

## **Anecdotes to the Book**

### ***Michigan Lighthouses, An Aerial Photographic Perspective***

#### **Introduction**

Since the original publication of *Michigan Lighthouses, An Aerial Photographic Perspective* in 1994, I periodically related tales and incidents that occurred during the flying and photographing. My friend, fellow pilot and Spirit Airlines Captain Tony Zarinnia, after having listened to several of these said, "Wagner, you should write up all these little details." I thought that a plausible idea and followed up with this epilogue.

#### **How Many Lighthouses?**

I'm often asked, how many lighthouses lie in Michigan Waters? I number 104 in the book meeting the criteria described in the first section. I show Copper Harbor and Presque Isle range lights (four structures) but I do not number them. St. Joseph, Muskegon South Pier and inner lights, Grand Haven inner and outer pier lights, Grand Marais and Cheboygan are examples of inner and outer pier lights, all of which appear in one photograph with one number. And Munising has a rear range light stuck way back up in the hill and barely visible. The Coast Guard counts hundreds of "Aids to Navigation" on the Great Lakes.

The number becomes apparent when considering Michigan has 3,200 miles of shoreline on four of the five Great Lakes. Some are navigational aids while others mark harbors; they also identify many treacherous shoals and reefs that are hazards to navigation. The State of Michigan and many persons have gotten exuberant about the total number of lighthouses, claiming the most in the United States; that is correct but I don't get excited over it.

#### **The Airplane**

My original 1968 Cessna 172 did not have an autopilot (my current C-172 has). So, loading roll film in the Bronica film back was often challenging—especially in turbulence. It was necessary to have one hand on the roll of film and the other on the film back when changing film—otherwise the whole roll could unravel and be exposed.

I would most often change film when traveling from one location to another at an altitude that would be safer with no hands on the wheel. I sometimes refer to the resulting gyrations as doing an Immelmann—an aerobatic maneuver from World War I, reversing course 180 degrees while simultaneously climbing. That's why I had four film backs so I could load up an advance supply of film.

#### **The Flying**

In the course of flying and photographing, I fly with my left hand and manage the camera with my right. There is a certain degree of controllability with the rudder pedals in a Cessna 172 allowing me to momentarily shift back and forth with my left hand between the control wheel while cushioning and stabilizing the Bronica camera on my fingertips.

On the occasion of filming the Stannard Rock Lighthouse, some 25 miles out in Lake Superior, I departed leaving my dear friend, Dr. Clara Lee Moodie, at the Houghton, Michigan Airport. She inquired as to why she was there and not flying with me. I replied, "Somebody needs to be back here to report in case I don't return."

### **The Camera**

The Bronica GS-1 is a “medium format” camera with an image size of  $2\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$  inches or 6x7 cm. The GS-1 has a right-hand grip, necessary for me as I fly with the left hand and use a “rapid two-stroke” film advance with the right thumb. It is relatively heavy. The combined weight with the gyroscopic stabilizer was slightly under 14 pounds with the camera perhaps weighing six or seven. I had a six-pound barbell beside my La-Z-Boy chair with which I exercised regularly to better handle the camera. At the end of a six-or eight-hour day, it got rather heavy. When photographing the lighthouse project, I did not have a gyroscopic stabilizer but later purchased one for \$2,500.

My favorite Bronica lens when doing aerial work was the 200-millimeter. A 100-millimeter is the “standard” focal length for the  $2\frac{1}{4}$ ” by  $2\frac{3}{4}$ ” image. A lens of double the standard focal length allows “foreshortening” the image, bringing or “compressing” the background into view. That technique was rather widely used throughout the book.

### **Kodachrome Film**

Developed in 1935, Kodachrome was a bastion of the film industry! Kodachrome was actually three layers of black and white film separated by filters of the primary RGB colors, red, green and blue. It is inherently very stable. It was a complicated film to process. Films such as Ektachrome and Anscochrome will fade and discolor within a few years. I have Kodachrome images from the 1950s that are still true color and brilliant.

Manufacturing ended in 2009 and processing ended on January 18, 2011. Wikipedia and *The Nightowl Trader, the Rise and Fall of Eastman Kodak*, has a lengthy and detailed description of Kodak and Kodachrome film. Today, digital cameras, invented by Kodak, operate on the same principle, pixels separated by filters. Kodak, in grave oversight, allowed Japanese camera manufacturers to embrace digital photography destroying the film industry. Thirty years of mismanagement and the failure to foresee technology’s direction resulted in Kodak’s stock declining from a high of \$94.75 to today’s \$2.95.

Kodachrome film was used throughout the book with only a couple of exceptions. I had hoped on several occasions that Kodak would produce it in the 220 format. My sage photographic advisor, Les Kirby, once said that Kodachrome was too thick to fit on a 220 roll and it could possibly hang up in some cameras or would require a pressure plate to hold it flat—causing Kodak more problems than they wished. It was never produced much to my regret.

As digital cameras gained a foothold in photography, Kodak ceased production and then a year later, ended processing Kodachrome 120 roll film. I had accumulated several rolls of exposed, but unprocessed film, and had an inventory of 12 or 15 unexposed rolls. I learned that Kodak agreed to one final processing run of 120 film in London, England.

### **An Eventful Flight**

Being inspired to use up and process my remaining rolls, I set out for Western Lake Superior to photograph its lighthouses and especially Split Rock. En route the airplane’s alternator went offline—inoperative, kaput! Skyharbor Airport and Jon Messer, the IA mechanic who did the engine installation a year earlier, was along my route of flight, so I landed to see if a quick fix, such as a broken wire, was possible. It was not. I continued onward with photography along Lake Superior and finished the day as nightfall approached at the Split Rock Lighthouse on Lake Superior’s west-ern end.

An aircraft engine operates on magnetos and therefore loss of the electrical system does not affect its operation. I flew with the master switch and all electric systems off, conserving battery power, bringing up only those essential items such as radios when needed. My JPI engine monitoring and fuel flow system, having been shut-off, was no longer accurate.

I departed Split Rock heading eastbound towards Lansing with the master switch off. As I approached the midpoint of Lake Michigan, I had to make a decision as to refuel somewhere short or if I had enough fuel to make Lansing.

Aircraft fuel gauges are notoriously inaccurate, only being required to show empty when the tank is empty and my JPI fuel flow instrument was inoperative. I had a critical decision—make Lansing by 9:00 PM, the cutoff time to make the UPS shipment or to land and refuel. I had learned through the years that watching the fuel gauge “bouncing” off empty, gave one the indication that fuel was low. Uncomfortable with the remaining quantity, I decided to refuel at Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

However, as I approached the Michigan shoreline, an undercast with tops of perhaps 3,000’ required an instrument approach into Mt. Pleasant. I turned radios on and contacted Saginaw approach requesting and was granted an IFR clearance into MOP. I conveniently broke out of the overcast at about 1200’ feet and continued on to land in Mt. Pleasant. Fortunately, Bobby, the line boy, was still working at 8:00 PM. We did a “quick turn,” and I was immediately on my way to Lansing—again with all electronics off.

I contacted Lansing approach about 20 miles out advising that my alternator was off-line, and if we lost radio communications, they give me a light gun signal to land. LAN asked “if I needed assistance” and I answered “negative.” Switching to tower, I was cleared to land on runway 06—and both sides of the runway were lined with firetrucks and emergency equipment. As I taxied to my tie-down, I was followed by security. They inquired as to my problem and I said simply that my alternator was off-line.

It was about 8:50 and I informed security I had a package that required delivery to UPS by 9:00 PM. I would either return to the tie-down, or they could follow me to UPS and I’d give them any needed information. Knowing the officer, and that only an alternator was inoperative, proved sufficient. I had pre-packaged and addressed a shipping carton to the final processing center in London. I arrived at UPS on September 21, 2001, at 8:55 pm, just in time to make the 9:00 PM lockout and my Kodachrome film was on its way to London for the final, worldwide processing run of 120 film!

Fortunately, my blackout flight to Lansing was uneventful, I could see other aircraft—they just couldn’t see me! And, I regarded the line-up of emergency equipment, after saying “not required,” as just another card a bureaucracy plays in “the numbers game!”

For years I had a professional color lab, Customation, Inc. in Michigan City, Indiana, process my negative film and produce enlarged, color prints. Color processing from negatives was best farmed-out as the chemicals had a short shelf life and were difficult to maintain. I remember the early writings by one of their sales reps about the advent of digital photography. I paid only casual attention, not attentive to the unfolding photographic evolution.

Today, I operate a Canon EOS MK II 7D digital camera with three lenses, a HP Z-3100 digital printer, an Imacon drum and a Nikon 3000 scanner, probably at a cost of some \$30,000—with a closet full of film cameras worth four cents a pound or destined for the Smithsonian. And, Customation is no longer in business—a scenario referred to in earlier times as a “buggy whip business!”

### **Publishing the Book**

The book was self-published, and therefore many aspects were my responsibility. The financing had to be arranged. I wrote up a business prospectus and met with Comerica representatives. They had no interest. Others did not even respond to my inquiry. Old Kent Bank in Grand Rapids, with whom I'd had a checking account for several years, agreed to a loan. We interviewed five different printers and two binderies. Paper had to be inspected, selected, purchased and shipped to the printer.

### **Old Kent Bank, Financing the Book**

My meeting with Mark Mushinski, the Old Kent corporate loan officer, was interesting. In order to secure their loan, they, of course, had all the books as collateral. Additionally, they placed a mortgage on my home (which was free and clear), I had previously sold a home in St. Johns on a land contract on which they placed a second mortgage, and they recorded a lien on my airplane with the FAA in Oklahoma City. They didn't want my car—it was too old! I commented, "Mark, you have this loan collateralized about three times over" and he replied, "John, we are not in the book business!" But, my friends at Old Kent Bank made it happen!

### **The Printer**

I became intrigued with Color Associates, a printer in St. Louis, Missouri, who had just implemented the process from Japan of printing on a Komori Lithrone 640 waterless press in 400-line screen—the first in the United States. This resulted in the fine resolution and sharpness found on the printed pages. Unfortunately, this printing process was critical to on-press temperatures; a plus or minus of one-half degree would cause unacceptable color.

In the final count, I was shorted 2,200 copies (of 10,000) by Color Associates because of unacceptable off-color variations. I originally priced the book at \$49.00 but raised it to \$75.00 to make up for the shortage. The total cost of publishing was about \$235,000. Knowing Color Associates' considerable cost and time in going back on press and all the ramifications of repurchasing paper, binding, etc., I mistakenly gave them the option of making up the difference if and when we did a second printing.

Color Associates also decided to play hardball! Prior to the third and last press run, I had a phone call that demanded payment in full—that was a bit upsetting! They had already been paid for the prior two prior press runs. I had financed a substantial portion of the book through Old Kent Bank and had advance orders for about 250 copies of which I intended to use the proceeds for the final payment. I also anticipated a 30-day payment schedule. This was not about to happen!

On a Friday evening, I received a phone call from my friend, Dick Moehl, President of GLLKA, inquiring "How's it going?" "Not very well," I replied and related Color Associates' demand. "How much is that," Dick inquired. I said, "About \$76,000." How much do you have" asked Dick, I said, "About \$25,000 or so!" Dick said, "Let's do it!" On Monday morning a check for \$50,000 arrived. It took me about six months to repay the \$50K, no-interest loan! Great friends so-often surface in a time of need!

In 1998, with a plausible second printing, we flew to St. Louis and met with Corporate Color. Unfortunately, the company structure had changed. The former CFO had acquired the company

and was now the president and CEO. After 20 minutes of conversation, he said, "I think we had better let the professionals handle this" which meant sue me!

I explored legal options with John Logie and the law firm Warner, Norcross & Judd in Grand Rapids. John was an early supporter of the book and a board member of the Michigan Historical Society. It became complicated and potentially very expensive! We signed the contract in Grand Rapids; Color Associates was a Missouri Corporation and would most likely seek a change of venue to a St. Louis Federal District Court, then requiring St. Louis Attorneys. The whole issue became so convoluted I decided to discard the idea and do a second printing with Michigan printers.

In July of 1998, I undertook a second printing with Superior Color Graphics in Kalamazoo and their sister company, Etheridge in Grand Rapids. Because of the project's size, each printed seven forms and delivered a full complement of 10,000 copies—a perfect job! This time the bindery wrapped and stitched the vellum fly-sheet around the first signature. No more loose fly-sheets!

### **The Bindery**

We interviewed two binderies and selected Nicholstone Bindery in Nashville, Tennessee, in the middle of the "Bible Belt." They had considerable equipment and experience in the bindery business. That included five Smyth Sewing machines where the other bindery had only two and could produce no more than 1,000 books a month. Charlie Nichols, the company's founder and CEO, was a grand ole guy who flew B-25's in WW II, so we had an immediate connection.

Unfortunately, during the first printing, the big Corporation Rand McNally was buying out Nicholstone and was very much driven by the "bottom line." An example was the vellum fly-sheet in the first printing which often detached (discussed later). We were most often on-site in St. Louis and Nashville inspecting the printing and binding process. On one flight to St. Louis, we flew over the two-mile-wide Mississippi River following a vast flood with homes, barns, and silos protruding from the water.

This "table-top" book in the 11x14" oblong format required much hand work. Smaller books were considerably automated, up to 10x12", but this book was different. For example, when the 12-page "signatures" were gathered, there would be a conveyer belt on which a collection of ladies would each hang on the belt the succeeding signature—all the while sipping coffee and smoking cigarettes. I occasionally have books returned where pages are upside down or out of sequence (page 103 following page 30). I chuckle as I remember that line-up of "hillbilly ladies" sipping and puffing on the assembly line!

### **The Book**

The opening page of each of the book's four sections contains an "abstract photograph" of a lighthouse in that section. The abstractions are mostly taken into the sun, casting deep shadows in the foreground, but also reflecting its light and the action of the wind, waves, and ice on the surface. Each makes an appropriate introduction to the section.

Vellum fly-sheet, the first page in the book, was written by former Upjohn President, Bill Parfitt. I don't recall how Bill came in touch with me regarding the book other than one Saturday morning he telephoned and offered to write that piece. He skillfully expressed the essence of the book.

In the first printing, the fly-sheet was “tipped-in” meaning it was glued. Unfortunately, the first page was also varnished. No one realized the glue poorly adhered to the varnish and many of the vellum pages became loose and detached. I did develop a method of gluing many books with a hot glue gun. In the second printing, the fly-sheet was “wrapped” around the first signature, (as page 12<sup>1/2</sup>) firmly securing it. On the half page, we printed flying seagulls. I probably took 50 photos trying to capture the right seagull image!

Spot varnish was a technique used on several pages. This process uses a separate printing plate highlighting selected portions of an image adding a sense of depth, often embellishing floating ice, wave action and sunlight. This was a whim of my graphic designer, perhaps adding a few thousand dollars to the book’s cost. In the case of the Granite Island Lighthouse, the spot varnish was used to highlight the floating ice that ran right to the edge of the page.

The introductory page to each of the book’s four sections contains an “abstract” photograph of a lighthouse within that section. The abstract images are strongly backlighted, meaning the sun was facing the camera as evidenced by the shadows. Such photos clearly identify the winds, waves floating ice and water conditions.

**Holland Harbor Lighthouse, page 1:** Classic Waco Airplane over the Holland Harbor Lighthouse. The Waco Airplane was manufactured in Lansing by friends Dick Kettles and Mike Dow. This airplane was based in Midland, Michigan, and was at the factory for an annual inspection. It needed to be flown after the inspection and we set up the flight to Holland to photograph it over the Holland Harbor Lighthouse. We flew for approximately two hours, stopping once to refuel the Waco and get a bite to eat.

It was a challenge to photograph the faster, larger and heavier Waco over an object on the ground. It flew a smaller, inside circle going as slow as possible and I’m on the outside flying as fast as possible and positioning the two airplanes over the lighthouse below. While I usually fly alone on lighthouse missions, it is prudent to have another person along while shooting air-to-air. A midair can wreck your whole day! It was an interesting challenge but the image conceptualized the book with an airplane and a lighthouse in one photograph.

**Pancake Ice, page 2:** while photographing the South Haven Lighthouse, I wandered a distance offshore observing ice patterns in Lake Michigan. It was very unusual and as I circled the area at perhaps 200’, I observed how Pancake Ice is formed. On a very calm and cold day, a flat sheet of ice freezes on the lake. As the day warms the winds pick up and the flat sheet is broken into large chunks. As the winds further increase, waves gather and wash over the edge of the ice floes. The interesting part is that the unbalanced weight of the ice actually causes the ice floes to tip up and down and rotate forming the circular buildup of ice around their perimeter.

**Burns Harbor, page 3:** as I was cruising eastbound along the shoreline of Lake Superior, I discovered the thousand-footer *Burns Harbor*, “downbound” towards Whitefish Point. Considerable winds were blowing—perhaps 30-35 miles per hour as evidenced by the waves over its bow. My Cessna 172 is equipped with a “STOL” kit, an acronym for Short Take-Off and Landing. This gives better short-field performance and greater stability at slower airspeeds—a desirable quality for sharp images while flying. I flew alongside the *Burns Harbor* photographing and observing its speed in relation to mine. I actually “toyed” with the idea of slowing to maybe 50 MPH and allowing the *Burns Harbor* to pass me! I was, however, on a time-critical mission and thought I should not be playing with such a frivolous venture. After all, how many “Footers” have passed a flying airplane!

**Statue of Liberty, page 6:** was taken from a Lake Amphibian on February 4, 1965, while circling the Statue of Liberty which served as a lighthouse for 16 years, from 1886 to 1902. I sold and was delivering that airplane to George Capanegro at the Flushing, New York Airport. Little could I have imagined that I would use that photo in a book 30 years later! In my 60 years of flying and 40 years of working in the industry, I often remember such occasions, but seldom do I remember how I got home!

**Title Page, page 9:** when you publish your own book you can do most anything! I designed page nine on which to autograph. The lengthy list of credits as well as the index is in the back of the book. This choice was the result of an autographed copy I received from Jacques Cousteau in his book *The Silent World*.

**In the 1950s,** I was in the diving business and sold self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (SCUBA—terminology adopted in later years) equipment for U.S. Divers Corporation.

**Captain Cousteau's movie, *The Silent World*,** won the Cannes Film Award in 1956 and debuted in three United States cities; Los Angeles, New York, and Kalamazoo, Michigan (Kalamazoo being a "typical Midwestern city"). I had an exhibit at the Movie Theater and enjoyed dinner that evening with Captain Cousteau, his wife Simone and publicist James Dugan. Later we appeared together on WKZO TV.

Captain Cousteau, Simone and Jim Dugan each autographed my copy of the *Silent World*—a very unique thing! It was written in French and I have translated it to English. It "was from the divers of the Mediterranean to the divers of the Great Lakes." I so cherished that opportunity that I dedicated page nine (the title page) for personalizing autographs in my book.

**Stannard Rock, Page 15:** After photographing the structure, I was climbing out at a rather steep angle and I had placed the camera aside. But, seeing the view from several hundred feet, I circled around and took this picture. Within a quarter-mile of the shoal, Lake Superior plunges to a depth of 700'. Michigan's record Lake Trout of 61.5 pounds was reportedly taken at this location.

I casually looked back at the shoal and structure, and seeing the distance; I pondered whether or not I could swim to the lighthouse if the engine failed. I swam in high school and in college, but in Lake Superior—25 miles offshore—what a frivolous thought that was!

**Shepler Ferry Service, page 17:** once when selecting images, I had occasion to talk to Bill Shepler, owner and president of Shepler Ferry Service. I mentioned I had a photograph of all three ferries entering Mackinac Harbor. He said, "John, why all three, why not just Shepler?" I quickly thought and responded, "Bill, you were in front!" That seemed to placate Bill and left me in good stead.

**Sand Hills Lighthouse, page 29:** Owner, Bill Frabotta, was a bit disheartened that the book's photo was taken shortly after he acquired Sandhills. The windows were boarded up and maintenance was lacking. Considerable restoration followed in the ensuing years converting it to a bed & breakfast. Bill died in 2016 and his wife Mary, with the energy of a gerbil, has continued to operate the facility. During WW II, Sandhills was a Navy training station housing as many as 200 personnel. The 2,500 square foot building is reportedly the largest lighthouse in North America. Sadly, Mary recently sold the facility.

**Eagle River Light, page 30:** I made several trips to Eagle River and failed to recognize the actual lighthouse building. There was a structure up the hill, some quarter-mile away, which had

characteristics similar to a lighthouse, perhaps a schoolhouse with a cupola on top. I knew the lighthouse was a private residence and perhaps considerably modified. After circling a bit, I finally identified the correct building, clearly spotting the remaining lantern room.

**Stannard Rock, page 35:** flying out to Stannard Rock, named after a ship's captain, the name in the proofs was spelled correctly. The printer while doing the setup for the book, corrected my "oversight" and change the name to Standard (S-t-a-n-d-a-r-d) in the first printing. I caught and corrected the printer's "correction" in the second printing.

Portage Lake Lower Entry Light, page 40: I have traveled the state doing art fairs, signing and promoting my book. I would occasionally encounter a graduate of Northern Michigan University in Houghton, Michigan. They often related how diving off the top of the Lower Entry tower was a thrilling experience. I think that be best left to the engineering students at Tech.

**The Flying, page 44 & page 110:** the only photograph in the book taken by another person was by my good friend, Dick Moehl, president of GLLKA (Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association). Dick was standing atop of the tower at St. Helena Island photographing me while I was in the air photographing the Boy Scouts forming the "T-4" on the ground representing "Troop 4" out of Ann Arbor. The Boy Scouts through the years were instrumental in the restoration of St. Helena. The flags atop the tower can be seen in both photos as well as my first red and white Cessna 172, N35711 on page 44.

**Big Bay Point Lighthouse, page 45:** I had been in touch with an earlier owner, "Buck" who also owned an airplane and flew from an airstrip he constructed on his property. I was tempted to land and meet him and discussed landing on his runway which can just be seen on the upper left of the photograph. However, time constraints again demanded I keep flying and shooting during daylight hours. I never did meet Buck.

**Granite Island Lighthouse, page 46:** Granite Island is illustrative of that technique with the varnish running off the page, highlighting the edges of the photograph and sunshine reflecting off the ice and water. I once had a lady contact me saying that the page was defective and wanting another book. I explained to her the varnish process, a technique most evident on that page.

**Munising Front and Rear Range Lights, page 50:** was a difficult shot. I made several trips to Munising attempting to get enough light and visibility on the rear-range to be observed. If one carefully studies the upper left-hand corner of the photograph, you can see it in the background. Taking that shot required flying up the bay at a very low altitude, avoiding the city with a sharp left circling turn while attempting to get both structures aligned in the picture.

**Grand Island North Light, page 52:** printing the book involved laying out six images on each side of a 32 x 40" sheet of paper, referred to in printing lingo as "six up." In obtaining a color balance of all six photos, there is a compromise between each image. I once did an enlarged photograph on my Hewlett-Packard Z-3100 Inkjet printer for a professor at MSU. It was then I fully realized the spectacular range of colors in the image. When printing a single image, color balance can be achieved on that one print. The fall colors in the trees, the glistening reflections off the water and the colored striations in the rock formation identical to that of pictured rocks, were all brilliant. The print was spectacular!

**Au Sable Point Lighthouse, page 53:** the intent of this photograph was to situate the lighthouse in the foreground of the Grand Sable Dunes. The 200 mm was the lens of choice, and flying a distance offshore at a low altitude captured the relationship of the lighthouse to the dunes.



Horror stories exist regarding the trek to the lighthouse as the parking lot is about a mile away. Black flies swarm by the millions! At an art fair, a lady once related her experience walking to the lighthouse, getting perhaps a quarter mile down the path and was so overcome by black flies that she and her family dashed back to the car, quickly jumped in and sped down the roadway at 50 mph with wide-open windows chasing them out. If one visits Au Sable Point, come prepared!

**Grand Marais Harbor Range Lights, page 54:** spending one night in Grand Marais, and perhaps at a local eatery/brewery, I decided to investigate the rear-range Grand Marais Light. Having found it rather fascinating, I climbed the rear-range ladder to observe Lake Superior. You can't see much at night, whether flying or climbing—thou shalt not drink too much!

**Crisps Point Light, page 55:** This image shows the original entryway building to the lighthouse. The year following this photo, a violent Lake Superior storm washed the building away. It has since been replaced with a new historically accurate structure.

**Whitefish Point Light, page 56:** Whitefish Point is a fine example of an elegant, quintessential restoration project being completed over the last 35 years. As I look at the 1989 photograph, and having visited Whitefish Point in the fall of 2018, I see the considerable restoration that has been accomplished. There are many photographs in the book that can be regarded as “historic” because of continued deterioration or restoration projects.

**Grand Haven Lighthouse, page 63:** I often ask mariners what is peculiar about this photograph of the *Paul Thayer*. As I was flying, I observed the vessel approaching the harbor and then circling back out into the lake. I thought this very curious and related it to my flying experience. In aviation, there is a procedure known as a “missed approach.” I thought, “Oh my, did the *Thayer* miss the harbor?” As I hung around, I ultimately learned that he was positioning to back into the harbor as he was unable to turn around in the river.

**White River Light, page 67:** a difficult lighthouse photograph. It is situated back within a recent growth of trees. I made several trips trying to get favorable lighting on the structure. The photograph in the book was the best available. Today, many of those trees have been removed.

**Little Sable Point, page 68:** this photograph probably has the book's least quality. It was taken on negative film which does not lend itself particularly well to color separations and publication. I chose this image for the several small ponds of water lying within the sand dunes. This was the result of a storm and seiche from the previous day which left pools of water on the beach and long shadows reflecting the many footprints in the sand. A seiche is a rapidly rising wall of water that can be several feet high, the result of winds and rising barometric pressure. Seiches on the Great Lakes have resulted in numerous drownings through the years.

**Big Sable Point Light, page 70:** when selecting images, the color in the sand dunes appeared inaccurate. However, further investigation revealed the whites are white, the black is black and the red spectrum in the sand, is in fact, quite accurate.

I remember the occasion as the photograph was taken late in the day—evidenced by the long shadows. The sun, settling in the west, showed up against a high, thin cloud deck at perhaps 20,000 feet, which in turn reflected the bright red hues downward onto the sand dunes. Once at an art fair and book signing, a fellow asked me if I had the Big Sable Point Lighthouse. I showed him the page in the book and a big grin crossed his face! He said, “I was running that pile-driver that was setting the sheet-steel, reinforcing the shoreline from waves and high water!”

**Manistee North Pierhead Light, page 71:** has an elevated walkway or “catwalk” that provides access to the tower during hazardous or stormy weather. It is one of four catwalks on the western shore of Michigan, the others being St. Joseph, South Haven, and Grand Haven.

**Frankfort North Breakwater Light, page 72:** when photographing a lighthouse such as Frankfort, which is a rather unpretentious structure compared to many others in Michigan waters, I often choose to bring surrounding objects into view. In this case, it is the South Breakwater Light, the boat in the foreground with the city and harbor in the backdrop. Other examples of that concept are Charlevoix, Alpena, Escanaba (Sand Point), Cheboygan and Windmill Point.

**Vessel *Peter Misner*, page 74:** an old friend from Kalamazoo, Walter Watkins, who was a boatswain for the Interlake Steamship Company of Middleburg, Ohio, once asked, “Where was this photo taken,” I replied, “In the Gray’s Reef Passage.” He commented that the *Peter Misner* was sailing illegally in open waters with open hatches.

A close-up inspection of the image disclosed a man in a blue shirt, starboard of the pilothouse, looking back at me with binoculars. He was perhaps fearful that I represented the Coast Guard and his vessel and company would be fined for sailing with open hatches.

**South Manitou Island Light, page 76:** the quality of a medium format camera and Kodachrome transparency film is evidenced by this image where one can read the building’s year of construction, 1858. It has a “covered walkway” which affords access to the light tower during inclement weather. North Manitou Island lies along the horizon.

**Grand Traverse and Old Mission Point Lights pages 78 & 79:** both with low water and showing considerable shoreline, characterizing the wide variations in lake levels. In the early 1970s, I flew Blanchard Mills, a photographer with the Michigan DNR, along the Michigan shoreline of the Great Lakes, photographing shoreline erosion.

This was a time when high-water and wave action was seriously eroding the shoreline with homes falling off the edge of the dunes. Once I gave Bill Shepler a photo of the St. Ignace Harbor and he replied, “I just spent \$400,000 dredging the harbor,” further emphasizing the great variations in lake levels. In 2019 the lakes are again at all-time highs!

**Charlevoix Light, page 80:** another example of a structure I describe as “unpretentious” where I have combined the colorful railing, the late-afternoon shadows of the two piers and boats passing in and out of the Harbor.

**Skillagalee Light, page 82:** an interesting event occurred when I once started out to photograph the Skillagalee Lighthouse as my first destination. On an earlier photographic run, during moments of an idle mind, I conjured up the scheme of suspending the camera from the airplane, a kind of loose mounting arrangement, to help stabilize and lighten the load. A fixed mount would not work, I needed something maneuverable. On the way to the airport, I stopped by the local apothecary and purchased two or three feet of half-inch surgical tubing. In the airplane, I contrived a method of suspending the camera from the sun visor.

Upon reaching Skillagalee, I descended from a cruising altitude and started the photo run, approaching the island—down to perhaps a couple hundred feet—shooting as descending. It suddenly occurred to me that I had a problem! My left hand was on the wheel, my right hand was holding the somewhat suspended camera—and I needed to get my hand on the throttle. The

problem needed to be quickly resolved—I don't remember how, but I did not land on Skillagalee or in Lake Michigan and the camera didn't go out the window. That ended a brilliant idea!

**South Fox Island, page 86:** there was an evolutionary time in photography when photographers were transitioning from film to digital. I, too, went through this process. I had onboard my first digital camera a Nikon 5700, not a very good camera! The day was especially turbulent with winds erupting over Lake Michigan and waves breaking below. I had shot a series of digital photographs with the Nikon and was backing them up with the Bronica.

I had earlier experienced a minor problem with the eye-level viewfinder on the Bronica—it would occasionally detach. I did not pay a great deal of attention to it. As I picked up and switched over to the Bronica and looked through the viewfinder, a particularly turbulent gust of air thrust my forehead against the eye-level viewfinder and it became dislodged. I quickly raised my arm in an attempt to catch the viewfinder and out the open window it went! I spiraled around and watched it plunge into Lake Michigan. Anyone diving off the south end of South Fox Island, please keep an eye open for that Bronica viewfinder.

**Squaw Island Light page 89:** the year following this photograph, a squall line went through Upper Lake Michigan, laid down and destroyed most of the birch trees that appear in the photograph, losing the brilliant character they lent to the island.

**Lansing Shoal Light, page 90:** Once when passing Lansing Shoal during a summer month, and at a somewhat higher altitude, I thought why not descend and take some photos without the lighthouse being surrounded by floating ice. When the film returned, I saw why—it looked like a chunk of concrete covered with dead Cormorants and bird dung—not especially picturesque and book material! The young male Cormorants, known as Jakes, are chased off the various island breeding sites and they find the lighthouses a convenient roosting site. They have become a major nuisance to lighthouse restoration. I have photographed offshore lighthouses with as many as 100 littering the decking.

**Poverty Island Light, page 95:** the image on this page also illustrates the effect of spot varnish as it runs down and encompasses the boundary of the page. In the interim years, I understand some coastguardsman made a futile attempt to seal off the roof and prevent water damage. That often is the beginning of the end for so many lighthouses, water enters the building, disintegrates the plasterboard and the interior falls apart.

**Minneapolis Shoal, page 98:** when reviewing these photos, this image provided some consternation as there appear to be two light towers as depicted on the ice in front. "How can there be two shadows, there's only one sun" my graphic designer, Spagnuolo asked?

Careful study reveals the image on the right is a reflection on the ice and on the left is the shadow. I probably took 25 photos of Minneapolis Shoal on this flight—a large number for me on "10 images per roll of Kodachrome film!" These ideal circumstances, after not having desirable images in the past, was rewarding. I also wanted to show the "water level entryway" in the center of the base giving direct access to the engine room/storage facility from a boat.

**Escañaba, Sandpoint Light, page 100:** another rather unpretentious lighthouse but the image reflects my concept of including the pleasant surrounding harbor and boating activities.

**Coast Guard Cutters Mobile Bay and Biscayne Bay, page 105:** I once donated a copy of my book to the St. Ignace Coast Guard Station. While there, I inquired of the Coast Guardsmen who

was giving me a guided tour, the nature of the photograph of the two vessels. Speculation by others questioned the two boats nestled together. Some thought that perhaps an ice flow might have jammed the propeller, others suggested a mechanical problem. The officer looked at the photograph and said, "They were probably trading videotapes!"

**Enerchem Catalyst & WAGB-83 Icebreaker Mackinaw, page 106:** I sometimes say the reason why the *Mackinaw* was repainted red was the inability to see it in white-out conditions often found in the Straits as depicted by this photo. The *Mackinaw* is barely visible from the air, moreover from a trailing vessel—but he has the "ice track" to follow.

**Waugoshance Lighthouse, page 108:** at an exhibit (before the book) I once had a fellow ask me if I had the "Aban" lighthouse. I confessed I was unfamiliar with it but asked its location. He explained its location and again I denied any knowledge. I felt compelled to research this matter especially when I'm suggesting all Michigan's Lighthouses were going to be in my book. I went to the charts and found the term "Aban" and discovered it was Waugoshance—an abandoned lighthouse! And—the fellow was a boater of the Great Lakes! I hope he doesn't read this!

**St. Helena Island Lighthouse, pages 109 & 110:** St. Helena Island lighthouse was in a state of serious deterioration as depicted by this image. A burn hole of some 20" through the floor was in a second-story room. It's amazing the structure did not go up in flames as did the 14-Mile Point Lighthouse under similar circumstances.

The only photograph in the book not taken by me appears on page 44. It's my airplane and the three flags of the St. Helena Island Lighthouse taken by my friend, Dick Moehl. Dick can be seen in the tower taking the picture of me while I was photographing the Boy Scouts from the air, forming a "T-4" on the ground, representing Troop 4 of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

**St. Helena Island Lighthouse, page 111:** it was my wish to photograph the lighthouse with the Mackinac Bridge in the backdrop some eight miles distant. This photo was rather difficult with the wind and turbulence as depicted by the flag in the light tower.

**McGulpin's Point Light, page 112:** a photograph showing the relationship between the lighthouse, the Straits, the Mackinac Bridge and Mackinac Island (with close-up observation, one can see the Grand Hotel). The lantern room has since been rebuilt and the Osprey nest that once rested for years in the chimney has been removed. The lighthouse is now operated by Emmet County and is open to the public.

**Old Mackinac Point Light, page 113:** a photograph taken while flying at a very low altitude over Mackinaw City showing a relationship between the lighthouse, the Mackinac Bridge and St. Ignace. I made several excursions to this site. Bringing the background of the Bridge and St. Ignace meant flying at perhaps 200' over the city. I would make two passes and then depart the area before drawing attention to someone with binoculars.

**Round Island Light, page 114:** those who remember the movie *Somewhere in Time*, Round Island is where Christopher Reeve rowed Jane Seymour for a romantic excursion. The aficionados of *Somewhere in Time* meet every year at the Grand Hotel to celebrate and view the movie. Many of the actors, directors, staff, local participants and fans, dress in period costume, attend and—schmooze.

**Cheboygan Crib Light, page 117:** the rear range light is barely visible about an inch below the tall tower in the rear of the photograph. I once entered the Cheboygan River with my friend Dick

Moehl using the range light system at night. it's two-dimensional entry is akin to the localizer found in an aeronautical instrument approach. It is a comforting entry to the harbor during nighttime navigation.

**Martin Reef, page 119:** demonstrates the many seagulls and bird activity located on offshore lighthouses. My flying in close proximity stirs their roosting, and some 28 were airborne in this photo. Aboard some offshore lights, the stench of bird-dung and dead carcasses is formidable. The young Cormorants, "Jakes" are driven off the several island breeding and nesting sites by the older males and find roosting space on the lighthouses.

**Spectacle Reef Light, page 120:** this photo vividly portrays the effects of winter's "reefing ice" and the water's flow of currents during spring's breakup. It is an example of spot varnish as it runs off the edge of the page, highlighting the floating ice. I often use Spectacle Reef as an example of my ideas of aerial composition.

**Alpena Light, page 136:** another very unpretentious structure, perhaps only 50' high. This photo necessitated flying very low, perhaps on 50' or so, capturing the pulp mill in the background. I made maybe five or six tight circles over the water outside the structure. As I departed the area, I noticed a fellow fishing on the end of a nearby pier. He must have considered that a rather spectacular airshow!

**Sturgeon Point Lighthouse, page 137:** I made several trips to the Harrisville area, as in my mind's eye, the winter's ice highlighting Sand Point protruding into Lake Huron, was esthetically important. The flying and photography was most difficult. The rising terrain to the west, and on too many occasions, southwesterly tailwinds of perhaps 20 to 25 mph were blowing me across the ground at 70 to 75 mph—while descending and maintaining a slow and stable airspeed. I was pleased to see the results under such difficult circumstances—may be the only one good shot!

**Charity Island Light, page 142:** it was reported that the missing boards on the southeast side of the building were the result of travelers stripping the siding as high as one could reach and were used as bonfire material. The roof structure fell inward and the building has been replaced by a modern structure. The light tower remains standing. The present owner offers boat tours and dinner at the new structure replacing the keeper's quarters

**Saginaw River Rear Range Light, page 143:** I had to remain extremely vigilant at this location as very nearby hi-tension powerlines run east/west parallel to my flight path. On an occasion or two, I believe I had another person with me to keep a sharp eye on our position. Airplanes and power lines don't mix well!

**Burning the "Tennies" page 145:** one of the fun writings was recalling the night I spent in Bill & Harry's Bar (not the real name—but I forget), when several of the Port Austin Reef Association members were there for an evening of conversation, eating, drinking and relating the long and rather gory details of the restoration of Port Austin Reef. The resulting little two-column narrative is always enjoyable to reread.

I've always had a close association with the Port Austin group, having early-on followed their work and photographed its progress. I made an early trip to the lighthouse on the pontoon boat, loaded to the waterline, carrying the first replacement roof rafters. My friend Lou Schillinger and his brother Mark, were both students at Michigan State University and initially flew my airplane through Mark's flight training. Both worked at Hughes Flying Service when I flew for Hughes and later at General Aviation as line crew. We continue to share a great friendship.

**The Blue Water Bridge, page 151:** the book, originally published in 1994, now contains images that might be regarded as “historic” as in the case of the Blue Water Bridge. A second span has been constructed for westbound traffic back to the United States, and the former Thomas Edison Inn is now the Hilton Double Tree Inn.

**Tugboat Point Carroll and barge McAsphalt 401, page 157:** how could one not help but photograph such a colorful and symbolic piece of equipment operating on the Great Lakes. Several vessels are included in the book as well as in my collection of photographs.

**Detroit River Light, page 161:** perhaps the last photograph taken prior to printing. I was not pleased with the photos of the Detroit River Light and as a final effort meeting publication deadlines, I again flew to the site. The result was a fascinating conglomeration of floating ice in such a scenic backdrop as the colorful Detroit River Light. The use of the varnish plate further emphasizes the ice-laden river.

**My Photograph, page 164:** the image shows me, new airplane, camera and book since I now had a copy of the first printing. The photo in the first printing showed me without a book, my original airplane and camera.

For several years I harbored the wish of photographing me atop White Shoal Lighthouse, holding a copy of the book skyward while my friend, Jim Anderson takes an aerial photograph of me, the book and White Shoal. Clara Lee said an emphatic “No!” The lantern room is about 13’ in diameter and has a ladder up the side so it should not be that dangerous as long as the wind doesn’t blow!

**U.S. Coast Guard Lifesaving Station, page 166:** on one occasion after photographing the Harbor Beach Lighthouse, I discovered a nearby U.S. Coast Guard Lifesaving Station in considerable disrepair. As part of a historical record, I decided to photograph it as well. I made several loops around the facility.

Afterward, I refueled at the Bad Axe Airport. I was greeted by Garrett Kladzyk, the Airport Manager. He asked if I was flying in the vicinity of Harbor Beach. I responded affirmatively. He had received a phone call from plant security at a nearby facility to the Coast Guard Station. The company produced Aspartame, the sweetener marketed as NutraSweet. Considerable controversy surrounded the safety of Aspartame and was the subject of congressional investigations and legal actions.

Aspartame was developed by the Huron Milling Company in Harbor Beach, was sold to Hercules Powder Company and eventually to the G. D. Searle Company. I was told the product was about to go off-patent and they were concerned that someone was photographing their facility from the air—corporate espionage! It is never known who on the ground might be peering through binoculars and recording the “N” number of your airplane.

**Two Sisters at Sunset, Page 168:** one never knows where certain images will fit in a publication. How appropriate it was to have photographed the St. Clair Flats Old Channel Lights into the setting sun as the last image in the book!

Dust Jacket, back cover: once passing the Point Betsie Lighthouse, it occurred to me it was a very bright clear day and Sleeping Bear Dunes was visible some 20 miles distant. It was rather turbulent with gusting winds and white caps on Lake Michigan. I retraced my course and slowed

in a stabilized approach at a very low altitude, perhaps 200' to capture the long angle of Point Betsie with Sleeping Bear in the background.

A gust suddenly disrupted the airflow over my left-wing and the airplane lurched into a spin turning left 180 degrees. I quickly thought "this is a very serious situation!" Thinking the implications of an accelerated stall, I carefully pulled out at an altitude somewhere around 35 to 50 feet above Lake Michigan. That probably represented one of the most dangerous and life-threatening aspects of the project. The STOL kit on the airplane perhaps enhanced the safety margin. That image or one similar is on the back of the dust-jacket.

So many people came forth, assisted and collaborated with my book, it is beyond my ability to recognize and thank them all—although I tried, especially in the credits and writing! Looking back over 20 some years, it was a great project—and life has been a great trip!

### **In Finality**

A final comment on the photography and book. In my living trust, when I go to the "Happy Hangar in the Sky," I have left the entire business collection of photographs (as opposed to personal) to the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. They also have the printing plates for the book and I expect they will accept my "traveling exhibit" of 120, framed lighthouse photographs and a percentage of remaining books to resell to fund any activities. In my absence, I wish them well!

### **Other Matters Unrelated to the Book**

Great Lakes Limited Edition USPS Stamp Print; In 1995, the US Postal Service decided to issue a selection of stamps commemorating one for a lighthouse on each of the five Great Lakes. Those selected were Split Rock, Lake Superior; St. Joseph, Lake Michigan; Spectacle Reef, Lake Huron; Marblehead, Lake Erie, and 30 Mile Point, Lake Ontario.

I conceived the idea of developing a limited-edition poster of all five lighthouses with the respective stamps affixed. My friend Dick Moehl, was instrumental in that proposal and participated in the selection of lighthouses. I learned of those selected and conceived the idea of developing a poster with the collection.

I had already photographed some of the lighthouses, but one of which I did not have a good photograph was Split Rock on the western end of Lake Superior. I decided to make a special trip. Since the lighthouse faced the east, I wanted to be in a position to photograph it in a rising sun.

Examining the weather, I decided a passing front would give a clear view of the lighthouse the following day. I departed Michigan with my friend, Clara Lee Moodie, an English Professor at Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. We headed across Lake Michigan in IMC (Instrument Meteorological Conditions) at 9,000 feet.

The flight was made in my newly acquired Cessna 172-L that had only 1690 hours on the airframe and engine. As we approached the Wisconsin shoreline the weather cleared and nighttime was approaching, the destination was Grand Marais, Minnesota.

As we approached the shoreline of Lake Superior, I detected a declining oil pressure. As I scanned the instrument panel, it became clear I was losing oil pressure. About that time, Minneapolis Center turned me over to Duluth Approach Control. I advised Duluth that I was monitoring

an oil pressure situation and would be deviating from my flight directly across Lake Superior and following the shoreline (better to land on rock than water)!

About that time the oil pressure dropped below the red line and shortly thereafter to zero. I advised Duluth that I had lost all oil pressure and needed an airport. The nearest was Iron River, Wisconsin about 20 miles south. They gave me a heading of 180 degrees. I reduced the engine RPM's to about 1700 or so, to reduce the fatigue and pressures on the engine.

Duluth advised the Iron River had a PCL (Pilot Controlled Lighting) system on the Unicom frequency 122.8. After a brief period, I switched over to Unicom to activate the runway lights to give me a visual reference and heading to the airport. In the meantime, I was switching radios back in forth in my "new" airplane—of which I was rather unfamiliar—as I still owned and flew my earlier 1968 Cessna 172. The radios in my "new 172" were a bit antiquated by then-current standards—with several switches to throw when switching back and forth to different frequencies—all in the dark—but with a flashlight!

I was advised by Duluth that the airport was five or six miles ahead. Again, back to the Unicom to activate the lights. I saw a lineup (somewhat) of five or six lights—and I thought I thought, "I've seen some badly lighted runways, but this is the worst!" An automobile then passed through the center and I decided this was not the airport.

Switching back to Duluth, I was advised the airport was within a mile. Switching back to Unicom and again clicking the mike seven times the whole runway lighted up below. What a welcomed sight that was! We completed an uneventful landing and was met by Captain Haelan "Hess" Hespín, the airport manager, a retired Eastern Airlines Captain, who lived on the airport. I suspect Duluth might have contacted him.

He directed us to a tie-down. I later learned the antenna was located inside the steel hangar which greatly limited the reception. Those who flew into Iron River regularly knew this and didn't attempt to activate the runway lights until in close proximity. The airport was owned by Terry Kohler of Kohler Manufacturing. Hess presented me with a logbook inscribed "Cessna 172, N7080Q, lost oil pressure, landed IRN. To a new friend and fellow QB."

He had contacted the local motel and its restaurant and it remained open awaiting our arrival. In the small town of Iron River, news travels quickly. Everyone was aware of our "emergency landing" and the scuttlebutt and buzz around the restaurant was that we had arrived!

The next day, I located Jon Messer a mechanic at the Duluth Skyharbor Airport and arranged to meet him. Together we returned to Iron River to examine the engine oil screen and pan. It was filled with metal particles! The camshaft was spalled with lips, the piston lands were grossly elongated and the pin plugs were worn down to the size of a nickel. The engine was trash! Difficult to say how much longer it would have continued to run, but failure would have been catastrophic. A piston might have broken, the connecting rod would have thrashed the casing and engine to pieces. The broken parts now adorn the top of my bookcase. How often and at what times do I refer to the oil pressure gauge—some have attached a clairvoyant connotation to that near-disastrous event! I might yet have a mission in life!

I had anticipated replacing the Lycoming 150 horsepower engine with a O-360, 180 horsepower, but not this soon! So, I was on the phone buying a new engine from Air Planes in Wichita, Kansas, arranging the payment, shipping, etc. I called my hangar partner, Dave Wagner (no relation) and he flew his Piper Comanche into Iron River to pick us up.



Meanwhile, Clara Lee, the English Professor, was wandering about Iron River seeking to occupy herself. When I returned, she proclaimed, "John, this town does not have a library—they have five bars, two snowmobile shops and one church—and nobody reads—and what they do read is trash!" She inquired of a local person about a library and they referred her to the drug store. There she found on the floor, stacked about three feet high, paperback books lining the walls.

A month later we returned to Iron River after Jon had completed the new engine installation. I flew off to Split Rock Lighthouse to complete the photo mission and Clara Lee drove back to East Lansing in my Dodge Caravan with the broken engine.

### **Other Flying Activities**

In about 1969, I was flying for Hughes Flying Service on the "west ramp" at Lansing's Capital City Airport. They had just negotiated a contract with Michigan Bell Telephone Company to provide a "scheduled/charter air service." We would learn in the late afternoon, the following day's itinerary, flying Bell Telephone personnel to various locations around the state. We might have passengers departing Lansing or perhaps picking up in Saginaw, the main office. On one occasion, the first leg was to Traverse City (TVC). I landed and announced our location and a voice came from the back of the airplane, "Oh, we forgot to tell you that 'blank, blank', could not make it and he was the TVC passenger." I immediately rolled out on the active runway and departed for the next location.

On another occasion, I dropped passengers in the western end of the Upper Peninsula and I was alone in the airplane, heading to Sault Ste. Marie for another pickup. It is interesting to cruise along on a magnetic heading at a couple of hundred feet above the terrain at 200+ MPH, "contouring the countryside" and not paying much attention to navigating, just looking at the sights. Suddenly, an airport loomed up in front! I thought, "My God, I've wandered into Kincheloe Air Force Base!" At the time, Kincheloe was a SAC base with B-52 bombers and F-104 fighters. I envisioned getting shot down by anti-aircraft missiles or a F-104 for my intrusion.

But, I quickly recognized the triangular shape of the 5,000' runways and knew it was not the 12,000' runway at Kincheloe. It was Racó, an abandoned WW II Air Force training base no longer listed on aeronautical charts. A couple of years later when employed with Michigan's Bureau of Aeronautics and involved with the publication of the State's Aeronautical Chart, I made certain that Racó was again listed on the chart as an "abandoned airport of reference."

Kincheloe AFB was named after Captain Iven C. Kincheloe, an early aviator from Cassopolis, Michigan, who was destined to be first in America's space program. On September 7, 1956, he piloted the Bell X-2 research rocket to a world's record altitude of 126,200 feet. Regrettably, he was killed in July of 1958 at Edwards Air Force base when a F-104 flamed out on take-off and he had insufficient altitude for his ejection seat and parachute to deploy. Several interesting websites extol his virtues and legacy. <https://www.nationalaviation.org/our-enshrinees/kincheloe-jr-iven-carl/> and <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/kinchel.htm>. A monument to Kincheloe is located on M-60 two miles east of Cassopolis.

### **"Bomb the Bus"**

At Hughes, we often flew freight for General Motors—the pilots self-proclaimed as "freight pigs." We would regularly fly to the Linden, New Jersey Airport, home of a GMAD, (General Motors Assembly Division). On occasions when flying through the mountains of Pennsylvania, if two pilots

were on board and on a late, sunny afternoon, we would play “bomb the bus.” When school was letting out with yellow school buses lining the hillsides, we would see who could better cast the airplane’s shadow and “hit the bus”—a couple of bored pilots seeking diversion traversing the Pennsylvania mountains.

### **Carbon Monoxide**

A disastrous occasion was averted when on December 8, 1969, while flying N6788X, a Cessna 310 on a freight trip to Chicago, O’hare Airport. It was an evening flight and I invited my friend, Jim Wilmer, a flight instructor at Hughes Flying Service, to accompany me. He accepted.

Departing the shoreline of Lake Michigan, I was casually studying the instruments on the airplane and noting the ADF radio. The numerals were rather squiggly. I thought “That radio must have been hot at one time to deform the plastic faceplate.” Jim commented, “John, I’m wondering what I had for lunch today, my stomach is rather upset.” We traveled along for another four or five minutes and Jim commented, “John, I’m having difficulty reading the panel!” That rang a bell!!! We immediately shut off the heater, opened the fresh-air vents and inhaled rather deeply from them.

We landed at O’hare, off-loaded the freight and Jim flew the leg back to LAN. On departure, we were cleared for departure on runway 31 left. There is a broad section of concrete a “holding area” prior to the runway. Jim was preparing to take off in that direction, 90 degrees from our runway. I caught that error and corrected him.

Prior to touchdown on runway 06 in LAN, Jim was some 10-15 feet in the air. Again, I corrected him, “Jim, get the power-up and the nose down!” We did land uneventfully but he was clearly incapacitated. We flagged the airplane “Do Not Fly!”

The next day, Ron Brokob, Director of Maintenance said, “Wagner, let’s fly that airplane.” As we taxied out on taxiway “Charlie” he threw on the gas combustion heater. It did not even ignite and pumped raw gas fumes into the airplane. Brokob said, “Turn around, let’s go back!”

A crack of an inch or more was discovered in the heat exchanger. Wilmer was so sick he didn’t even come into work that day. If it hadn’t been for Jim aboard the airplane, where we were comparing our condition, I would have been at the bottom of Lake Michigan! I’ve often chuckled since, when reminiscing about that event, thinking of the pilots sitting around Hughes Flying Service saying, “Ya, that damn Wagner, he didn’t know as much about flying as he thought!” The notation in my logbook was “Carbon monoxide in the cabin—hole in heater—bad tripXXX!”

### **Crystal Falls, Michigan; Phalyn’s Resort Airport**

During an Airport inspection tour on November 7, 1974, with Michigan’s Bureau of Aeronautics, I was in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula flying a Cessna 182. Circling Phalen’s Resort Airport and checking the wind, I elected to land to the west. From the air, the length of the grass is virtually indistinguishable. On touchdown, the airplane came to a halt in 200’ or so in about 10-12” of grass. I parked the airplane and wandered to the other end to find the owner/airport manager.

After introductions, I stated that we needed to mow the grass prior to my departure. A rather belligerent chap, he commented, “What kind of an airplane do you have?” I replied, “A Cessna

182, but you still have to mow the grass.” He then stated, “What kind of a pilot are you” and I replied, “Well, I have an Airline Transport Rating, but you still have to mow the grass!”

I don’t recall what conversation later transpired, but he finally got on his Ford Tractor and started down the runway. His portable radio, strapped to the tractor with electrical tape was blaring away, and his dog Skippy was yapping as he plunged into the foot-long grass.

He got about 15’ and the tractor stalled. He restarted, backed up and headed down the runway, got another 15’ and again stalled. About then, he got the picture and proceeded down the whole length, clutching the tractor, backing up and plowing forth. The return trip was less eventful as he cut only a half-swath.

Standing at the runway end and watching the proceedings, a fellow drove up and asked if I was from the State. I replied and he commented on the airport’s condition and said he was a pilot from south of Chicago, bought a home on the airport but never flew in. He added, “A fellow flew out of here last year in his Bonanza and crashed in the trees off the end.” Following that encounter, I removed the airport from public use and off the charts.

**Phew!**

**The End**

**jlw**