

2010 Trip to Puerto Rico

Happy Holidays 2010



From Millie & Galin

Written by Galin Hernandez & Millie Santiago

Photos by Millie Santiago

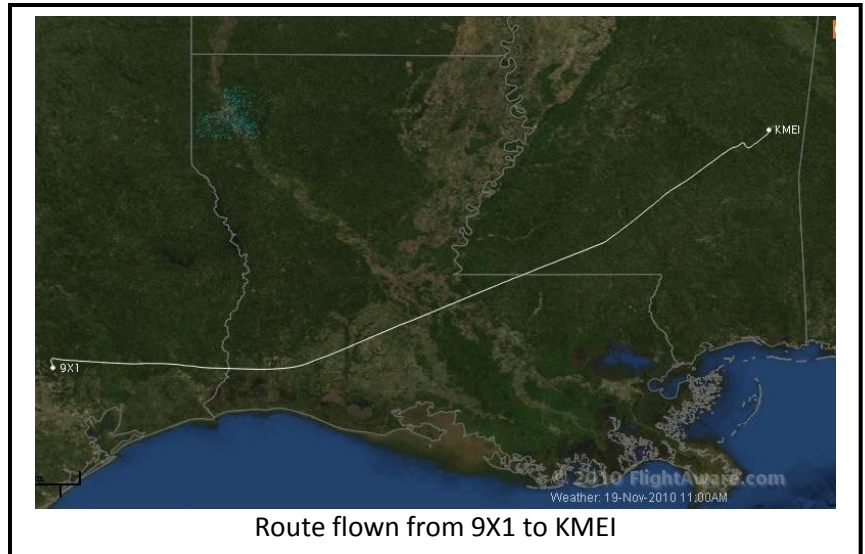
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Heading to Aquadilla, PR

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 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 that military



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



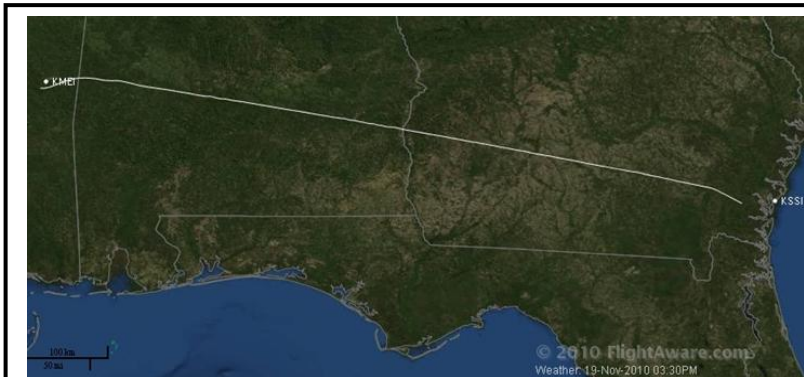
Millie reflected in the Meridian Aviation FBO door.

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.

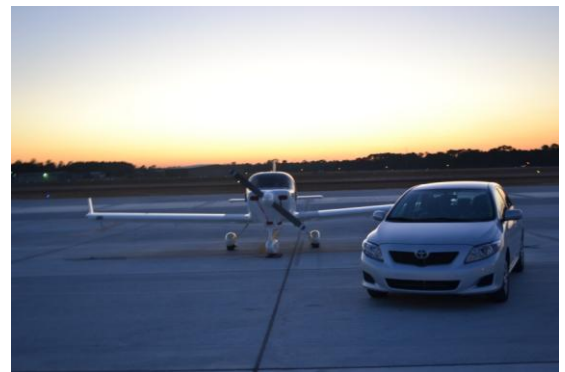
Once inside the nicely kept FBO we were welcomed by the lady running it. She told us to help ourselves to the complimentary lunch available there. We had pizza and ice cream then Galin went outside and fueled the plane up. While there we talked to several student and instructor pilots from the Navy, 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 was 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

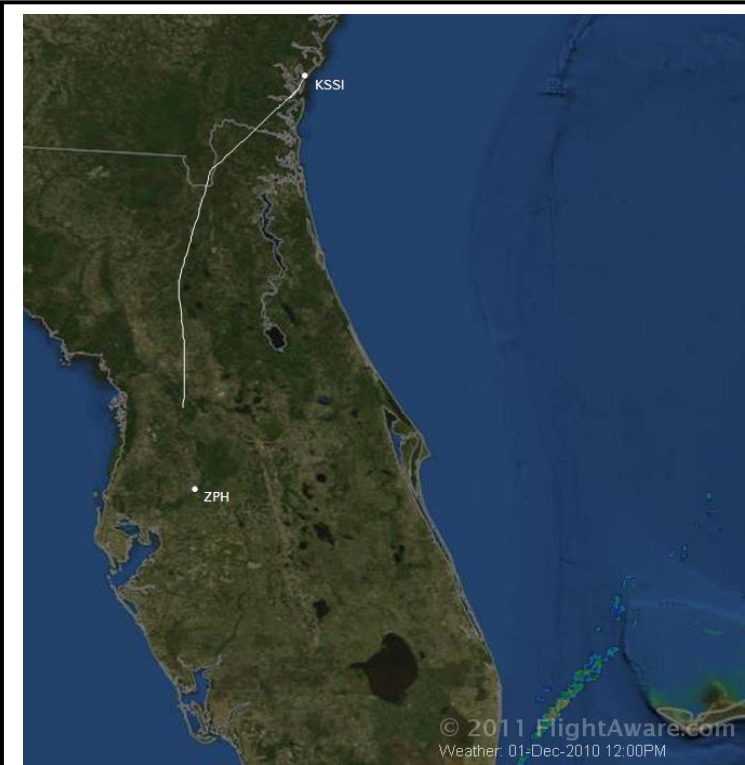
On our last Sunday there we decided to fly over to Baxley, Georgia (KBHC) and fill up the airplane since fuel there was only \$3.75 a gallon. It was a nice short flight there and we quickly had the airplane full of fuel. When we tried to start the airplane, the engine would not turn on. The airplane 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 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 headed south to Puerto Rico anyway. On December 1st we flew to 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.



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



Route taken from KSSI to KZPH

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 (KTMB). 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



Route flown from KZPH to KTSMB

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.

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 Air Force Lt. Col Julio Rodriguez-Butler, who we hadn't seen in about 19



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

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 bill 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.

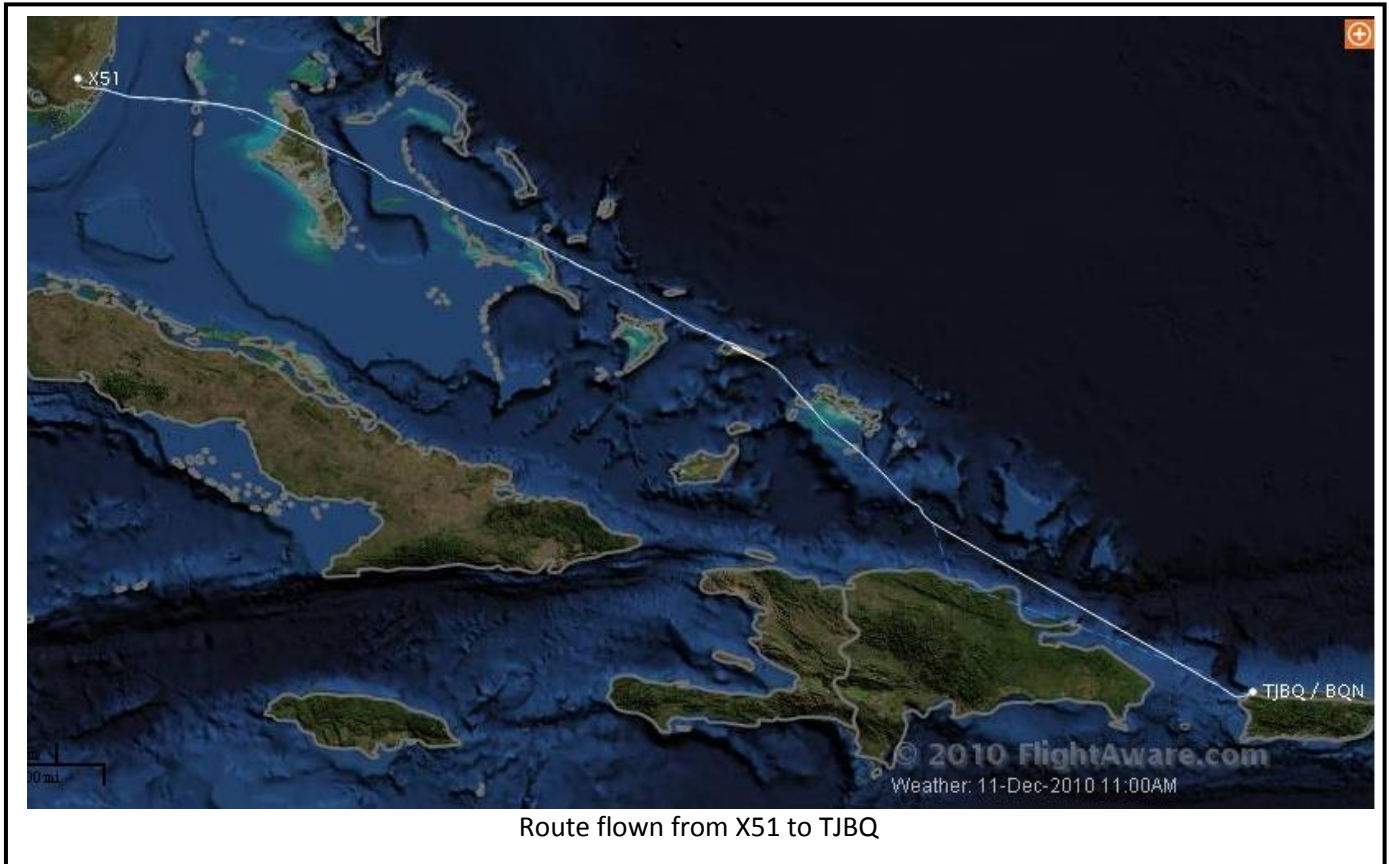
A call to a Flight Service briefer and our next IFR flight plan was on file. Galin had finished everything so around 8:45AM we started our flight towards Aguadilla, Puerto Rico (TJBQ). The weather was beautiful so we took off visually and picked up our IFR clearance to 11,000ft from Miami departure once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



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

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. 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. 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.

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 140Kts 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 an hour 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

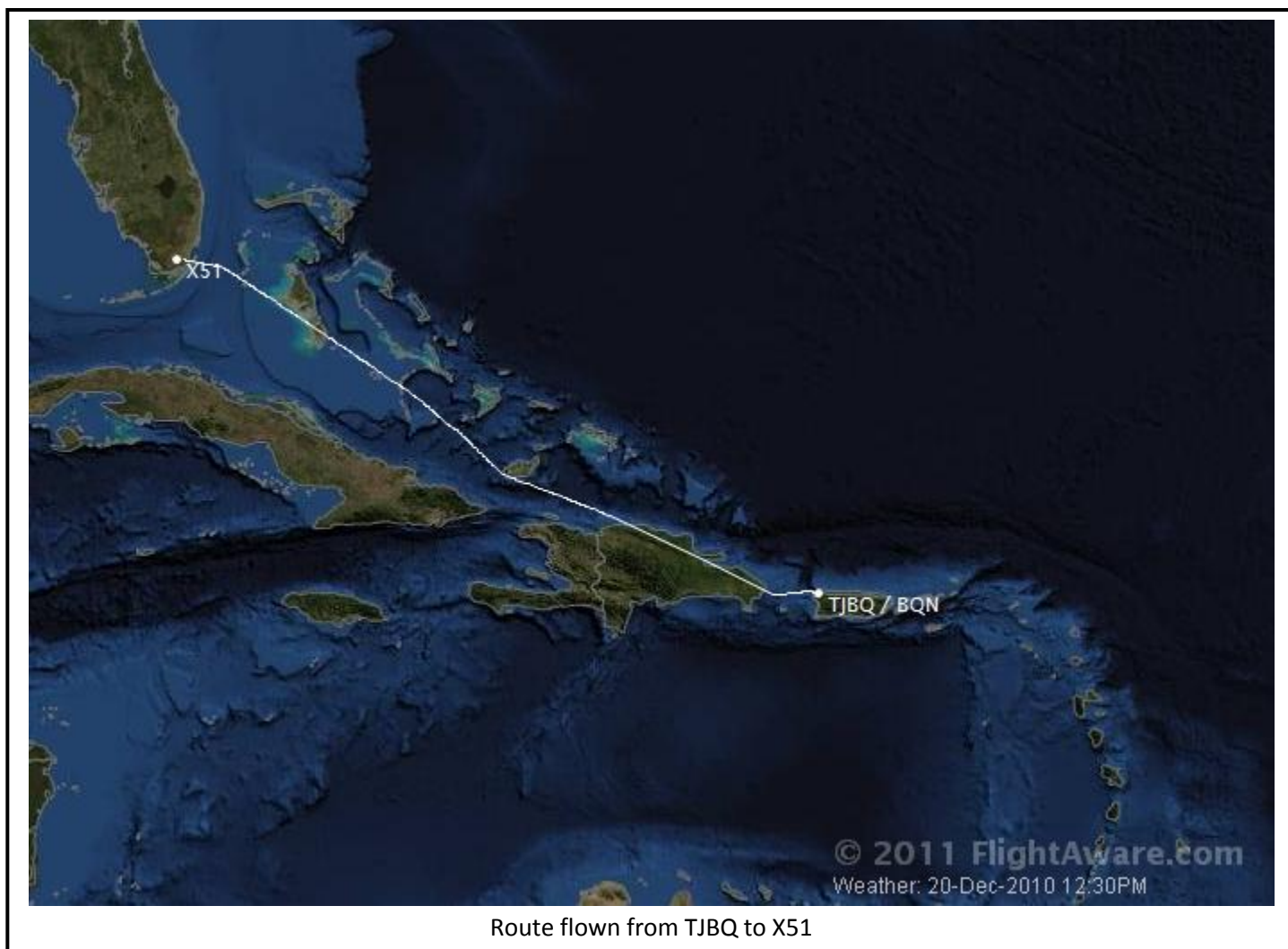
During this open house, Galin also got to spend time with his very good friend, retired United Airlines Captain Jimmy Pesquera, who he had not seen in many years. Galin & Jimmy worked together in the Puerto Rico Air National guard for many years and played Basketball together. Jimmy, as everyone else 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 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.

The airplane was loaded up with fuel and baggage so 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 and 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.

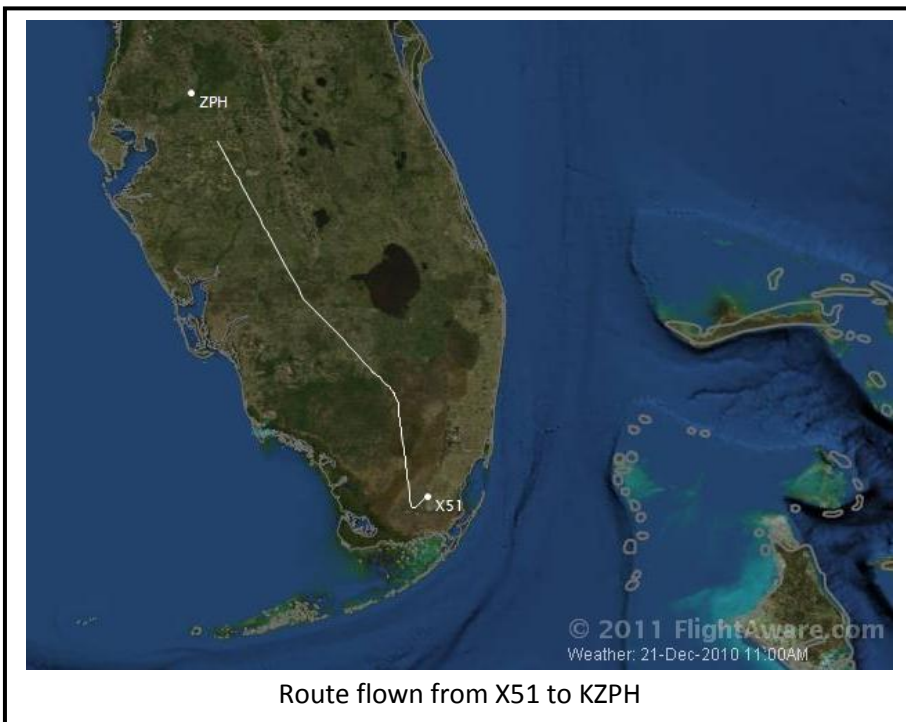
As we approached the Florida coast we had been airborne for about 6½ hrs when the controller asked how much endurance we had left. He probably thought we were low on fuel and needed priority handling. A quick check verified we still had about 2-3hrs of fuel to which the controller asked "What kind of 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 to Georgia the next morning.



We were airborne around 11am towards Zephyrhills but being IFR in a small airplane within Miami's congested airspace meant getting vectored all over the place. First I was sent to the south at 2,000ft for "spacing" then turned north to

intercept the DOLFIN 330 degree radial towards Labelle while still maintaining 2,000ft. The weather was bumpy but beautiful and we considered cancelling IFR and continuing VFR, but we wanted the flight to be tracked on FLIGHTAWARE to have a record of our route and the weather in the area during each flight we had flown. Once on the 330 radial, we were cleared to 5,000ft, direct Labelle, Lakeland and Zephyrhills. Definitely not the GPS direct we had filed for.

We landed about 12:30pm and were welcomed by the FBO staff who were wonderful. At Zephyrhills we were going to meet friends for lunch at a Latin restaurant called Flaco's Café which is about 2 miles from the airport and afterwards fuel up the airplane. Unfortunately, we got a message that they couldn't make it for lunch. We figured we would have to order delivery pizza since we didn't have a car but the FBO ladies gave us the keys to a courtesy van and off we went. We had a nice lunch at Flaco's Café after all. After lunch we filled the airplane with fuel and departed on a GPS direct IFR flight plan towards St. Simons Island, Georgia. We had been on the ground about 3hrs.



As we flew along towards Georgia, we saw a thick black cloud right in the middle of our flight path. As we got closer we realized it was a smoke cloud blowing to the east from a huge grass fire. At about 500ft we could see a plane and a helicopter working to control it. Being on an IFR flight plan at 5,000ft meant we would fly right through the smoke cloud, something we did not want to do. Galin advised ATC about the smoke fire and they let us deviate to the left in order to avoid the smoke cloud. There were several other airplanes in the area requesting deviations due to the same smoke cloud so the controller was a little busy. Millie got a good picture of the fire and the firefighting airplanes as we flew past it.



After this deviation, we got to fly over the Jacksonville airport (KJAX) at 5,000ft seeing several commercial airplanes land and take off. It was around 5:00pm when we landed in Georgia. By the time we got the rental, got our luggage out of the plane, secured the plane, checked in with the FBO and used the bathroom it was around 6:30pm and immediately drove to Savannah getting to The Bohemian Hotel at around 8pm for dinner.

We spent the next several days with Diana since they were her days off but we weren't feeling well. It seems like the change of weather from the warmth of PR to the cold of Georgia was getting to us. We were able to have dinner with Diana and her boyfriend Tony at a Longhorn's restaurant. Unfortunately, Diana had to work on Christmas Eve so we decided to have lunch at her hotel that day then fly ½ hour to Craig field (KVQQ) in Jacksonville to spend time with Galin's family.

On December 24th we departed to Jacksonville. When the approach controller handed us off to Craig tower, we were immediately cleared to land. Galin thought this was odd, clearing us to land so soon so he asked to confirm we were cleared to land even though we were about 10 miles away. The controller confirmed it and

said we were the only airplane anywhere near the field and that made it easier on both of us. We couldn't fault her for that kind of thinking so Galin said "Ok, cleared to land". Craig field is a very interesting airport since it is an old Navy base. The runways, taxiways and ramps are huge compared to what we normally fly into. Besides a Cessna Citation 2, we were the only other airplane on the ramp. The FBO facilities are very 1st class and the staff is very attentive. We like this airport a lot.



Route flown from KSSI to KVQQ

We were going to spend only one night there before heading out to Houston but the weather to the west was turning bad. The Weather Channel was showing a severe cold front over Alabama bringing low clouds, turbulence and icing conditions from Mississippi to Georgia. It was forecast to pass through to the northeast during the next hours but all travel in the area was having problems. Ok, so we wait another day before heading out. The family was happy that we spent Christmas day with them. We went to a luncheon then to a cousin's house for gifts giving. We had a great time but had to rest for the next day's flights.

At 6:30am on December 26th we were up and ready for our final day of flying on this long trip. We had a big breakfast because we didn't know if the FBO in Meridian, Mississippi was going to be open. We left around 7:30 for the airport and it was cold. Galin called

Flight Service for a briefing and to file a flight plan. According to the briefer, the weather was real bad to the north and east but better along our route of flight. There had been reports of icing conditions about 30 miles north of us from 4,000 to 6,000ft with strong winds and light snow flurries. This didn't seem to be a big deal since we would be at 8,000ft, in clear conditions on top. Meridian was reporting marginal VFR conditions but forecast to be completely VFR by the time we arrived in 3hrs with temperatures in the low to mid 40's. With this information in hand, we filed a GPS direct IFR flight plan to Meridian and we got ready to depart. We still had about 5hrs of fuel on board for a 3hr flight so we did not take on any more. Besides, the airplane would be at least 250lbs lighter giving it better performance.

So we got our luggage inside the plane when to our surprise we saw snow flakes coming down. Our first reaction was; "It's snowing in Florida for heaven sakes!" The temperature was about 38 degrees so the snow was melting immediately upon contact. It was also raining lightly and very windy. We said our goodbyes to our uncle and climbed into the airplane. The plane took a while to start since it was very cold. Good thing we had a new battery with a full charge on it because our old battery would have never started the engine at that temperature. Once the engine was on, we had to wait quite a while for it to warm up to operating temperature before Galin decided to taxi away. Since it is such a long runway, Galin asked for an intersection departure which still provided more than 4,000ft of runway for take-off.



Craig tower gave us our clearance and we took the intersection departure to the northwest. Approach cleared us to our cruising altitude of 8,000ft and we entered the clouds at about 4,000ft. Other planes were on frequency saying they were VFR on top and that the clouds ended at about 6,500ft so everything seemed just like the weather briefing said it would be. But at about 5,000ft Galin noticed that the airplane was not climbing as it normally did. At this weight we should be climbing at about 1,200ft per minute but it was struggling to do 500ft per minute at the same airspeed. Galin made sure the pitot heat was on so he didn't think this was the problem. Being in the clouds we could not see anything outside so Galin concentrated on the instruments.

Craig tower gave us our clearance and we took the intersection departure to the northwest. Approach cleared us to our cruising altitude of 8,000ft and we entered the clouds at about 4,000ft. Other planes were on frequency saying they were VFR on top and that the clouds ended at about 6,500ft so everything seemed just like the weather briefing said it would be. But at about 5,000ft Galin noticed that the airplane was not climbing as it normally did. At this weight we should be climbing at about 1,200ft per minute but it was struggling to do 500ft per minute at the same airspeed. Galin made sure the pitot heat was on so he didn't think this was the problem. Being in the clouds we could not see anything outside so Galin concentrated on the instruments.

After a while we were climbing at only 200ft per minute and Galin knew something was not right. Just then Millie asked "What's that on the windshield?" We had a book with the en-route charts on the dashboard with a black three ring binder containing the approach plates on top of it so we could not see the lower 3 inches of the windshield. At first Galin couldn't see anything on the windshield but after a few seconds he saw ice, rime ice, on the windshield. Icing conditions were a lot further south than reported and the worst part was that we had inadvertently entered them.

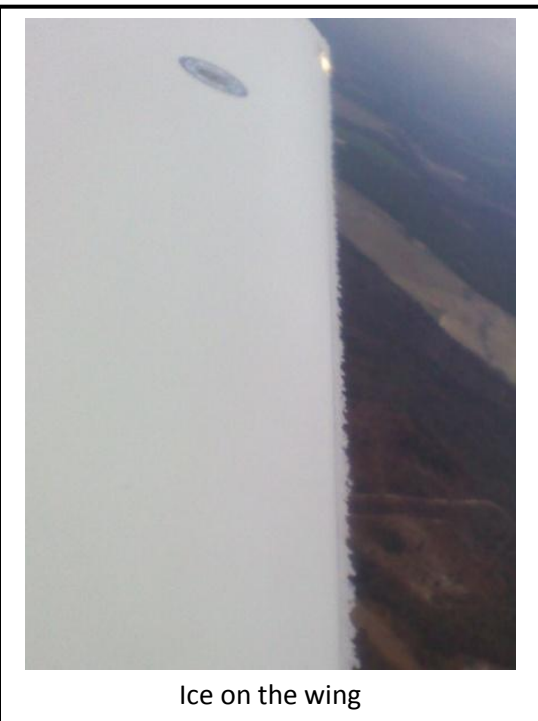
That explained why the airplane was not performing correctly. We turned to the southwest keeping our wings



Route flown from KVVQ to KMEI

as level as possible and started a descent out of the clouds. Galin advised the controller we were picking up ice and needed to descend to which the controller said to standby while he coordinated lower for us. Yea, right, like we were going to wait while you coordinate. By the time he cleared us to 4,000ft we were already there still in the clouds. Galin told him we needed lower and he cleared us to whatever altitude and heading we needed to get out of the conditions. NOW we are talking as we continued the descent.

We broke out of the clouds at about 3,800ft into VFR conditions and were able to finally see the wings. What we saw took us by surprise. The entire leading edge of the wings as well as the winglets had about $\frac{3}{4}$ " of ice on them sticking straight out like fingers. We could not see the tail but figured it should be the same if not worse. A few seconds later the ice everywhere started to slowly melt and break off. A quick look showed the outside air temperature to be at 39 degrees. Good, above freezing. We leveled off at 3,500ft letting more ice melt and break off until the windshield was completely ice free. Having a GARMIN 496 GPS with XM weather on board Galin checked the temperature of a few airports towards Meridian and found they were reporting surface temperatures from the low to mid 40's. To the east, airports were reporting surface temperatures in the low 30's to high 20's. Galin decided to head west where the temperatures were higher rather than back to the east while staying at 3,500ft. The controller had no problem with this and cleared us direct to Meridian when able. Millie took a picture of the ice on the wing with her cell phone. Galin also turned on the taxi/landing lights knowing these two 55w halogen lights near each wing tip generate heat. You can see the lights are on in the picture Millie took.



Ice on the wing

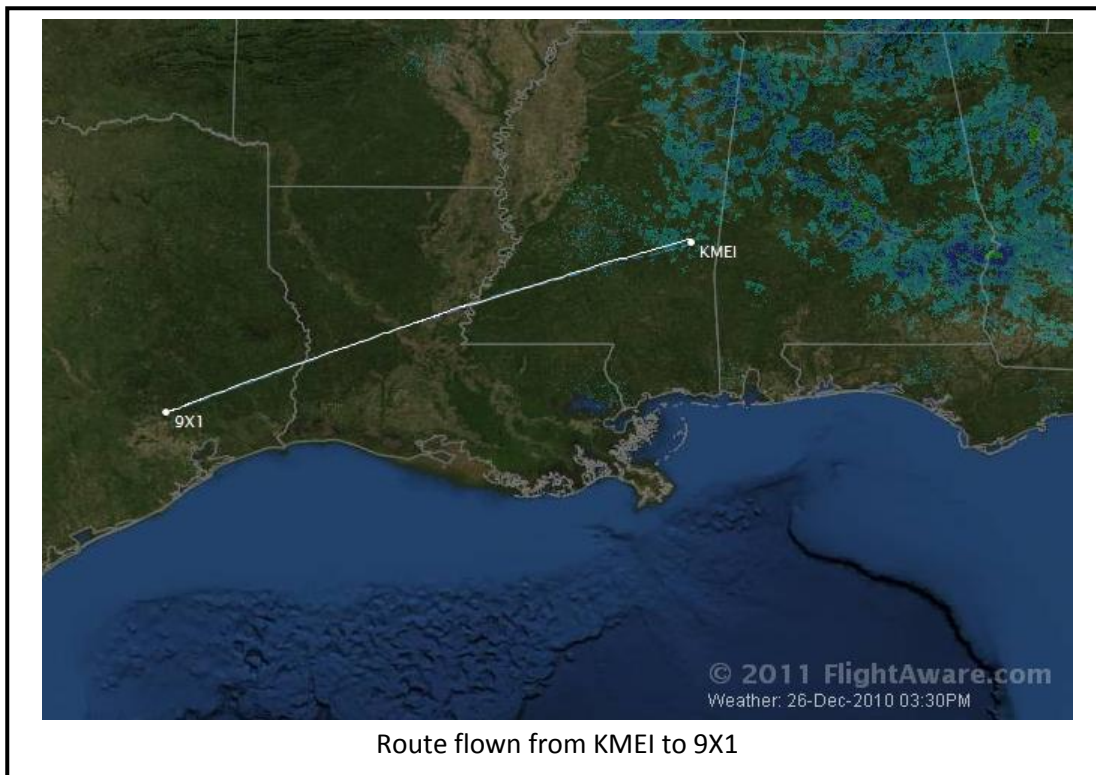
Millie admitted in all the flights we've done this was the scariest for her but, trusting Galin, she kept quiet so he could focus. Galin later admitted that he was concerned when he saw the ice and was about to make a precautionary landing when the ice started melting. After that the airplane performed just fine and wanted to climb back into the clouds. We think everything came out fine probably because we took corrective action in time.

There was a lot of turbulence and, combined with a full stomach it was not fun. We both started to feel queasy. Millie couldn't hold it and had to use a puke bags then hold on to it until we landed at Meridian almost 2 hours later. We wanted this portion of the trip over so we could land. It took us a little over four hours when it should have been only three. The clouds, ice and snow didn't help one bit. Of all the flights we have done, this one from Jacksonville, FL to Meridian, Mississippi was the one that had us worried but it turned out OK.

As soon as we touched down at Meridian, there was a noise from the right side and the airplane shimmied a little. We thought the right main tire had blown so Galin held it as straight as possible on the 11,000ft runway. Once the airplane stopped Galin told the tower he thought we had a blown tire. The controller asked if we needed assistance but Galin told him to standby. Galin gave a little power and the airplane taxied just fine. He then told the tower everything was fine and the controller cleared us to the FBO ramp. We think there had been some ice that broke off the tire as soon as we landed making it feel like a blown tire for a second.

When we got out of the airplane, Millie threw the puke bag away and ran to the bathroom. It was the longest bathroom break for her. While there Galin fueled up the plane for the final leg of our trip. While fueling he saw the very tip of the nose and the front of each wheel boot had some ice on it. It looked like someone had stuck a tiny cup of shaved ice on them. Although it looked real funny, we knew we had been into some real icing conditions and got out of it in time. After a little while, all the remaining ice had melted off so we took our time having lunch in the warm FBO office.

While sitting in the FBO, a Beech Bonanza landed and parked next to our airplane. This airplane was covered in ice a lot worse than our airplane. The pilot walked into the FBO and asked us where we came from and if we had encountered ice to which Galin said "Oh yes!" He had come from Memphis, Tennessee was headed to Gulfport, Mississippi to pick up some passengers and was hoping to get a report on what the weather was like further south. Afterwards a Cessna 402 landed also with ice on the wings. He was arriving from New York and had picked up the ice during the descent from 14,000ft. It was not a good day to be flying up high and to the east crossing through the icing area.



To where we were headed next (9X1) the weather was clear below 12,000 with surface temperatures reported to be 55 degrees. The briefer told Galin a KIS4 had reported icing conditions to the east of Meridian a few hours before and Galin told him he knew about that because we were the KIS4 reporting the ice. So Galin filed another GPS direct IFR flight plan to our home airport, this time at 4,000ft just to make sure we stayed as far away from icing conditions as possible.

When we got in the plane towards Texas, Millie still wasn't feeling 100% so she decided to try to sleep as much as she could. Her stomach was still queasy and she was getting dizzy if she looked anywhere but straight ahead. Although there was some turbulence, it was not as bad as our flight to Meridian. We were so happy to land at our home airport after an uneventful 3 hour flight. It had been a total of 7 hours flight time on December 26, 2010 by the time we

landed. We put the airplane in the hangar, didn't care if we had left some things in the airplane and drove off to have a light dinner.

We got home around 7:00pm. It was wonderful to open the door to our apartment even though we were greeted by an empty refrigerator. That night watching the news we saw how the weather had become worse than expected affecting even commercial air travel. There was ice and snow everywhere along the east causing major problems. What a time for us to get our first actual, not theoretical, experience with in-flight icing. Later that night our daughter Diana called all excited. It snowed in Savannah and she finally saw snow falling for the first time in her life.

Overall, it was an awesome experience, but truth be told that there is no place like home. We flew for over 43 hours and more than 5,300 miles in 39 days. Situations came up that we had to deal with and overcome. Most things went exactly as planned, but a few didn't. On a trip like this you have to be prepared for the worst. If it doesn't happen, then great! If it does, you are not wasting valuable time trying to figure it out on the spot and at least have an idea of what to do. This entire trip was just a preview of what awaits us during our "2015 Around the World Flight" and who knows, maybe we will do this same trip again next year.



The route we took during our 2010 Holiday trip. It took 39 days, over 5,300miles and more than 43 flight hours from Houston, Texas to Aguadilla, Puerto Rico and back with stops along the way.

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
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Silver Wings Aviation Academy, Isla Grande Airport, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Western Aviation, Rafael Hernandez Airport, Aguadilla, Puerto Rico
Golden Isles Aviation, Malcom McKinnon Airport, St. Simons Island, Georgia
Southern Wings and Training, Malcom McKinnon Airport, St. Simons Island, Georgia
Jacksonville Jetport, Cecil Field, Jacksonville, Florida
Puerto Rico Sport Aviation Association, Humacao Airport, Humacao, Puerto Rico
Ramey AFB Museum, Rafael Hernandez Airport, Aguadilla, Puerto Rico
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
Ktss	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