

2010 Puerto Rico Fly-In

Happy Holidays 2010



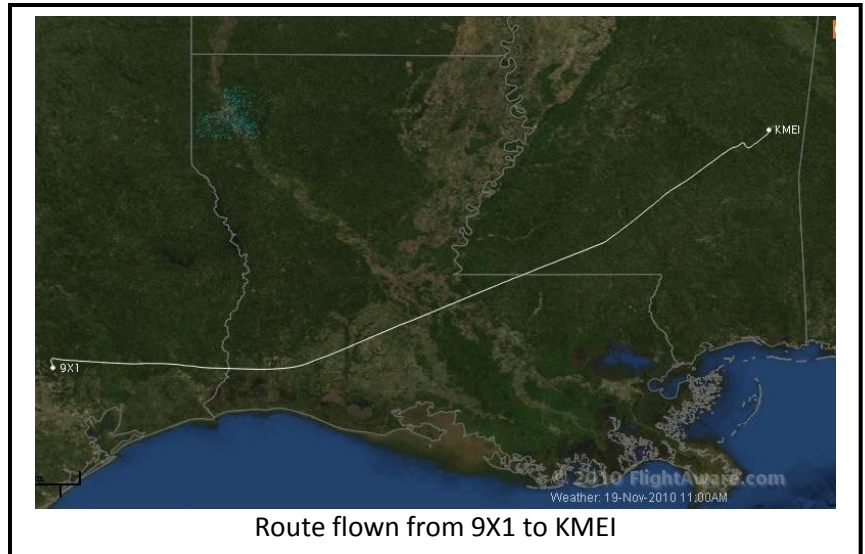
From Millie & Galin

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Photos by Millie Santiago
Flight tracking information by Flightaware.com
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Heading to Aquadilla, PR

It had been a while since we had a flying adventure so we figured it was time for another one. Galin had been talking with several other pilots wanting to help the general aviation community in Puerto Rico. Besides, he had 5 weeks of vacation time and we could get away from cold weather for a while. That's when we decided to take our airplane on a trip to the Caribbean and back for the holidays.

So on November 19th, 2010 we started the trip to Puerto Rico with a flight from Houston, Texas (9X1) to Meridian, Mississippi (KMEI). The weather wasn't exactly perfect with low clouds all over the area but once airborne IFR, Houston Center cleared us to 8,000ft and we were above the clouds. From that point on we settled down to a nice smooth flight. At one point the controller handed us off to another control facility and Galin made his initial call by mumbling something, but saying our tail number very clearly. Millie looked at Galin and asked, "What was that all about?" That's when he said he didn't catch the name of the new control facility and used an old trick until he could figure out who he was talking to. The controller, probably thought there had been some interference, ignored the mumble and chatted away. We started laughing and couldn't stop for the longest time.



Route flown from 9X1 to KMEI

After about 3 hours of flying we descended through the clouds as we approached Meridian. There were a lot of airplanes talking away on the approach and tower frequencies procedures as we did a GPS approach to runway 04. We broke out of the clouds at about 4,000ft aligned with runway 04, landed and taxied to the FBO ramp. As we pulled in to the ramp we saw they were parking us along side two US Navy F-18 fighters. Unfortunately they taxied out before we could get out of the airplane and take pictures. A few minutes later a US Navy T-45 Goshawk taxied up and parked next to us. It was so cool. Then it hit us. We were at an airport



Parked next to a US Navy T-45 Goshawk at KMEI



Millie reflected in the Meridian Aviation FBO door.

that military pilots use for training flights. As usual, no sooner had we parked people come up to the plane wanting to take a closer look and asking all kinds of questions about it.

Once inside the nicely kept FBO we were welcomed by the lady running it. She told us to help ourselves to the free lunch available there. We had pizza and ice cream then Galin went outside and fueled the plane up. While there we talked to several student and instructor pilots from the Navy, Marines and Air Force. They were interested in knowing about the airplane and our travels. Having retired from the Air Force, Galin couldn't resist joining a couple of Air Force pilots there in poking fun at the Navy and Marine claiming real pilots fly for the Air

Force. Just typical inter-service rivalry fun. While Galin filed a flight plan, Millie walked around the area taking pictures. After about 2hrs there, we were ready to head out but knew we would stop here on our way back.

The next leg from Meridian, Mississippi to St. Simons Island, Georgia (KSSI) took just under 3 hours in perfect weather. We had filed GPS direct so we got there just as the sun was setting. Our rental car was waiting for us



Route flown from KMEI to KSSI



On the Golden Isles Aviation Ramp

parked inside the airport fence making it easy for us to get our luggage into the car and go to the hotel to rest. We were too tired to visit our daughter Diana in Savannah, GA that evening so we decided to rest for the night. The next day we surprised her at the Bohemian Hotel where she works. We had lunch there and the food was exquisite. During the next few days we visited her several times at work. While at the hotel we took pictures from the rooftop bar where you get a view of Savannah's river walk. During our visit, Diana gave us our Christmas presents. Galin got a Peanuts comic strip book which he wanted for a long time since the one he original had was lost and I got some gorgeous earrings.

Over the next few days Galin went flying with some of his friends. One of them is a well known orthopedic surgeon with his own airplane. This is when Galin came back in love with the new iPad with aviation applications. The other friend is an Instructor Pilot who is also an instructor at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC). During this time Galin took advantage and completed a Biennial Flight Review even though it wasn't due for another few months. He also went to his doctor for a check-up getting a clean bill of health. This fulfilled some requirements he wouldn't have to worry about for a while. We took time to inspect our house there and do all the things we wanted to do in Georgia. During these days we also took a few flights around the Golden Isles to see the area and take pictures from the air. We took pictures of many things as we flew including a large sailboat just off the coast.

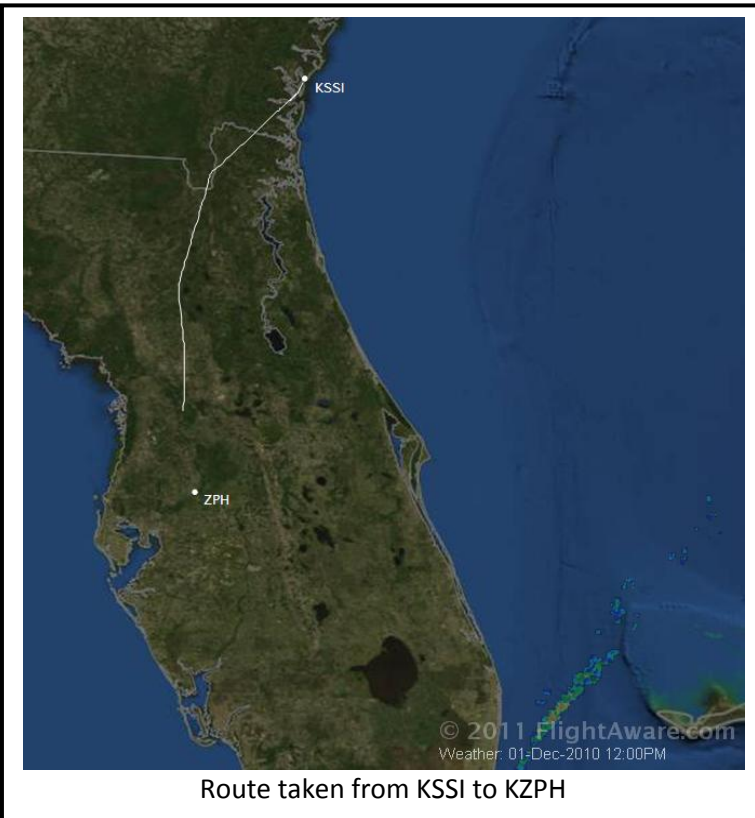


Sailboat off the Golden Isles of Georgia

On our last Sunday there we decided to fly over to Baxley, Georgia (KBHC) and fill up the airplane since fuel there was only \$3.75 a gallon. It was a nice short flight there and we quickly had the airplane full of fuel. When we tried to start the airplane, the engine would not turn on. The airplane battery had been giving us problems for several months but we didn't want to buy a new one. Now we were stuck at Baxley and there was nobody there. We made a few calls and the airport manager said he would have the local mechanic drive out to help us. About 20 minutes later he showed up. Galin explained the problem and asked him to give the battery a boost charge. As we waited for the battery to charge up we chatted about airplanes, our trip to Puerto Rico and hung out in the FBO office. About 15 minutes later the battery seemed charged up so we paid him for his time, got back into the airplane and it started right up. We taxied out and had another uneventful flight back.

Now it was time to head out to Florida. We flew there because a 1½ hr flight beats a 4 to 5 hour drive. Besides we were heading to Puerto Rico anyway. On December 1st we landed in Zephyrhills, Florida (KZPH). The next

day we went back to the airport to get some things from the airplane. While we were there, sky divers were everywhere, planes were fueling up, and a banner towing plane was picking up and dropping banners close to where we were. It was one busy airport so Millie took her camera out and clicked away.



Route taken from KSSI to KZPH



Zephyrhills, FL (KZPH) flight activity

Having had the problem with the battery at Baxley and with ½ our trip still ahead of us we decided to cave in and buy a new battery. Besides this one was already 9yrs old. A few days later the new battery arrived to the hotel we were staying so Galin went to the airport to install it. Even though it was the same battery the top part was slightly different so the existing aluminum bracket holding the battery in place would not work. A quick trip to

Lowe's, a \$2.50 mini hacksaw, some trimming of the bracket and the battery was firmly in place. When we tested the battery, the engine started up faster than it had ever done in the 3yrs we have had it. Go figure! Then we took the old battery to Advance Auto and gave it to them for disposal. They tested it and told us it was in bad shape, something we already knew. At least we wouldn't have to worry about a weak battery anymore.

After spending several days in the Tampa Bay area, sharing time with long time friends and inspecting our apartment, it was time to head out. On December 9th we filed our IFR flight plan and took off towards Tamiami, Florida (KTSMB). On the way there the autopilot failed and Galin had to disengage it. The weather was fine until we got just past Sarasota, Florida. From there, and as expected, the clouds closed in on us and it was raining. We got bumped around a lot while the controllers changed our flight route three times. When we got close we were vectored for the visual approach into Tamiami but we could not see the airport because of the low clouds. So we were then sent out over the ocean to execute a GPS approach until low enough that we broke out of the clouds and we landed. Galin said this had been one of the most difficult flights he has ever made due to the combination of poor weather, in flight changes to our route and the autopilot failure. Of course things fail when you need them most.



Route flown from KZPH to KTSMB

At Tamiami we met up with Anthony Pereira who would fly down to Puerto Rico in his Flight Design CTLS Light Sport Airplane (N179CT). Anthony is part owner of Premiere One Aviation and not only sells Light Sport planes but owns one too. The CTLS doesn't have the range or speed as ours so he planned on stopping in Exuma (MYEF) and Providenciales (MBPV) while we would fly non-stop. Anthony would be going VFR at 9,500ft while we would be IFR at 11,000ft. He would leave two hours before us so both airplanes would arrive in Puerto Rico at about the same time. We briefed the route, the weather, frequencies, alternate plans and what to expect on the flight down. After a few hours of talking, trying to cover everything possible and looking over both airplanes and having lunch, we got back into the airplane for the short 15min flight to Homestead, FL (X51).

The next day we went back to Tamiami to finalize details for the flight to Puerto Rico. While in Tamiami, we also saw a long time friend, retired Puerto Rico Air National Guard Lt. Col Julio Rodriguez-Butler, who we



Carlos Rosaly, LtCol Julio Rodriguez-Butler & Galin at the Runway Café, Tamiami Airport



Vinny Tirado, Carlos Rosaly & Galin at the Wings over Miami Air Museum, Tamiami Airport

hadn't seen in about 19 years. There was a lot of catching up to do. While having lunch with Julio, we met two Puerto Rican aviation icons Carlos Rosaly and Vinny Tirado. Carlos is a retired airline pilot who flew for CaribAir and later Eastern Airlines while Vinny is retired from US Customs and runs the "Wings over Miami" aviation museum. We got a great private tour of the museum; saw the vintage airplanes they are restoring along with a dose of some South Florida aviation history. Eventually we had to say fair-well since it was time for the next leg of our trip.

We got up early on the morning of December 11th and headed to the Homestead airport for what we would be our longest non-stop flight yet. Galin loaded our luggage into the plane, fueled up and paid our FBO fees while Millie took pictures. There was plenty of activity going on including a hot air balloon and some ultra lights flying around. Millie was amazed on how the balloon actually lands, like a controlled crash. She asked herself if she would ever fly in a balloon like that one and silently decided against it, at least for now.

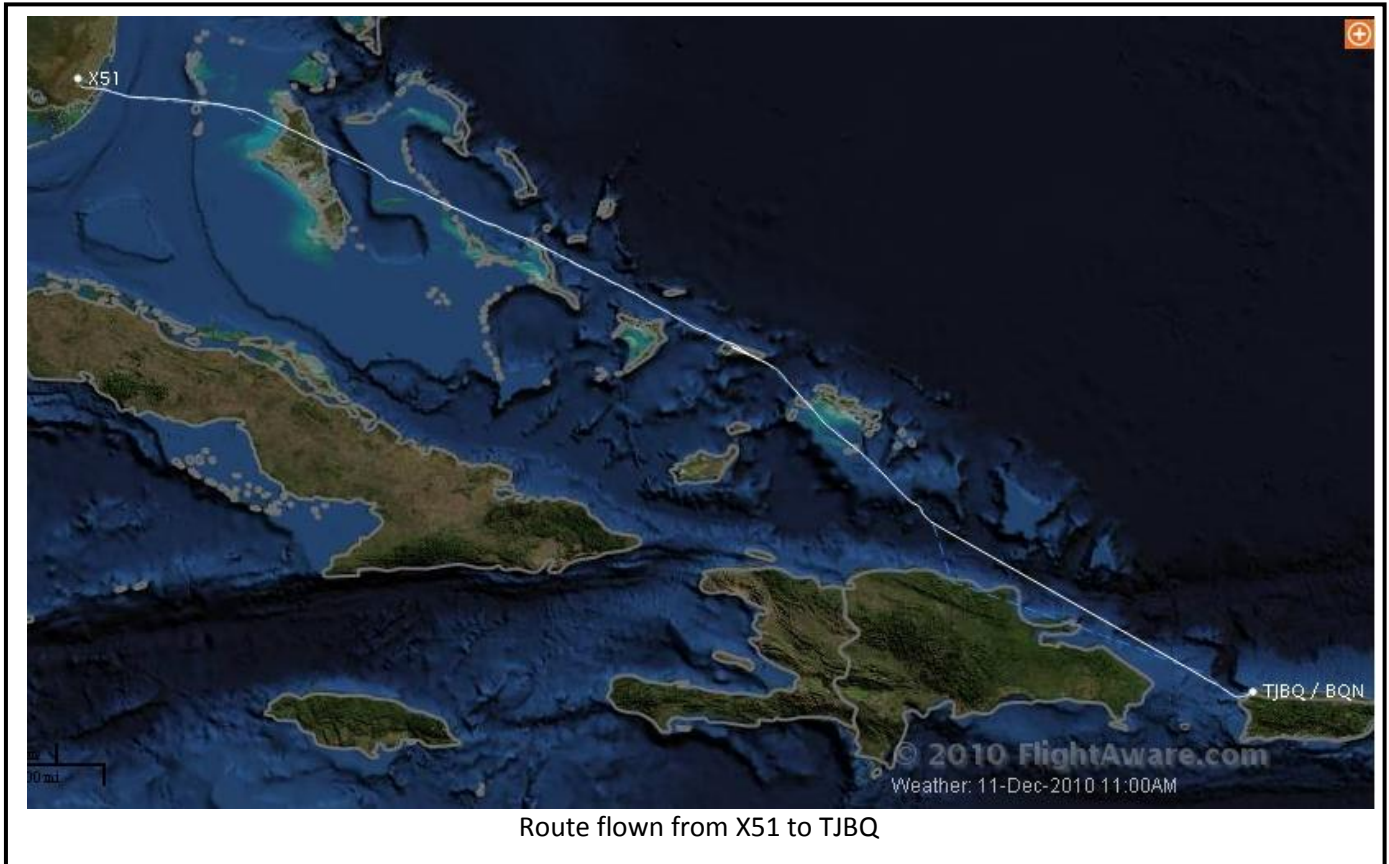


Hot Air Balloon and Ultra-light aircraft at Homestead, FL (X51)

A call to a Flight Service briefer and our next IFR flight plan was on file. Galin had finished everything so around 8:45AM we started our flight towards Aguadilla, Puerto Rico (TJBQ). The weather was beautiful so we took off visually and picked up our IFR clearance to 11,000ft from Miami departure once airborne. When we were several miles east of the Florida coast we were handed off to Nassau approach and got cleared direct to

Gran Turk (GTK). That would cut several minutes off our total flight time which was looking to be about 6 1/2hrs total without headwinds.

After about 2hrs of flying we heard Anthony checking in on the radio (N179CT) as he departed Exuma. We were behind him but flying faster than he was so we were catching up. From there on we kept in touch on a



frequency we had briefed the day before. It was fun updating each other on where we were, how far we were from one point and how fast we were going. Both of us were experiencing around 15Kts headwinds even though he was at 9,500ft. A few hours later Anthony landed at Providenciales while we continued on. About 1hr later he was airborne again but now we were slightly ahead of him just passing Gran Turk Island.

From Gran Turk we turned south towards Puerto Plata (PTA) in the Dominican Republic. Before we got there Santo Domingo Center let us fly direct to checkpoint KOBET then to KATOK for a handoff to San Juan Center. Good, another few minutes were taken off our flight time. We wanted both airplanes to land in Puerto Rico at the same time but now this was not going to happen. We were already ahead of him and were flying along faster. Besides Anthony might arrive after US Customs closes which meant he would have to continue on towards San Juan to clear Customs. Galin had so much time available during this flight he was able to troubleshoot the autopilot and figured out how to make it work when it fails. Now he can pass the information to the factory so it doesn't happen. Until then, we can at least get it back to work when it fails in flight.

Once at checkpoint KATOK we were handed off to San Juan Center. It had been almost 13yrs since we had last flown in San Juan Center's airspace and it felt great coming home. Just for practice Galin requested the GPS approach to Runway 8 at Borinquen (TJBQ) and started the decent. San Juan approach asked what maximum speed we could maintain in the descent since there was a Dash-7 aircraft behind us and he needed to maintain 140Kts in the approach. Galin told him we could maintain 140Ktss also until final and he requested we do so. We could have done a lot more in the descent but didn't want to push in to the airplane's yellow arc. We sure didn't want to wait for him to land before we did.

After almost 7hrs en-route, in which Millie watched two in flight movies, we landed into Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. Since it was later than expected we asked the tower to advise US Customs that Anthony was running late and

to please wait for him. Anthony landed about 30 minutes after we did, thankfully with Customs still waiting for him.



Gerry & Galin just after we landed

When we pulled up to the Western Aviation FBO ramp, our friend Gerry Giles was waiting for us. Gerry runs the aviation museum in Aguadilla and has the same mindset Galin and Anthony have, to get youth interested in aviation. Gerry helped us unload the airplane then invited us to a typical Puerto Rican Christmas party that night. So we went to the hotel and got ready to party. Even though we can be party animals we were so exhausted after such a long day that our eye lids were heavy during the party. We did enjoy ourselves a lot eating great food and seeing several of our old Ramey friends including some of our daughter's teachers. But we wanted to rest so we politely excused ourselves and went back to the hotel to sleep. It was great to finally arrive at our intended destination.

The next day Galin and Anthony flew both planes to an aviation activity at Humacao (X63) while Millie stayed behind to share time with family. Even though she wanted to go, she needed a break from flying. When Galin came back he told her that as soon as he parked the plane in Humacao, people came to see it and loved the PR flag and the parrot on the tail. Several persons told Galin that they had read about the airplane on the INTERNET and wanted to see it in person. That was amazing to us. Galin was impressed with some remote control airplanes and helicopters flown by young adults. He also met some interesting people including Charles Peterson who is working to keep General Aviation interest alive in Puerto Rico.

It was now time to work on our "To Do" list. Our top errand was to get new birth certificates for the family, which took us three days, but we finally got them. We also took some time and went sight seeing through the towns of Aguadilla, Aguada, Rincon and Añasco. We ate all the foods that you can only get in our island. Galin also visited his old job with the US Custom's Flying Mofongo Brothers and showed the airplane off.

There was one day that Galin and Anthony took off towards to Isla Grande (TJIG) but due to bad weather they ended up in Mayaguez all day. They had lunch at a "guagua" which is a van converted to a food stands serving typical Puerto Rican food along the road. They made the best of it by flying each others airplanes. At the end of the day, we were happy to enjoy the day even though we didn't do it together.



Our airplane at Humacao, PR (X63)

Later that week we went to the San Juan Metropolitan area and visited family. In Bayamon we visited with Millie's Mom. We wanted to meet up with Galin's brother but it didn't work out. We visited the Silver Wings Aviation Academy with Anthony getting to know their staff at the Isla Grande Airport (TJIG). For this trip we

drove and it took forever. This is when we realized how much more convenient it is to fly over large traffic jams instead of being stuck in the middle. The next time we visit San Juan, we will definitely fly.

That Saturday Galin flew to Isla Grande to participate in an open house sponsored by Silver Wings Aviation Academy. While Anthony gave orientation flights in the CTLS, Galin had our airplane on static display for the persons that participated. The idea was to raise awareness of general aviation and to show the different types of aircraft that are available.

The main topic was the fact we had flown these aircraft from Florida to Puerto Rico and were going to fly them back. Many of the persons were amazed with this feat, especially that we had first flown from Houston to Florida and then to Puerto Rico. It had not occurred to them that a general aviation airplane can be used for that kind of trip and that it would be quite an adventure. Since we made the trip using two different methods, (Anthony went VFR and made two stops while we flew IFR non-stop) it showed that anybody can do it with proper planning. While there, we generated a lot of interest in making the trip an annual event so others that want to do a trip like this have a mechanism to accomplishing it. So now we are thinking about planning another trip like this during December 2011 and see what kind of interest it generates.



N819PR and N179CT at the Silver Wings Aviation Ramp



Galin & Jimmy Pesquera at Isla Grande

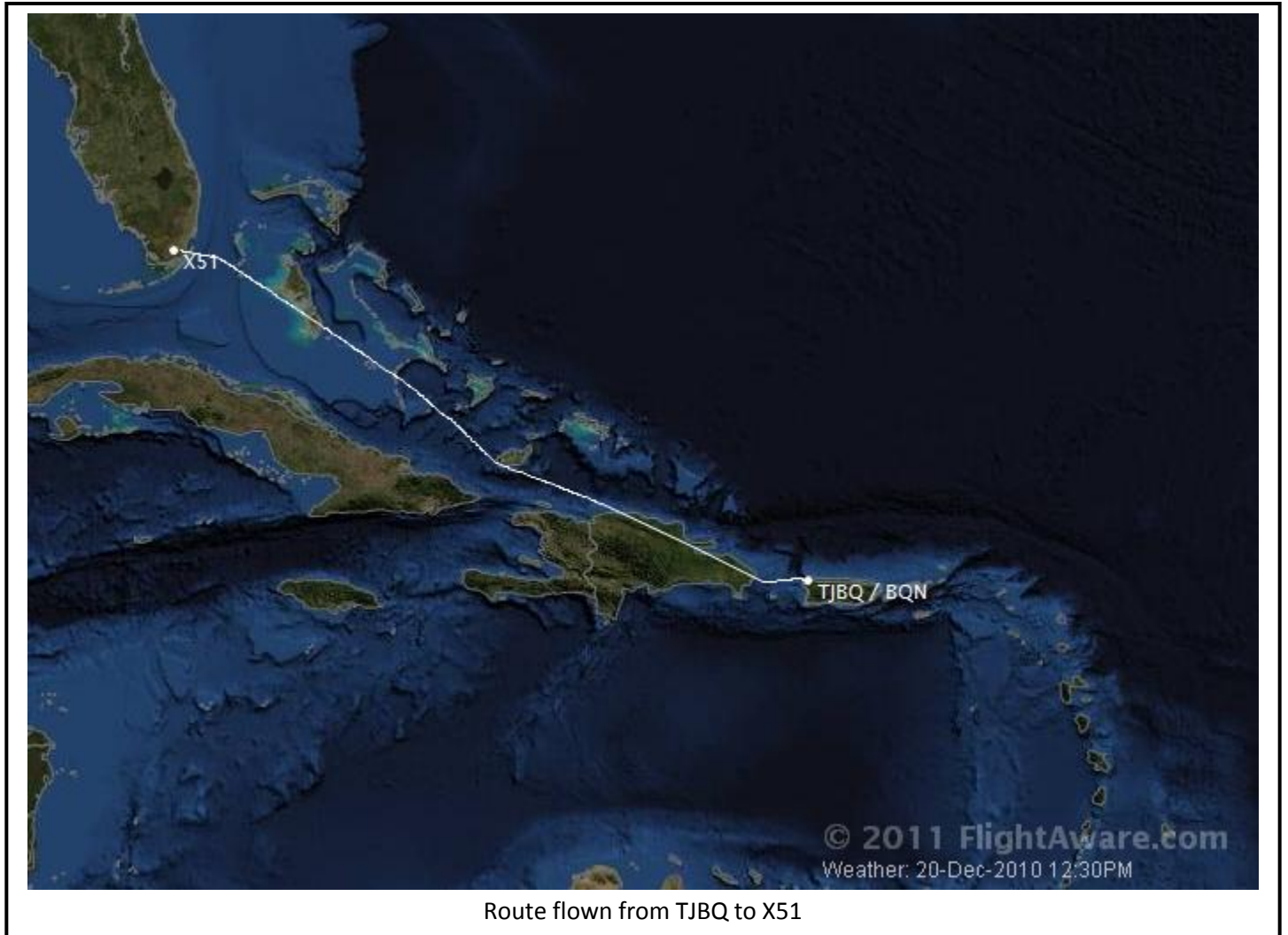
During this open house, Galin also got to spend time with his very good friend, retired United Airlines Captain Jimmy Pesquera, who he had not seen in many years. Galin & Jimmy worked together in the Puerto Rico Air National guard for many years and played Basketball together. Jimmy, as everyone else who attended the open house, was impressed on how technologically advanced our airplane was. Galin got to see the beautiful Citation Jet that Jimmy now flies as a “part time” job for fun and to keep him busy. Now this is the way to fly!

Finally, with our errands complete, we enjoyed our last day in Puerto Rico during this trip visiting with family members we had not seen. During our last full day we took a 2½ hour photo flight around the island. We flew along the coastline at 1,000ft

over water. We got permission to fly at 500ft just off the San Juan shoreline until east of the San Juan International airport (TJSJ). While off shore Salinas, we circled over several persons riding jet skies near a small island as they excitedly waved to us. This flight gave us a great last look at Puerto Rico from the air. Now it came time to head back to Houston and home with our first leg from Puerto Rico to Florida.

HEADING BACK TO HOUSTON

The plan was to leave Puerto Rico around 9:00am after clearing US Department of Agriculture, fueling up the plane and paying the FBO bill. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't cooperating. It was raining at TJBQ with the worse weather in a line running southwest to northeast. It wasn't extremely bad, just a large area of clouds between 3,000 and 8,000ft with lots of rain. Along our planned route the weather was poor until about 50 miles



to the northwest. After that it was fine. With this information Galin filed a IFR flight plan for a 10:30am departure, 1½ hrs later than what we wanted. We still had to load our suitcases and baggage into the airplane but we didn't want the inside of the airplane to get wet while doing it, so we decided to wait for the rain to stop. While waiting, the local A&P Mechanic, Jose Lopez, told us to pull the airplane into his hangar and load it there. We took this offer, loaded it, fueled it up and were soon ready to go. By the time we taxied out from the FBO it was already 10:45am, a lot later than we had originally planned. Then, with our engine running, we waited on the runway at intersection ALPHA while ATC looked for our flight plan. After about 20 minutes they finally found it so on December 20th, 2010 we left Puerto Rico on our way back. We were already late and with the expected headwind this meant arriving into Homestead a lot later than anticipated.

Since the airplane was loaded up with fuel and baggage, we were heavy. When we got close to checkpoint KATOK we were only at about 4,000ft and climbing at about 750ft per minute. San Juan Center told us that we needed to be at 10,000ft at checkpoint KATOK or Santo Domingo Center would not accept us into their airspace. We told them we could not do that so they changed our route to checkpoint ANTEX about 50 miles to the south of where we were. This meant we would stay in the bad weather a lot longer than expected while adding another 15 minutes to our already late arrival. When we got to ANTEX we were in and out of the clouds

at 8,000ft and got handed off to Santo Domingo Center. At least from ANTEX they cleared us direct to Puerto Plata (MDPP) then to checkpoint RETAK where we would be back on our original course in Haitian airspace.

When we got to RETAK, we could not contact Port Au Prince Center on the radio. However, we also heard several other airplanes calling with no answer. After about 10 minutes an Air Surinam airliner started relaying radio calls from several of us to Port Au Prince Center. By the time we got our communications relayed to them we were already at checkpoint ALBEE and were handed off to Miami Center. From there we flew to Great Inagua Island (MYIG) then turned on route A315 towards Florida. It was absolutely beautiful to fly over all the islands as we headed northwest while the headwinds were not as bad as we expected. About 5½ hrs after takeoff Millie had to pee badly. So she wound up using the portable urinal while airborne just south of the Island of Stella Maris in the Bahamas. At least this time it was a little easier since this was the second time she has used it in flight.

As we approached the Florida coast we had been airborne for about 6½ hrs when the controller asked how much endurance we had left. He probably thought we were low on fuel and needed priority handling. A quick check verified we still had about 2-3hrs of fuel to which the controller asked "What kind of airplane is that?" Galin laughed and told him we could carry about 11hrs of fuel onboard but only brought 9hrs on this flight to which he was amazed.

Seven hours and forty five minutes later, our longest non stop flight ever, we landed at Homestead's airport. The sun was already setting and it was a lot colder than Puerto Rico. This is when Millie captured the moment with her camera.



When we turned on our cell phones there was a text message from Anthony welcoming us to Florida. He had kept an eye on us through Flight Aware and knew we had arrived. We secured the airplane, got our rental and called Millie's uncle to see what he was up to. He invited us to his house to eat some pork chops with rice & beans. It was delicious. There we not only saw her uncle, some of her aunt's siblings and a cousin she hadn't seen in a long time. It was peaceful and nice to know about the family that she hadn't seen for a long time. Unfortunately the exhaustion of flying got to us quickly. We said our goodbyes and went to the hotel. We took our showers and went straight to bed because we were headed back home the next morning.

Our THANKS go out to the many persons and businesses that we encountered during this trip. We especially want to thank the following:

Meridian Aviation, Key Field, Meridian Mississippi
Southern Wings and Training, Malcom McKinnon Airport, St. Simons Island, Georgia
Golden Isles Aviation, Malcom McKinnon Airport, St. Simons Island, Georgia
Zephyrhills Aviation, Zephyrhills Airport, Zephyrhills, Florida
Premier One Aviation, Tamiami Airport, Miami, Florida
Silver Wings Aviation Academy, Isla Grande Airport, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Western Aviation, Rafael Hernandez Airport, Aguadilla, Puerto Rico
Puerto Rico Sport Aviation Federation, Humacao Airport, Humacao, Puerto Rico
Ramey AFB Museum, Rafael Hernandez Airport, Aguadilla, Puerto Rico
Homestead Executive Jet Center, Homestead General Airport, Homestead Florida
Wings over Miami Museum, Tamiami Airport, Miami, Florida

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ATC	Air Traffic Control
FBO	Fixed Base Operator
GPS	Global Positioning System
IFR	Instrument Flying Rules
Kts	Nautical Miles per Hour
Nm	Nautical Mile
VFR	Visual Flight Rules
Yellow Arc	Airspeed at which the airplane should only be operated in smooth air