

Australian Air-Ferry

January Newsletter

On A Wing And A Prayer

The first two aircraft to venture from California to Australia in 2005 were delivered to their new owners recently by Australian Air-Ferry.

On the 7th January 2005 two Captains headed for Tennessee and Minnesota, where they accepted two aircraft that were destined initially for California. Arriving back in California 15th January the two aircraft were left with tanking companies to be readied for their oceanic voyage.

Our pilots prepared for their departure in a Commanche registered VH-TWK and a Bonanza registered VH-CCY. These aircraft had been tanked during the Christmas period.

After a great deal of soul searching, Captains Michael Cooke and Garry Mitchell decided that the meteorological evidence was sufficient to attempt the crossing. The intense weather studies had lasted three long days. A ridge of high pressure extended southwest from California and it was decided that the trip was achievable with the fuel available. There are no second chances during the longest oceanic crossing in the world.

Day-break on the 18th January, Cooke and Mitchell nursed the aircraft into the air and headed south-west to capitalize on the tail winds that were dominant for approx 1,000nm. The first seven hours went quickly - the ferry fuel and HF radios checked out ok and an inquisitive 747 captain on 123.45 says "You are braver men than I, I'm glad its you and not me," yes we have to make our own coffee they replied.

After a few hours the brave duo settled into a familiar pattern of routine small talk and mutual assurance. As expected the two aircraft were met at 1,000nm with a frontal system that provided a relentless 20kt headwind. The next five hours dragged slowly by, watching the 130 knot ground speed remain rock solid.

By now it was late in the day and the sun had started to set on the horizon, the miles clicked by slowly as the two watched the distance to Hilo (Hawaii) diminish increasingly slower. A spectacular oceanic sunset was accompanied by a wind shift, and again the duo experienced a 20kt tailwind. At 170 knots the last few hours goes quickly.

Fifteen hours later the two aircraft touched down in Hilo, Hawaii – they'd averaged 137 knots.

The following day both aircraft headed for Christmas Island, Pago Pago (American Samoa) the day after, a quick refuel in La Tontouta (New Caledonia) and into Brisbane on the fourth day.

VH-CCY and VH-TWK in Pago Pago



N197K in Albuquerque New Mexico



The trip had gone smoothly considering what the arduous American winter had dished out to its inhabitants – both aircraft arrived safely without incidence to their new homes in Australia on the 21st January 2005.

A Great Time To Buy

With the Australia dollar remaining at approx 80 cents American, there's never been a better time to purchase aircraft from the U.S.A. Darren Gibson is able to offer a complete purchase package from aircraft location through pre-buy to delivery – a truly one stop shop. Ask Darren for a no obligation quote on landing the aircraft of your choice at your door.

Surplus Equipment

We have a portable Lowrance 1000 GPS available for \$1,150 Aust – This navigation aid has a five-inch screen, is equipped with a pacific international database, and has only been used once. We've also got a six-man life raft that has all sorts of inclusions, never used. Talk to Darren Gibson about these items.

Australian Air-Ferry

Kempsey NSW Australia

Darren Gibson

PO Box 495

Kempsey NSW 2440

Ph: +61 2 6563 1406 BH

Ph: +61 2 6562 1861 AH

Fax: +61 2 6562 3064

Mobile: 0417 446 521

aaf@dodo.com.au

Australian Air-Ferry

Brisbane, Qld Australia

Garry Mitchell

Ph: 61 7 55477692

Fax: 61 2 6562 3064

Mobile: 0412 457727

US Cell: + 1 562 8815919

gazza@acenet.net.au

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