

Instrument flying

Trip to Key West

Sept. 20-21, '43

Dear Folks,

September seems to be the real rainy season down here. Storms have been longer-lasting and more frequent. Naturally we do not fly during the worst weather even though qualified instrument pilots. Flying alone on instruments isn't so bad for short periods, but it's tiring and not much fun. With no horizon visible it's impossible to tell for sure whether one is in level

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flight or not or whether one
is going straight or turning
unless one is concentrating
entirely on instruments.

The altimeter and air speed
indicator show one's altitude
and speed, the turn and
bank indicator (needle for
amount of turn, ball for
keeping one from skidding
or slipping) over amount of
turn ^{and bank}, though there is a
wonderful instrument called
the artificial or gyro horizon
which one can fly on
entirely under ordinary
circumstances. Flying
formation under instrument

conditions is not good for
 obvious reasons. Wingmen
 of course, ^{still} have to watch
 the leader or else break off
 and go on instruments
 themselves if they lose
 him. Instrument take-off
 are occasionally practicable,
 but instrument landing
 definitely are not as yet.
 Because of necessarily more
 limited equipment and
 experience we are of course
 not anywhere nearly as
 expert on instruments as,
 for instance, airliner pilots.
 As also in the case at night,
 navigating ~~under~~ ^{on} instruments

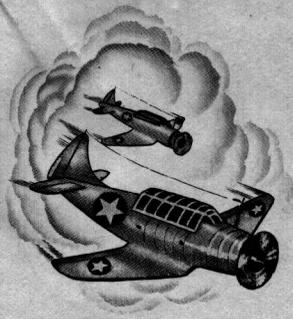
off the beam (radio silence,
as in war zones) is inaccurate
at best because it's impossible
to see the waves and make
a wind estimate, though
one can fly contact at night
all night if the horizon is
visible. So much for that,
except that I might mention
the rather obvious danger
of collisions, another reason
why we don't fly in all
weather conditions.

The Key West trip was
just for the pure hell of it.
It wasn't exciting or
beautiful (the keys do not
for the most part resemble
the ideal desert island), but

it was interesting to see
 the country and reach the
 most southerly point in the
 country, a triple over $24\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$
 from the equator. It involved
 256 miles by train to
 Miami and then 163 by
 bus - over 800 miles altogether
 which would have been
 impossible if I hadn't
 been able to get off early
 the day before my day off.
 As it was, I left the
 station here at 1.00 P.M.
 and got to Key West twelve
 hours later, which gave me
 a scant half a day there.
 I hired a bicycle and
 pedaled around the island.

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practically all of which is
occupied by town, The Army
and especially The Navy.

The only new bird
encountered, possibly my
first truly tropical one,
was a great white heron
(just like a white great
blue). On the return
trip I had a good look at
the bays, seen before only
by moon light. One is pine
covered. The others have lots
of mangrove (something
like small magnolia
growing like alders - in
the mud) around the
edges, other scrubby hard-
woods and some palms.



U. S. NAVAL AIR STATION
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The overseas highway passes over almost more water than land, one of the bridges being about six miles long. The old railroad was wrecked by a hurricane more than a decade ago, but some of the bridges remain and are now used for the highway, which in one place is built right on top of an old railroad bridge. In another few months they'll have a new road

utilizing more of the old
railroad bed completed, and
the trip from Miami will
be a lot smoother and a
little shorter. A railboat
would be a nice thing
to explore the bay in.

Well there isn't much
other news. My last day
of bicycle trip was spoiled
by rain again. The heat
continues, though the
temperature did finally
drop below 70° F. the other
morning.

That must have been
quite a mission that a
certain colonel cousin of ours
made - nice to have done.

Love to all T.R.