



Six Days and Five Nights

Lilo Steffen, Student Gyro Pilot

Flight From Danbury, Connecticut To Santa Fe, New Mexico in Manfred's Homebuilt Experimental Gyro

N71Ml, 06-24-02 - 06-29-02

At the end of all the travel, we see Manfred and his Magni Gyro coming into the Santa Fe Airport, right on schedule.

Day 1

We are moving from New Canaan, Connecticut to Santa Fe, New Mexico and have decided to fly our home-built gyro to our new home. Friends, Rich and Christy, have volunteered as our ground crew, to drive our car and tow quite a big trailer. We plan to meet every evening for the night stops; share our experiences; replace the T-Shirts - and potentially – retrieve spare parts. We are quite excited about the adventure lying ahead. The route has been carefully planned, subject to a compromise between our 2 hours plus reserve range; en route altitudes; an even split of the total distance between the six days we have allocated and good access to the airports from the freeways for the ground crew - a planning nightmare!

We start out from Danbury at 10 a.m., in good weather, calms winds, sunshine; it's a little hazy here and there.

We fly over the Poconos Mountains. They are pretty, with a sprinkling of picturesque little lakes, wooden houses hidden in the forest, people boating and swimming. Past the Appalachians, we continue over hilly, lush green farmland; all getting flatter by the hour. Could be somewhere in Bavaria, the Schwarzwald or Switzerland. Our altitude is mostly

1000 ft above ground; the ground speed varies between 60 and 70 mph.

I'm sitting on the back seat, the GPS attached to my



Manfred and Lilo flying out of St. Genivieve; the beginning of Day 4. Air to air photo thanks to Steph and Greg Gremminger, flying along in their new Magni.

left thigh. I help Manfred fly straight to our refuelling stops, giving corrections, checking frequencies and airport information. In Class C airspace or more difficult areas with MOA's and restrictions, Manfred handles the GPS himself. I am getting a lot of cross-country training!

The flying is great. Despite the quite warm temperatures on the ground (90° plus), it gets nice and cool at 3000 ft. We decide to wear long thermal underwear, our cotton pilot suits, and for me an additional warm pullover. Perfect for flying! In the backseat it's a little cooler, draftier and after all, I'm a woman and I thus have the right to feel cold.

Everything goes smoothly. In the evening, we are happy to meet Rich and Christy in a good mood at our final 1st Day destination at Johnstown, Pennsylvania. We are hunting for a nice bar and dinner, celebrating our successful first day with a well deserved margarita!

DAY 2

Start at 10 a.m., weather fine, hazy again. Flight I and II are lovely, over hilly and green Ohio. Much wheat has been harvested already. We enjoy the herb scented fresh air, but near Pittsburgh it turns into a stinky smell. We also see the flooded areas, caused by heavy rains of the previous week.

Manfred needs some fun with his toy and does some flying at lower altitudes over fields and lakes, waving at boats and children splashing in swimming pools. That is the ultimate feeling, exciting and surely the difference between flying a Gyro and a Jumbo jet.

At KLHQ, we are offered a nice clean courtesy car to drive downtown for lunch. We enjoy a wonderful Mexican Taco salad. Mostly, we live on granola bars and

Coke during the flying hours.

Gradually the weather changes to clouds, a report of isolated thundershowers for I69 is forecasted. We push ahead to get to the last stop of the day, keeping in mind our alternates. With a lot of luck and getting a little wet, we land just before a really impressive thunderstorm. As soon as our gyro is parked in a hangar, all hell breaks loose. Lightning strikes an outside power line. Even in the hangar, a metallic light makes at least me feel a little frightened. In shock I am tempted to throw the GPS away. Everybody runs to the exit to check on the cables dangling from the blackened pole.

We make it again without problems, and we are happy to be at the planned destination. Our ground crew arrives just in time: steady as a scheduled travel operation. Rich had to repair the CD player, so the entertainment for the long route is ensured, which, of course, is important!

Their question of the day: is Christy's hair red - or what? All men seem to think so, they obviously can't distinguish between Irish reddish, chestnut - and probably focus more on other features than hair colour. After a relaxing jump in a swimming pool, we have our daily margaritas and ribs and all lust for the same: sleep! Worried about the weather next day (me), we sink into our pillows!

DAY 3

Blue Skies, some remaining clouds from yesterday's rain, it looks good again! Every morning the same procedure: At 6 a.m. Manfred talks to the FSS Weather service: they forecast more or less good to very good conditions. Still, it seems to be standard procedure to suggest "... VFR flight is not recommended..." Could this possibly be



Manfred, coming to a full stop at Santa Fe Airport. This was the final destination of Manfred's and Lilo's Six Days and Five Nights. A safe and enjoyable journey, arriving at their final destination within 4 minutes of the original ETA.

because there is a cloud somewhere in Alaska? Manfred is optimistic and it pays off: from now on, no more rain, fewer and fewer clouds, just about perfect VFR flying for the rest of the trip. Despite the daily recommendation, not to fly VFR!

Truth is, that in this summer heat, thunderstorms can and do develop. That means, cautious planning and being "home" by the afternoon. So that's what we do! It also means getting up and starting early. Poor ground crew, they also have to get up early to deal with the logistics and putting bags back into the car. Our gyro holds two people; some gas and enough space left for one credit card, so all the luggage goes by car. Anyway, we in our gyro are a little faster, so we always manage to meet within one hour after our last stop in the afternoon! Professionals at work!

Today, it will be a long day: We fly in very good weather, again living on our granola bars and coke, trying to save time at the refuelling stops. We ride over treetops, rose perfumed fields and meadows, grazing cattle, goats, and sheep. To be so close to mother earth and see this big country with all the transitions from east to west leaves us with wonderful impressions!

We fly along the Ohio River, pass over green, pretty countrysides. Quite often, it reminds us of Africa, also South America or Italy. Long stretches are without any houses or signs of life. It's a big country!

We cross the Mississippi and arrive at Perryville, Missouri, exactly as planned at 3 p.m. Our on-time arrival rate could challenge any airline!

Greg, Magni Distributor/Instructor and our good friend, pulls in the very same minute. We are glad to see him and his wife, Steph, again. Greg is checking over our gyro and performs some adjustment on the rotor tracking to achieve perfection. I get refresher training for two hours in his brand new dual control gyro and receive my endorsement to continue flying as a student pilot. We have dinner with Greg and Steph, dive deep into our pillows, a "little" tired. After all, it has been a long day!

DAY 4

The weather is super! Great for flying again! We take off in Perryville with Greg and Steph flying formation for a photo shoot and for waving good-bye! What great people! We continue over endless forests, no single person seems to be living here other than a fire watchtower here and there. At every airport, we are warmly welcomed. Immediately, a little crowd gathers around our pretty gyro-plane, asking interested questions and digging for details. We meet many envious flyboys!

Its getting warmer, in the 100°, and we either walk as fast as we can to the air conditioned operations room, or tear off one or two pieces of clothing. Still, we feel comfy with our layers of clothing in the air. The gyro's cooling system is working hard, so Manfred takes off a cover that blocks part of the radiator, and which was intended for cooler areas, such as Connecticut. Now the Rotax 914 runs a flat 30 degrees cooler.

At 3DW - a clean, neat airport - we find we are only the second airplane to land on the dance-floor like brand new runway - a really classy airport manager invites us for

lunch. It's only few miles and a short hop, but we have the feeling of having made a friend again, like so often during this trip! We are pleased to skip our granola bars for today.

After landing at KJNP, the tower asks us where we all come from. "Connecticut" obviously seems too far away, that's why he is asking again and still cannot believe it. Everybody is even more surprised when they learn that our final stop will be Santa Fe. A swim in the pool helps again to recover from a long day in either gyro or car, so does the beer in the nearby Aussie-bar "Outback", the Lobster at the "Lobster House", and a good night's sleep. Provides power for a new great day! There is an air show on at the weekend; unfortunately we cannot stay. We would have loved to give the crowd a nice demonstration of what a gyro can do.

DAY 5

6 a.m. and Manfred talks to Flight Service, as usual; again a beautiful forecast. It sounds, looks and is good! We are lucky, because the weather throughout the USA is really bad: Thunderstorms, heat waves, floods. We escape everything, are always ahead or past the bad stuff! Our timing is outstanding; we are getting better every day! Planning flights, hotel reservations, packing, meeting our ground crew. Sounds to me like a perfect American/German/Swiss run operation.

Today, we fly along the Cimarron River, anywhere between 500 and 1000 feet. Most exciting, to fly formation with the birds, watch the sandbanks change into reddish flowing waters, left turn, right turn, a bridge, a road vanishing into nowhere...Just Manfred and me, nobody and nothing else in this world counts. The connection to nature is very intense. Even our movie clips won't tell the real story. It's quite emotional.

The red soil down below is very attractive and stays with us for more than one day. Green bordered rivers, grazing cattle, beautiful horses, goats, birds, the smell of flowers and cropped fields. The way they are ploughed they look like artful drawings. Few houses, nobody home! A lot of wrecked cars lie in old, retired drive-in cinemas.

Elk City is not so very pretty, but we all enjoy a fun evening. After our first beer in an old dark bar, we play a round of pool-billiard (Rich and I win); have a great tasting Mexican dinner and a lot of delicious ice cream. To improve digestion, we go for a ride in a merry-go-round, acting way outside our age group. Every evening, we feel in our head and bones, what we have done. Manfred and I are tired from too much fresh air, whereas Rich and Christy suffer from a lack of being outside. They ride more comfortably, but we get the good smells and the VIEW. We all sleep well, as usual. We are very grateful, that everything is going so smoothly and hope the same for the next day, our last exciting leg. Next morning, Manfred and I will drive to the airport with the courtesy car, so the ground crew has an easier access to the highway.

DAY 6

6 a.m. A cheerful briefer at Flight Service forecast the best of all possible weathers, very little headwind, maybe 5 miles per hour. It will be another long day, 5 legs and a steep climb to Santa Fe. Up to more than 9000 feet flying altitude. We plan to meet the ground crew at Santa Rosa Airport. This, just in case I will have to ride the last leg instead of flying with Manfred (temperature, actual winds, limited experience at such high altitudes with the gyro, might make this a necessary precaution).

The first landing of Day 6 is at 2E7. They don't sell gas there at all, but we need to land there for refuelling or walk the last 20 miles to Amarillo. Airports become a little scarce out here. So we call ahead, to make sure that someone will bring us a canister of gas. It works. The landing strip surely was built before World War II and the wind-sock must be from the same time, now torn to shreds. The "Airport Manager" is waiting with the canister, we refuel and off we go. Everybody offers us assistance. We have a good feeling, flying the Wild Wild West. Due to time pressures, we have to refuse the next invitation to use the courtesy car for lunch in town so we live on crunchy bars again! The ground beneath is changing from red soil and green fields to big flat brown fields. Harvest is in!

During the next landing at Tradewinds Airport in Amarillo, it's time for me to get rid of the warm pullover, since I am still flying with thermal underwear and a pilot's suit. Manfred is wearing Shorts, T-Shirt and his suit.

All of a sudden, New Mexico opens up, giving way to steep rifts, dry sandy earth; speckled with all sizes of rocks, pine trees. It's getting really hot, there are gusty cross winds, getting stronger at altitude. The rotor turns faster in this thin air given the same load and the engine wants to run too fast – but holding back the throttle a bit solves that problem. Manfred decides to fly low to improve our endurance. He is fully concentrating on throttle and stick; I'm not even allowed to stretch my stiff legs in the air. We see deer, also dead cows lying on the dry soil. We chase a fox. Heia Safari!

Since there is so little traffic in this area, we have to make sure that somebody is attending the desert Santa Rosa Route 66 Airport (the runway is part of the old, famous route). We need fuel to reach Santa Fe. And it works again. Now, wetter and variable but strong winds are adding stress to the last leg to SAF. Manfred decides to leave me behind with the ground crew to travel by car. He flies the last and final leg to SAF without me. It is very bumpy; luckily strong tailwinds (we could have made it together after all) take him safely to Santa Fe. In the meantime, I alert friends to get out to the airport, to witness Manfred's landing. Reunited at the pretty Adobe style airport SAF an hour



Celebrating with their friends and cohorts, after everyone's successful arrival at SAF. L - rt: Manfred & Lilo, Christy & Rich

later, we all cheer with a bottle of champagne. Friends surprise us with this nice gesture, which makes us feel home already.

The Adventure is over! We are very, very happy! We relax and celebrate. Like in Hollywood: an Oscar goes to ...surely Manfred! He deserves one for the planning, airmanship, coordination and professional execution. And an Oscar goes to....Rich for driving our car and trailer without the slightest problem, no moaning and always being in a good mood. And for his perfect planning of the ground operation.

And we thank, of course, everybody who has helped us fulfill our dream of this USA-crossing, mainly all the nice people we met at 23 different airports.

Soon, pictures and movies will be on our website. We invite you to visit at www.acelosangeles.com/gyro.

SIX DAY & FIVE NIGHTS continued next page

Flight with Manfred's Experimental Gyro "N71ML" from 1



Pictures this page: (top - bottom; lt - rt)

Lilo, cleaning the prop at Ste. Genivieve, Missouri; Visiting with the Santa Fe Jet Center managers, lt - rt, Night Mgr, Luis Pedroza; Airport Mgr, Bill Wagner; Leuthard; Manfred & Lilo as they begin their taxi when first taking off from Danbury, Connecticut airport.

DAY	DATE	LEG	FROM	TO	FROM
1	06-24-02	I	KDXR	KMPO	DANBURY MUNI
		II	KMPO	KLHV	
		III	KLHV	KJST	
2	06-25-02	I	KJST	8G8	JOHNSTOWN
		II	8G8	KLHQ	
		III	KLHQ	189	
3	06-26-02	I	189	K62	CLAIRMONT CO
		II	K1MS	KFRH	
		III	KFRH	KCUL	
		IV	KCUL	K02	
4	06-27-02	I	K02	KFAM	PERRYVILLE MU
		II	KFAM	KTBN	
		III	KTBN	3DW	
		IV	3DW	KJNL	
5	06-28-02	I	KJNL	2F8	JOPLIN RGNL
		II	2F8	KGOK	
		III	KGOK	20B	
		IV	20B	KELK	
6	06-29-02	I	KELK	2E7	ELK CITY MU
		II	2E7	KTDW	
		III	KTDW	KTOCC	
		IV	KTOCC	Q58	
		V	Q58	KSAF	

6

23

We flew 23 legs in 8 days, used 167.6 gallons of gas during 29:04.00 hours, an Our ground crew drove 2232 miles and used 192 gallons of gas.



anaan, CT to Santa Fe, NM 08-24-02 - 08-29-02

TO	TIME	GALLONS	GALL/HR
POCONO MOUNT.	1:31	5.5	5.6
WILLIAM T PIPER	1:41	9.0	5.8
JOHNSTOWN CAM:	1:30	8	5.3
HARRISON CO	1:31	10.3	6.8
FAIRFIELD CO	1:20	7.9	6
CLERMONT CO	1:22	8.5	6.5
GENE SNYDER	WAYPOINT		
MADISON MUNI	1:20	7	5.3
FRENCH LICK MO	0:59	6.2	6.2
CARMI MUNI	1:19	7.9	5.9
PERRYVILLE MO	1:25	8 cargos/Greg	5.5
FARMINGTON RGNL	0:40	4.3	6.1
WAYNESVILLE RGN	1:32	9	6
SPRINGFIELD DOWNTOWN	1:11	6.9	5.9
JOPLIN RGNL	1:15	7.5	6.4
SKIATOOK MUNI	WAYPOINT		
WILLIAM POGUE MU	1:39	10.3	6
GUTHRIE MUNI	1:09	6.8	5.8
HINTON MUNI	0:49	5	6
ELK CITY MUNI	0:48	4.9	5.9
MC LEAN GRAY	0:56	5 cargos	5.5
TRADEWIND	1:07	6.0	6.2
TUCUMCARI MU	1:31	6.3	4.2
SANTA ROSA ROUTE 66	1:05	6.1	5.8
SANTA FE MUNI	1:15	6.5	5.2

29-04-00 157.5

6.821739

of 5.8 gall/hr. We flew 1800 stat Miles.



Pictures this page:
top: Lilo out of flying gear having arrived at their new home in Santa Fe; bottom lt - rt: Manfred studies the map in preparation for another day's flight; at Ste. Genivieve Airport with Greg & Seph Gremminger's Magni in background, Lilo and Manfred examining their ship after a full flight day.

