



EMILY, Libby, and Alan Herring at Glendale Airport, Arizona.

FUN FLIGHT

SHARPENING SKILLS FOR FAMILY TRAVEL

I missed out on a bunch of flying this weekend,” lamented my neighbor, Alan Herring, over dinner. Alan is a dairy-cattle veterinarian and fellow pilot. He owns a Cessna 170 taildragger and a Turbo 182. He and his wife, Jeanie, live near Phoenix, and commute on weekends to their vacation home here in Flagstaff. He’d just finished describing how his family names all their vehicles. The Skylane goes by *Wanda*, and the 170 is called *Willy*.

“Our daughter Emily is down in Tucson attending the archrival Arizona State University-University of Arizona football game,” Alan explained. “Her sister Libby is at home west of Phoenix. They’re coming to Flagstaff tomorrow to join us for one night. The plan was for Jeanie and me to fly up here in *Wanda* yesterday. The girls were to rendezvous tomorrow morning at Glendale Airport, where I’d pick them up. Then we’d all fly home together on Sunday. Sounds crazy for just one night, but we always have a good time together and the girls have shopping in mind. But when we got ready to fly here yesterday, *Wanda*’s battery was dead, and it was too late to address it.”

I asked about the girls’ contingency

travel plan. Emily would now drive from Tucson to Tempe in the morning. Libby would come from the west valley to meet her, and they’d continue to Flagstaff together. Returning home Sunday, they’d detour to retrieve the extra car.

“That’s complicated for one night, and quite a drive,” I observed. “Why don’t you and I just pick up Libby and Emily at Glendale Airport in the *Flying Carpet* tomorrow? Then they could ride home with you and Jeanie Sunday without leaving cars all over the place.”

Alan and Jeanie expressed surprise. “Oh, we couldn’t ask you to do that,” Alan said.

“Why not?” I asked. “That would give the girls more time to enjoy their brief

visit. And you’d get an extra couple hours of family time traveling home together instead of driving separately. Besides, it’s always fun seeing Emily and Libby—and what more productive excuse could I find to enjoy a morning’s flying?”

After takeoff from Flagstaff the next morning, Alan and I swapped flying stories. Alan told of flying *Wanda* on long cross-countries from Arizona to Texas, and to his childhood home in Georgia. But then he described a bad-landing experience that had softened his piloting confidence and will.

“At least you were alone on your botched landing,” I observed. “Last time I bounced a landing I had first-time passengers aboard!” We laughed, but Alan admitted he’d not flown much following that experience.

“Two years ago when I was flying a lot, I would have found a way to solve Thursday’s battery problem,” he said. “But now that I’m not flying enough, I was all too willing to let it go and drive instead.” I’d wondered why Alan didn’t fly his airplanes to Flagstaff more often, so this was revealing.

My friend talked of earning more ratings to enhance his skills, first knocking off the instrument rating he’d started but never quite finished years ago.

“It’s not easy flying all the way to Georgia VFR,” he observed. “And I’d sure love instrument qualifications to penetrate the marine layer flying in and

out of San Diego.” I recommended a seasoned instrument flight instructor near his home airport to finish him up.

We also discussed advanced pilot certificates, which he hadn’t seriously considered before. I explained the many benefits of becoming a flight instructor after completing his instrument rating, and how he could streamline the process by combining commercial and flight instructor written-test prep and flight training.

“Proficiency is what I’m most interested in,” observed Alan, “and earning those ratings might be an ideal way to do it.”

By now it was time to concentrate on our arrival. Alan bases one of his airplanes at Glendale Airport; along with handling radio communications he shared valuable tips on reporting points and local area procedures. Glendale is

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sandwiched between Phoenix Class Bravo airspace and the rather unique Luke Air Force Special Air Traffic Rules area. It’s manageable to negotiate if you’re prepared, but I appreciated having a seasoned local pilot assisting on this trip.

We’d hardly landed when Libby and Emily arrived in separate cars at the airport parking lot.

“ASU lost, but it was still a great game!” Emily announced when she arrived at the airport. She and Libby both were so nicely dressed that before taking off, I proposed a spur-of-the-moment photo with their lucky dad.

“Boy, are you two photogenic!” I observed, after reviewing the pics on

my camera. Only then did I reveal the publication destined to picture them. To much laughter, Libby and Emily donned their headsets, and the seasoned aerial travelers immersed themselves in cellphone texting before we reached the runway. They emerged only for sightseeing as we overflowed stunning red-rock Sedona.

“We should fly up here more often, Dad,” said Libby. “This is a lot better than driving!”

“We will, girls,” said Alan. “We will!” 🗣️

Greg Brown is an aviation author, photographer, and former National Flight Instructor of the Year 🗣️ (www.gregbrownflyingcarpet.com).