it's still morning after a fifty five mile leg (that's something after the last two days total trips). Fuel with 100LL (all that's available) and depart. I start to dream, I could make it home today! Twenty eight miles to Dwight, IL and I stop again. It's another new airport to me and I'm glad I stopped. The owner is a life long resident and flying farmer who knows all my flying farmer friends back home. I feel I'm getting close now. Quick trip to town for fuel and a long talk then on my way. Watch out, wind generator towers ahead. They are fascinating to watch and really tall (around 550ft). They are also not turning today. It must be maintenance day as I know I am fighting headwinds. At Illinois Valley, IL I secure the courtesy car (real junker but beats walking) to get lunch and two gallons of gas. I then top off with one gallon of 100LL, cost \$5.81. I'm teased by pretty receptionist for my big purchase. Now 2:30 pm with 170 miles to go. Will I get home before sunset at 8:30 pm? It will be close. Forty three miles later stop at Kewanee, IL. Fuel, bathroom break and on my way. Next stop Iowa! It takes one and a half hours but I'm back in my home state. I've just flown one state in one day and still going. Only seventy miles to go and two and a half hours of day

light, I'm not stopping now. The maps are put away and I relax and enjoy this last leg home. I stop in Washington, I.A just to stretch my legs and prolong the ending. Happy to be home but sad the trip is ending. No one to greet me at the home airport but that's OK. I've just flown 800 miles in twenty hours flying time over six days. I'm happy and exhausted but already looking forward to next year.



### Epilogue

*Do I or Don't I ?? I'm Glad I did !!*