

On October 3, 2003, at a few minutes past 7 a.m. Eastern Standard Time, Andrew Keech launched his autogyro, a Little Wing LW5 Woodstock, from First Flight Airport in Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina, and headed westbound in an attempt to set a new transcontinental flight record for fastest cross-country time by an autogyro. Keech, 64, succeeded at 6:30 p.m. Pacific Standard Time on October 12, when he landed at Montgomery Field in San Diego, breaking Johnny Miller's previous record, set in 1931 (see "Pilots: Johnny Miller," December 2003 *Pilot*).



Pilot breaks 72-year-old gyroplane record

He lost 10 pounds on the westbound trip, which took 35.2 tach hours at an average speed of nearly 68 knots. Miller set his record in the Pitcairn PCA-2, at an average speed of about 52.5 knots, taking 43.8 tach hours. However, since a transcontinental flight is timed from "wheels off on one coast to wheels down on the other coast," according to Keech, a pilot's stamina and judgment make critical differences in the flight.

Keech benefited from several advantages. "The LW5 is less than four times my body weight, and less than a third the size and power of Miller's PCA-2, but is made with modern materials and techniques," said Keech. "It was a different age and a different time technically. Miller could not fly in rain as it would have stripped the fabric from

his rotating blades, and navigating while holding a road map in an open cockpit speaks to the capability of this great aviator." Keech had the advantage of an all-metal propeller and rotor blade and navigated using a handheld GPS, like most modern record-setting aviators.

Keech's flight was made without accompanying technical support, though he valued help from several good Samaritans en route. "I took two one-half-inch wrenches, a spare prerotator belt [the prerotator is used for spinning up the rotor blades prior to takeoff], and a can of oil—about 2 pounds of technical support," said Keech. A cell phone allowed him to consult with Ron Herron, developer of the Little Wing Autogyro. Fellow pilots and friends along the way offered him food, shelter, fuel, and mechanical suggestions.

The return trip was an even loftier success, recordwise, as he improved upon the previous time by 100 percent. At one point, he noted a groundspeed on the GPS receiver of more than 136 knots. Keech noted, "If my records are superceded they will have to be flown by someone with the confidence I have for the design of my Little Wing tractor autogyro." Keech said that autogyros were sidetracked for 50 years when gyrocopters were introduced in the mid-1950s with pusher engines—which typically have a poorer safety record. Herron has managed to turn the tide by the reintroduction of his Little Wing design with the engine in the front. —Julie K. Boatman

SQUAWKSHEET

■ A problem with the software for Garmin's GTX 330 and GTX 330D Mode S transponders prompted the FAA to propose an airworthiness directive (AD). But Garmin told AOPA that it has already sent updated software that fixes the problem to all Garmin Aviation Service Centers. Without Garmin's recently released software version 3.03, the Mode S transponders may not reply to traffic alert and collision avoidance system (TCAS) interrogations from other airborne traffic detection systems. Garmin issued a safety bulletin in mid-2003 and is offering to pay for both the software upgrade and the avionics shop time to do the work. Anyone with affected equipment who has not received the software upgrade should contact Garmin by calling 800/800-1020 or visiting the Web site (www.garmin.com/contactUs).

i Links to the full text of this proposal can be found on AOPA Online (www.aopa.org/pilot/links.shtml).

ePILOT HEADLINERS

AOPA ePILOT

Recent news from AOPA's weekly e-mail newsletter.

Dayton Flyer flies

A Wright Flyer replica built by the Wright Brothers Aeroplane Company of West Milton, Ohio, has flown, is continuing to fly, and will keep on flying. Two replicas were built using wing ribs made by children from around the nation at supervised workshops.

Fossett to jet around globe

Burt Rutan has unveiled the Virgin Atlantic *GlobalFlyer* single-engine turboprop aircraft at Scaled Composites in Mojave, California. It will be flown by Steve Fossett later this year in his attempt to make the first solo nonstop flight around the world.

New Piper opts for glass

Avidyne announced that The New Piper Aircraft has chosen its FlightMax Entegra primary flight display and multifunction displays for the Saratoga HP, the Saratoga TC, and the Piper 6X and 6XT single-engine airplanes.

British pilot changes course

Weather and logistics problems in Antarctica forced British pilot Polly Vacher in December to abandon her attempt to circle the globe pole to pole.

Pilot, businessman dies

Harry B. Combs, noted pilot, businessman, historian, and author, died December 23 at his home in Arizona. He was 90.

Intersection named for firefighter

Michael Quilty, an enthusiastic and accomplished pilot, firefighter, and devoted family man was memorialized when the FAA named an intersection for him called KWLTY. He died during the collapse of the World Trade Center towers.

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