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CAPTIVATING COMPER



RENO RACES
AN LAA PERSPECTIVE

TOURING THE US
IN A RAND KR2

ZENAIR BUILD
PLUS STRIP & HANGAR

BEAGLE PUP
PROTOTYPE SAVED

SERVICE AWARDS
MEMBERS RECOGNISED



TOURING AMERICA

THE EASY WAY

Part three of Colin Hales' amazing round the world tour in his Rand KR2

Well it is easy... all one has to do is sit there and look out of the window while America passes by under the wings. And it really has been refreshing – no landing fees anywhere, even amongst the Jumbos, sensible and plentiful air traffic control and good guidance whenever it is needed, once the language barrier is overcome.

There's cheap fuel at just 75p a litre, a pilot's room at virtually every field and sometimes even a courtesy car for you to use as you see fit. It's a country too that has every conceivable landscape, from golden beaches to everglades, deserts, forests, prairies, salt lakes and mountains. I've crossed America three times now in *Itzy*, my KR2, and gone up and down the east and west coasts, while hunting out history, aliens and aviation heritage. And I've loved every single minute, except for about two – but he was an idiot...

I have gained a perpetual dilemma though – what to say to the people I meet whenever I land somewhere new? Initial interest comes from the German registration on my aircraft – well 'C' is for Canada so 'G' must be for Germany right?

“Where you from boyyy?”

En route for Anchorage, Alaska, where *Itzy* has been laid up until Spring 2016, when Colin hopes to enter Russia

“England sir.”

“Well what you'all doin in a German plane?”

Most air traffic controllers tell me “Nahh, you've got your tail number wrong!” or repeated it back incorrectly. Some complain about my poor radio transmission, because they couldn't understand my calls... there's nothing wrong with the radio, it's the accent they couldn't understand.

Arriving back in Canada, on the way up to Alaska, I was told by Victoria Tower to, “Report one mile out.” When I asked them which runway they were using, they replied I could “Land on the taxiway or on the apron!”

I replied, “My normal procedure was to land on a runway.”

With disdain, I was offered the very end of Runway 19. The Canadians do things differently I know, but surely I shouldn't land on the taxiway, even though it was big enough? Through a mist of confusion and doubt, I called final for 19, only for them to reply “Oh sorry

Papa Lima, we thought you were a helicopter!”

Amongst a crowd of enthusiastic well-wishers, and I love the American and Canadian enthusiasm, I feel that whatever I say as an introduction, somehow I was just not going to win. Normally the first questions are, “Where are you from?”, “How did you get the plane here?” and “Why are you here?”, followed by “What statement are you trying to make?” “Is this to protest about Global Warming?” “Are you trying to prove that you don't need much money and a flash plane to travel the world?”

Any true answer put despair in the eyes of the crowd and Monty Python humour is completely lost on them.

I've tried saying, “I'm doing it for World Peace and to save the whale!” and “If I had lots of money and a flash plane, I would be going around the world in the flash plane instead of my KR2, and I'd buy a bigger tent.” No one seems to believe the fact that I'm just doing this because I like the challenge, I love travelling and my KR is the only aeroplane I have. There is no more to it than that. Sometimes I wish there was! If I get the map out and show them my intended route, that also brings out a gasp. “You are going through Iran?”

Trying to explain that I've done it before



Colin met round-the-world gyroplane pilot Norman Surplus at Nantucket; he was heading eastwards for home, Colin was heading west.



(Above) Yes, believe it or not it does all fit into the KR!

and I've got friends there and that the American's really shouldn't want to nuke my friends so readily, can bring frowns of disbelief.

The result of all this confusion was that sometimes I didn't want to say anything, just park up in the far corner and run from the aeroplane. Then once I'd seen all I wanted to, I jumped back in and flew on. Then people contacted me later, wondering why I did not say hello, as if I'd been rude. I just cannot do the right thing. I've also virtually stopped writing articles or reports, and I don't do any more interviews for newspapers as I've always been misquoted.

I try not to need help. I've got plenty of tools and spares on board but people are so eager to offer assistance that it seems rather rude to refuse them. I think they see it as a way of being part of the journey, one they wish they could be on, and who am I to refuse them that opportunity? Sometimes I even have to remember where I put my wallet as I may not have used it in days as people insist on paying. I've been invited out for dinner, breakfast, lunch, to have my hair cut, to pay for my fuel, all to be a part of the journey. Then,



understandably, the good friends I meet want to be able to continue to follow me on my journey, so I have had to start a website to enable them to do so. I have enjoyed the radio interviews though; I've got a big mouth and I like talking, and you can't be misquoted on live radio. Sometimes the interviews opened up avenues to see the local way of life and their community in a way I'd not seen before. A win/win situation. But then I wasn't doing things quite the way I would have liked, freedom to choose was being compromised, so I went back to parking up in a corner and sleeping in my tent, even though I had received multiple invitations. I'd rather sleep in my tent than stay with one family and possibly annoy others, and I could come and go as I pleased. This journey I feel could easily get out of hand and beyond my feeble control.

There is also one very real problem with the journey – at some point I'm going to have to try and fly through Russia and into Japan. Blow your own trumpet in the media too much and then fail, well you could end up looking very silly. I always say, "I'm trying to fly around the world," never that "I am," as that would be too

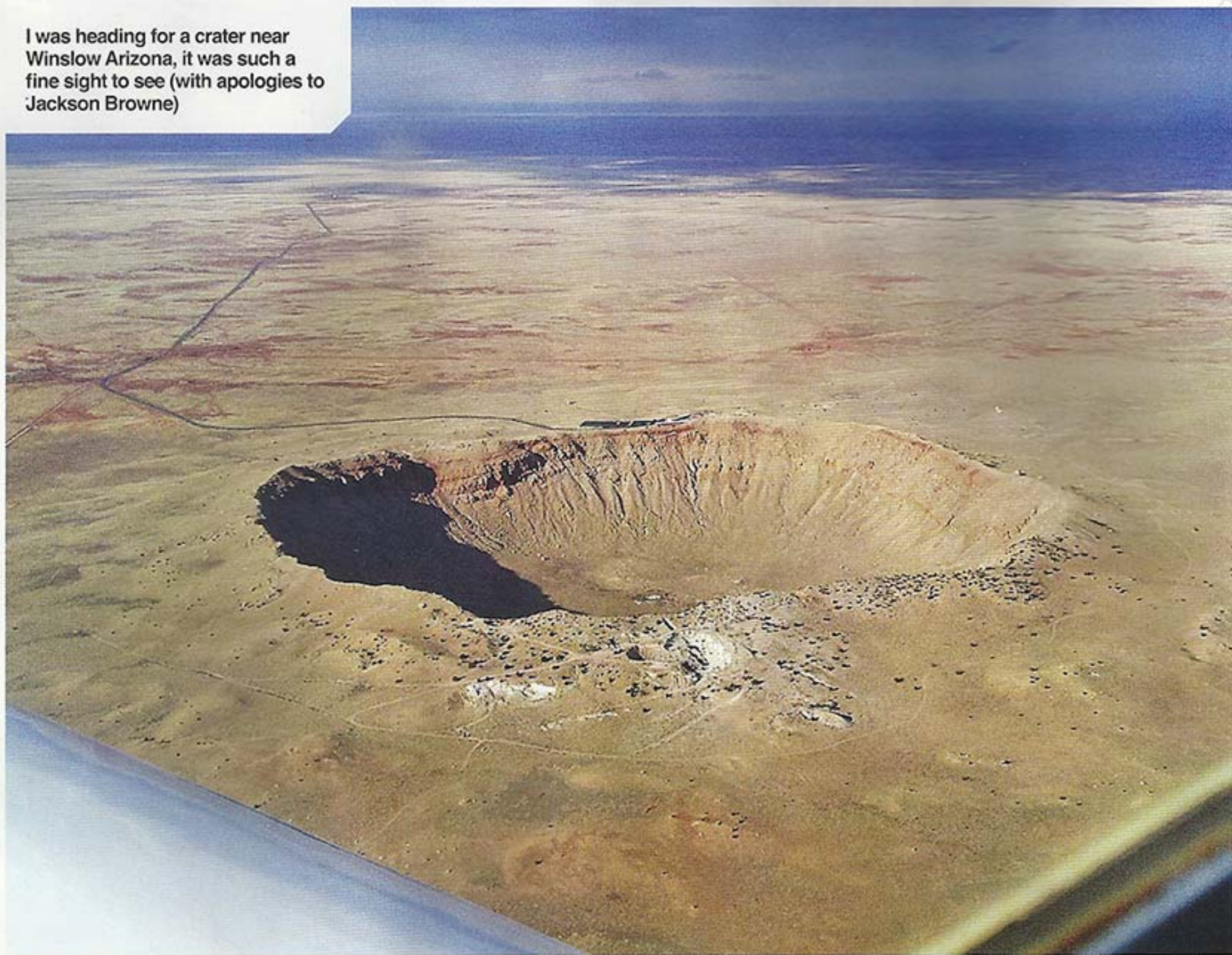
presumptuous and possibly tempt fate.

Another question I'm often asked is, "What is the one piece of advice you would give to people who want to do a similar flight?" Again the honest reply fails to enthrall. Everyone expects significant words of wisdom, but my common reply of "Just to set off" just doesn't cut it. But it is the truth. Yes, have a rough idea of what you want to do, but that is all. I've learnt that you shouldn't have fixed plans and never spend much time planning ahead. If you do plan, it can cause what I call 'planning bias'. This is where you may have planned to go up the left valley but the local and much wiser pilots tell you that it would be stupid to go up the left valley and to go up the right. But then you think to yourself, "Yeah but I spent all that time planning to go up the left valley, which will be wasted if I don't, so that is what I'll do!" So even though it sounds unprofessional, don't plan ahead, but stay flexible and gain local information from the people who know the environment and locations.

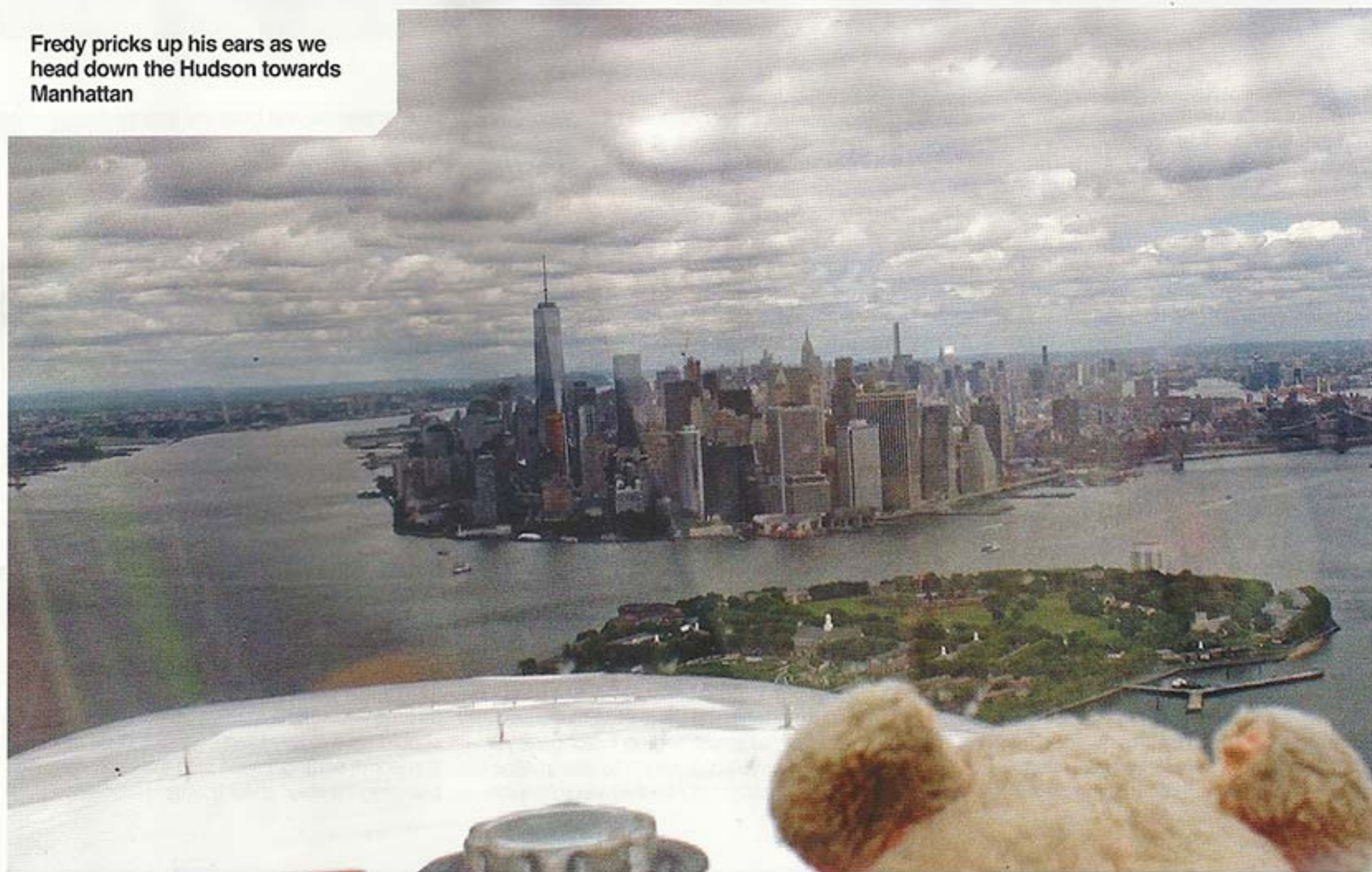
I'm always quite overwhelmed and tired, as time just seems to fly by. I feel as if I should always be doing something, writing to someone, sorting issues with the aeroplane, planning 'flexibly' ahead, writing articles,

TOURING AMERICA THE EASY WAY

I was heading for a crater near Winslow Arizona, it was such a fine sight to see (with apologies to Jackson Browne)



Fredy pricks up his ears as we head down the Hudson towards Manhattan





Where it all began, the Wright Brothers' flying site and memorial at Kitty Hawk

Here I am just about to leave Oshkosh, having this year been able to enjoy the entire event



meeting people, visiting people. So to just find time to look around, which is what I enjoy the most, is the hardest thing to justify.

I've met over 500 great individuals now, I have a carrier bag of business cards, the aeroplane has hundreds of friends on the beloved social media and I am seriously embarrassed at the state of my inbox... A flight around the world is very little to do with flying. Once in a while, when I can I get in and fly my plane, it's the easiest part of the journey.

So where have I been and what have I done since I arrived at Oshkosh in 2014? Where is the aeroplane now and what is next on the agenda? If you find it interesting, read on, if you think I'm just explaining my summer holiday, as quite a few people do, then there are probably more interesting articles for you over on the next page.

I think most people know that I just about made it to Oshkosh 2014 for the last major day of the show. It took 17 flights and 46 hours to arrive. After Oshkosh, I travelled to the Reno Air Races, via Yellowstone and the Rockies, and down to San-Diego via Vegas, the Grand Canyon and Nevada. I then came home to England for Christmas and the New Year,

before returning to America to pick up the aeroplane February this year.

After San Diego I wanted to take a trip into Central America. My chosen route was to go down through Mexico, across Central America, up the Caribbean chain of islands, into Cuba (the first GA aircraft to have landed there since the Missile Crisis, with embargoes recently lifted) and arrive in April at Sun 'n' Fun, the second biggest air show in the world. After further consideration, a reality check was required. Even though this undertaking would

have been wonderful and I would have flown over great sites such as the Mayan temples and Inca trails, it was all way beyond my means and resolve. So instead, I decided to fly through the Southern States of America to Florida and on to Sun and Fun. It was absolutely the right decision...

Sadly I left good friends at Gillespie Field, San Diego and flew out to Kingman Airport, Arizona. Being quite emotional, I didn't keep a good track of time and left Gillespie way too late in the day and had to put down on

TOURING AMERICA THE EASY WAY



The beautiful turquoise waters of the Bahamas as I head for an idyllic beachside strip

a deserted strip somewhere out in the desert, just after sunset. That night I camped under the stars, listening to the coyotes howl. I saw the original London Bridge at Lake Havasu City before landing at Kingman, amongst 200 odd mothballed airliners. I met the owner of Bracket Air Filters – I have fitted hundreds of his filters to aircraft in my time and he showed me around the factory. Next airport was Valle, to see an annex of the 'Planes of Fame' museum and the 'Fred Flintstone' theme park next door.

I flew over the massive meteorite crater on the way to Winslow Arizona, where it snowed, so I quickly headed further south off the high desert lands to Coolidge. Here I met the engineers in charge of looking after venerable large piston engined aircraft of note, such as DC4s, DC6s and President Eisenhower's Constellation, the original *Air Force One*.

I couldn't land at the Aircraft Boneyard at Pima Air & Space Museum, so I hired a car to drive there. Awesome, but sad to see the aeroplanes being broken up. I flew up to Casa Grande and the Cactus Fly-in, winning the 'furthest flight to the show' award, by some 4,000 miles. Then on to Eloy, just down the road and the world's largest parachute jumping centre, Bisbee, as well as the largest copper and mineral mine.

I was heading for French Valley but only made it to Truth and Consequences Airport

(genuine name). The smoke system switched on automatically, which I thought strange because I haven't got one... my second failed oil cooler of the journey. With the cooler removed, I flew on over the 'VLA' (Very Large Array) antennas out in the New Mexico desert and then around the White Sands Missile range, over to where the aliens allegedly crashed at Roswell. Next Carlsbad City, to ride out to their famous underground caverns, and then Dallas where a good friend from Oxford had brought me out another oil cooler. I drove on to visit the huge Dallas Speedway complex and the South by Southwest music festival in Austin Texas.

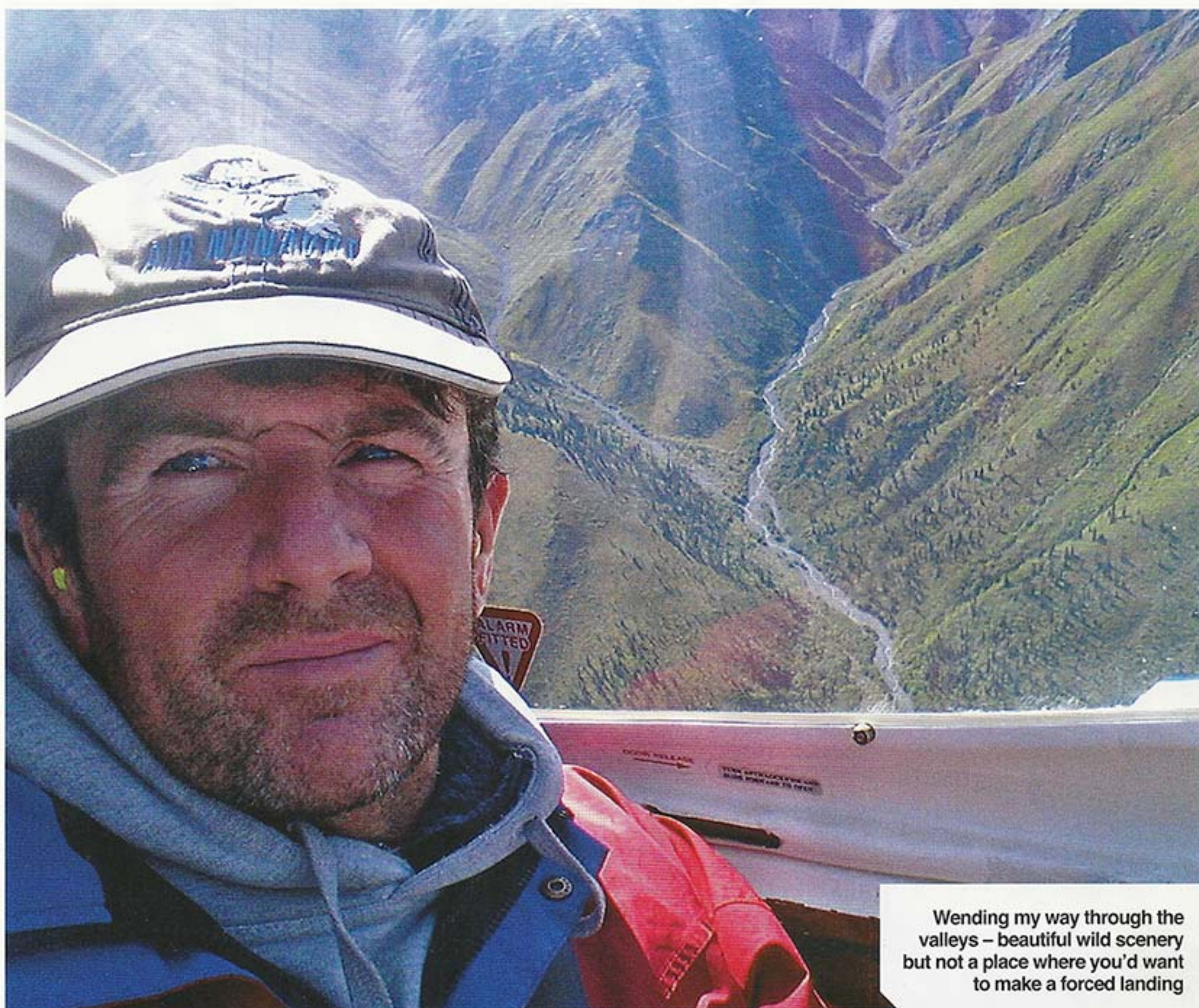
I TOLD YOU IT WAS JUST LIKE RECOUNTING MY SUMMER HOLIDAY...

Next was Jasper, but their airshow was cancelled because of poor weather. At Galveston I viewed bizarrely damaged aircraft inside their museum – a Catalina had floated around during floods caused by Hurricane Ike. Back up at Houston for NASA's Space Centre and I got to talk to astronauts and NASA pilots at Ellington Air Force Base and sat in a Messerschmitt 262, among other historic aircraft. Then Lakeside, a very posh FBO and a bus ride into New Orleans to view the Mississippi River and walk the French Quarter, while listening to all the live jazz. I

then flew along the coast down to Everglades City and rode air boats looking out for gators, salty crocks and manatees. Then it was up to Kissimmee so that Mickey Mouse could meet my lucky mascot Fredy, and we got shown around Disneyland and Epcot.

I then flew down to Key West and out to the Bahamas before checking out the beaches of Miami and then back to Lakeland, east of Tampa Bay for the Sun and Fun aircraft extravaganza. From there I beat up the Space Shuttle's runway and visited the Kennedy Space Centre. I hired another car to see the Daytona International Speedway and drive on Daytona Beach. Next was Kitty Hawk and a pilgrimage to the alleged birthplace of powered flight and the Wright Brothers memorial. Further north it was Washington and the Whitehouse, the Smithsonian Museum and Aerospace Museum to see the *Enola Gay* and another Space Shuttle, this time *Discovery*. Then up to where I first arrived in America 25 years ago to a summer camp at Wurtsboro and the nearby airfield where I had gone gliding.

From there I flew down the Hudson River to New York, to fly over Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty... heading east to Long Island and Nantucket to meet Norman Surplus, who was flying around the world in his Rotorsport gyroplane. I followed him up the coast to



Wending my way through the valleys – beautiful wild scenery but not a place where you'd want to make a forced landing

Plymouth where the Pilgrims first arrived on the *Mayflower* – awkward timing as it was their 4th of July independence celebrations. Then it was further north-east to the most eastern airport in America at Eastport. Niagara Falls was next and then into Canada and Montreal and over to London Ontario to see a long time Canadian friend of my tour. Back to America and Dayton to see Memphis Belle at the Wright Patterson American Air Force Museum, and the first airport where the Wright Brothers flew their planes, and I cycled to their bike shop. Past Chicago and the Great Lakes, then back to Oshkosh 2015. This time I got to see it all.

Back west and over the great plains and through the Rockies, via Salt Lake City. Down to San Francisco to ride my Marin mountain bike over Marin County, north of the Golden Gate Bridge and throughout San Francisco. From there it was up the west coast to McMinnville where the *Spruce Goose* is kept in their aviation museum. Further north to Vancouver Island past Seattle and back into Canada. I followed the Alaskan Highway through the mountains, back into America and Alaska and down to Anchorage.

It was all utterly stunning – another 175 hours and 121 different airfields.

I arrived in Alaska about three weeks later than I intended. I won't go into details about my plans to cross through Russia, only to say

that they could not be fully completed at this moment in time. My flight through to Japan can only be done with the assistance of many people and I'm sorry to say that one of them is no longer with us... a real shock and despair, because what could have been achieved between us would have been mighty and developed an even greater friendship than had already been formed from our comparative minds and personalities. A sad day indeed and seemingly so unfair. But when has life ever been fair to all.

Since arriving in Alaska, I've gathered information from Alaskan and Russian pilots about different avenues for heading west and flying through to Japan. In theory it is all possible. My original plan was to set off literally as soon as I arrived in Alaska and use the long summer days and good weather to my advantage. No doubt there will be weather, technical and logistical delays as I enter Russia, and those delays could run into months. Starting off in July and being held up in Siberia for August and September would not be a problem. In fact, it could be very pleasant. But these new avenues required different permits which will take more time to obtain. Leaving later and possibly getting held up in October and November, well, you do not want to be in Siberia then.

There was no longer any decision to be

made. The only sensible, realistic and safe option was to park *Itzy* up in Anchorage until next spring, come home and earn some more money. The time at home will allow me to prepare in greater detail and therefore make the continued journey safer and more enjoyable. Also time at home will allow me to review and portray in many media forms how wonderful this journey has been so far.

I'm not sad, this is not the end. It is just a delay. The only loss is time, time I had set aside for future projects, but I will try and progress those during the six months I may be at home. I'll return next year with, hopefully, everything in place to continue on through Russia and into Asia.

I would just like to thank all the people who have become *Itzy* and my friends over the last year and a half. I might seem to make fun of some of them but their friendship, support and hospitality has been second to none. I'm continuing not only for myself but because of the positive spirit behind the journey. If I can eventually get *Itzy* around the world, it will be an amazing, astonishing, achievement and each new friend will have played a little but important part in the journey. And for this, you all have my very best regards.

For more stories and pictures see the web site Kr2worldtour.com and media madness on facebook at Krii Worldtour ■