My Allegro 2000 Cross Country Trip

I arrived at the Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina airport on July the 9th, 2005. Doug Hempstead picked me up at the airport and drove me to Sanford. I flew for an hour checkout in the Allegro with their flight instructor. I had flown the airplane a couple of months earlier, but I wanted a full checkout before I started out for Arizona.

I started my trip from Sanford, NC on the morning of July the 10th, 2005. A hurricane was heading toward the Mississippi Valley. My goal was to get across the Mississippi River by sundown. I thought this would allow me to stay ahead of the weather.

The morning started out foggy, so Ramsey and I went out for breakfast while we waited for the fog to lift. Ramsey works with Doug and Betty Hempstead, importers of the Allegro 2000. He gave me my first ride in the Allegro, and is an accomplished pilot.

The fog lifted, and I took off for Arizona. Ramsey and Doug had suggested the best route through the Appalachian Mountains. The mountains of the East Coast are not as high as the Rockies, but they are nonetheless a significant influence on general aviation aircraft and local weather. I flew just east of Greensboro, then crossed the Appalachians over Mountain Empire, Virginia, and followed the highway to Virginia Highlands Airport at Abingdon, Virginia. "Wow" was all I could say! This airplane could only be described in one word: Fun!

I pulled up next to a King Air 200 and asked the attendant to top it off. After looking all over for the fuel cap, he came inside and sheepishly asked where to put the fuel. From then on I made sure I told the Line Service Attendants' where the gas cap was located. After paying for the fuel I was off to Tennessee. I flew low, about 1000 feet AGL, until it started to get bumpy. At that time I'd climb until it was smooth. I ended up at 4500 feet MSL. The cruise RPM was 4950. The indicated airspeed was 105 knots. The burn was 4.8 GPH.

I landed in Tennessee just east of Nashville at the airport in Lebanon, Tennessee (M54). They topped me off and gave me a complementary Coke. They were excited to see the first Light Sport Aircraft at their airport. Everyone had a lot of questions about the Allegro. I found that the hardest thing about my flight was leaving any given airport, as the folks at every airport always wanted to ask about the airplane. I took off and flew over the top of Nashville International. To a person, every air traffic controller asked "What is an Allegro?" I was called an Experimental on several occasions, but I just told them, "No, this is a new Factory Built Special Light Sport Aircraft".

I made it across the Mississippi River and landed at Walnut Ridge, Arkansas, thinking I was going stay for the night. At the airport I saw a retired Boeing 737-200 I used to fly for my employer. (My airline recently retired all of our B-737-200 models). They took the wings and landing gear off and are making a restaurant out of old N86SW! A quick check of the weather showed me a line of thunderstorms west, and a hurricane to the south. Forecast: heavy rain for 5 days. After talking with a briefer I took a quick photo of

the Allegro parked next to the future restaurant and headed north for Missouri to try and outrun the weather.

I landed for the night just southwest of St Louis in Sullivan, Missouri. I had flown for 7.1 hours. A crowd met the airplane. They were all wanting to know what this Allegro on the radio looked like. The airport manager fuel me up, let me park in a covered tie-down, recommended a hotel, and loaned me an airport car. There are very nice folks at KUUV. I recommend the stop if you are in their neighborhood.

I awoke early the next morning and called to Flight Service to check on the weather and the progress of the hurricane. The first wave of rain from the hurricane was 30 miles away and headed straight for the airport. I had a quick breakfast and took off for Kansas. I flew low, (1000 feet AGL) once again, and enjoyed the view of the lakes and farms along the way. Springfield was Marginal VFR, but my route of flight just north was fairly good. I made sure to always keep myself a way out, and was able to make it past the hazy skies and into the flatter lands of Kansas. I landed at the mostly deserted Tri-City Airport (KPPF) in Parsons, Kansas. The Airport Manager was getting his King Air ready for a charter, but stopped long enough to fuel and admire the Allegro. The passengers on a just arrived Cessna Citation smiled and waved as I taxied by them on the way to the runway.

The next leg took me to Oklahoma. The flight was uneventful, and flown 2500 to 4500 feet MSL. I landed at Alva, Oklahoma (KAVK). They had a very nice terminal, and loaned me a car so I could drive to town for lunch. I had a quick bite at a local Sonic, and then it was back to the airport for the last leg of the day. I showed off the Allegro to a nice family of four, and then headed off to Texas.

The ride started getting bumpy at 4500, so I climbed to 6500. The ride was good for a few minutes, but then deteriorated, so I climbed to 8500. It was nice and cool, but still bumpy, so I climbed to 10,500 feet, where the air was smooth and cool. I enjoyed a nice ride until I started my descent into Buffalo Airport (1E7), a grass strip just south of Amarillo, with a field elevation of 3640 feet. I slowed down to the top of the green and descended for landing. The temperature was 95, and although warm, the window vents kept plenty of air moving around the cockpit. I touched down and rolled out to the hangar where my brother was working on his C-172. He really liked the lines of the Allegro. Oh, by the way, the Allegro loves grass strips a well as pavement. I could have easily flown to Albuquerque, or farther, but I wanted to stay in Texas and enjoy some good home cooking at my folks' house.

I left at dawn the next morning and once again flew low (1000 feet) over the farms and ranches of the Texas Panhandle and Eastern New Mexico until it started to get bumpy. I flew past the wind generator farm south of Tucumcari, and then climbed up to 8500 where it again was smooth and cool. I landed just east of Albuquerque at Moriarty, New Mexico (0E0). The field elevation was 6199. I topped off the fuel tank at the self-serve pump and then climbed out towards Sandia Peak, the tall mountain east of Albuquerque.

I climbed up to 10500 feet MSL. The winds aloft were light and variable at 5 knots, which is important in a light aircraft over the mountains. It was also reassuring to have the old Route 66 (I-40) underneath me along the way. If I ever needed to land off-airport I figured I could find about 400 feet of unused asphalt on the road below. Both the air and the engine were smooth. I indicated 95 knots at 10,500 feet @ 4950 RPM. This was my first extended experience with the Rotax Engine. I was used to my Lycoming cruising at 2550 RPM. The Lycoming produces its horsepower with larger bore cylinders and a lower RPM. The Rotax uses smaller bore cylinders and a higher RPM, combined with a propeller reduction gear that turns the propeller at the proper (slower) speed. (Needed to keep the prop blade tips from going supersonic and being very loud) The result is a smooth running, very quiet engine/ propeller combination. The Rotax operated flawlessly on the entire trip. I was even getting comfortable with the higher engine RPM.

The landing at Show Low (KSOW), like everywhere else, was uneventful. The field elevation is 6415 MSL. I got the tank filled up, grabbed a soda, then checked the weather (mainly for TFRs), and noticed that the density altitude was 8800 feet. The runway in use was 7000 feet long. I thought, "If I'm not airborne by 3500 feet then I'll abort the takeoff, go to a hotel, and try it again in the morning". I was airborne with full fuel and luggage in 500 to 600 feet, and climbed out at 600 FPM! The plane really performs well with the 100 HP engine. I climbed up to 10500 so I could enjoy the nice cool air. She was climbing so well that I continued the climb up to 11800. I could have climbed even higher, but it was time to descend into the Valley of the Sun and the new home of this Allegro at Falcon Field in Mesa Arizona. The temperature upon landing was 103. Everyone at the FBO was surprised to see me pull up on the ramp in such a short time.

I had left North Carolina 2 ½ days earlier. My total flight time was 17 hours. I traveled 1866 NM. My average speed, (west bound, over 17 hours, burning 4.8 GPH) was 126 MPH, or 109.6 Nautical MPH. Not too shabby for 100 HP!

I have about 17000 hours, own a Grumman Traveler, and fly a Boeing 737 for my job (if you can call having so much fun a job). I have to say, flying the Allegro 2000 across the country was one of the most enjoyable trips I have ever made. I had a blast! The airplane is fun to fly. It is fast, economical, and it's good looks draw a crowd at every airport that it lands.

I studied Light Sport Aircraft for about a year. I traveled to Europe, and flew several aircraft both there, and in the States. I think the Allegro 2000 offers the best value for the dollar in the S-LSA market. I look forward to my next flight in the Allegro!

Larry Vaughan
Mesa, Arizona
LV737@aol.com