

# Long Gone

By Stu Simpson



Photos by Divan Mueller

I recently recounted the story of a flying adventure that Bob Kirkby, Carl Forman and I had in 2014. One part of the story told how we were clearing snow and ice from our planes after being stranded by weather in Wyoming. I wrote of the warm sun rising steadily, but by the time it could affect our planes, we'd be long gone.

When I wrote that, about being long gone, I was surprised at the unexpected and pleasant sensation I felt about such a notion.

I smile now thinking of the giddiness and anticipation that strikes me when I think about being long gone. It's a sensation of, "Oh, boy, I actually get to go! I get to fly my plane off to somewhere else! I'm going on an adventure, and soon I'll be long gone, right in the middle of it. That's SO exciting!" Perhaps that's childish, but I don't mind.

I like the idea of being long gone, especially in my Cavalier. It means that some place, any place, is behind me, and that some other place is still out in front of me. There's something ahead, something to look forward to.

Being long gone in the Cav means moving forward toward those other place, other things, other experiences. Sometimes they're new and unknown. Those ones are the best.

So many times I've come up overhead a city, or airport, or landscape where I've never been and thought, "Oh, that's what this place looks like. Cool!" Sometimes the location, like the Rogers Pass or the Utah desert, has simply left me breathless.

Occasionally, people see me and my wingmen getting ready to fly away and they're jealous that we'll soon be long gone. I know this because they've told me so, and I freely admit that it pleases me. It's not pettiness, it's simply satisfaction in doing things that others want to do, too. I know I sure feel jealous seeing others on their way to being long gone.

But those folks soon forget about us, and that's ok. We'll fly away and become a footnote on the page of their day. They might later tell someone, "Hey, there were these guys that came through from a far-off place in some really interesting planes." But the page will soon turn.

By then we'll be in the air again heading off in some direction or another. We might be rocketing along on a tailwind, maybe dodging low clouds near an unfamiliar airport, or seeing something else we've never seen before, something that once again leaves us breathless.

Either way, we'll be long gone. And that's one of the best feelings I know.

