

## My Flights to the Bahamas

After purchasing my Mooney M20F aircraft, I began to put it to good use. I could carry four passengers and a small load of luggage for six flight hours on a full tank of gas. Each year my wife Joanne and I would fly down to Georgia for a Christmas visit with my parents. The period between Christmas and New Years was usually a good time to fly somewhere interesting. After some research, I decided to try the Bahamas. so in December of 1984, after careful preparation, we departed the Marietta airport for West Palm Beach, Florida where we rented a Coast Guard approved life raft and vests. We then flew a course straight out over the ocean using NDB radio navigation. My sister's two children, Raif and Aylin, made four people for the trip. After landing, in Nassau we went to our hotel. That night , the occupants of the adjacent room were very noisy, we could not get to sleep. I called the front desk and told them I was a pilot and needed to get a get a good night's sleep for the safety of my passengers, which was not possible given the circumstances. Shortly thereafter, someone from hotel staff knocked on the door of the adjacent room and told them to quiet down. We then were able to go to sleep.

The next day, we departed Nassau for our destination on Cat Island. I was interested in going there because it was a so called "out island" and the home of the family of Sidney Poitier. It also had the highest point in the Bahamas where many years ago Father Jerome, an Anglican missionary, built a structure called The Hermitage, a small castle-like worship place. After arriving over Cat Island, we circled a hotel owned by the Russell family so they would know we were here. Then we landed on a very short Runway, and the Russells came and picked us up. We then checked in to the Russell's hotel which was located right on the beach and we were served a unique drink called a "Bahama Mama."

I remember a most humorous incident with the Russell family. Mrs. Russell asked me what I would like for dinner that first night, and I said "well, what do you have available?". She replied "conch fritters, conch soup. crayfish and named a few other items." I said that I would like crayfish, and asked "how many?". When I replied " one dozen," she said " goodness gracious," and her eyes got as wide as saucers. Well, it turns out that in the Bahamas "crayfish" means "lobster." Not wanting to gorge myself on a dozen lobsters, I changed my request and asked for two. After a few enjoyable days, we Departed for Florida and then on to Marietta, Georgia.

In December of the next year, we flew to Eleuthera in the Bahamas. This spot had been recommended by my old friend and flight instructor Al Taylor. As we crossed the coast of Florida on an easterly heading, I dialed in a navigation station frequency for our destination The direction indicator pointed due south toward the island of Cuba. I then checked my navigation chart and found that, the Castro regime had duplicated the frequency for our destination on Eleuthera. The signal from Cuba was much stronger and overrode the signal from our destination. I continued to the east, and fifteen minutes later, the signal from Eleuthera dominated the one from Cuba, and we were able to land at our destination!

In December of 1988 we flew to Treasure Cay and on to Marsh Harbour in the island of Abaco.

So, to sum it up, I hope you get the idea that with careful preparation and planning, you can fly to many interesting places. The Bahamas certainly fit that category. I will always remember these enjoyable trips!