

**Cathy and Phil Cobbin's
RV7A Project
1-2Q2008
Photo Log**

Title: Phil and Cathy Cobbin's big move to Flagstaff Arizona
Subtitle: Phil gets to figure out how to move the airplane project et al

After getting Cathy settled in Flagstaff back in February are intrepid explorer flew back to New Hampshire and proceeded to “hike” into the house and spend the first two days back getting the plow truck out to the road which required at least one minor epic fix it yourself with a welder to rebuild the plow frame on the truck which gave up the ghost while whacking at the one to two feet of ice and snow that accumulated on the driveway in our absence.



Illustration 1: The driveway, late March and early "mud season"



Illustration 2: The trucks: the plow before going to the bone yard and the rental truck that would go beep-beep

In addition to finishing up a few odds and ends around the house (400 feet of flooring, 200 feet of slate in the dining room/kitchen...) we turned to the tricky part of loading our Van's RV-7A aircraft project and my lathe and milling machining...plus some of the wife's odds and ends :). I gave away all the small stuff like welders, drill press etc. to my brother-in-law, friends and neighbors. That done, the key order of business was to put the heavy stuff in first. The trickiest turned out to be the mill. Primarily because my neighbor Jack's ramp truck turned out to be at a lower deck height than a budget rental truck (key difference from U-Haul!). So, we had to do a little maneuvering around the driveway...in the mud. Took a little finagling, but finally after bottoming out the budget truck by the chicken coop...



Illustration 3: Mud rigging.

It was still a bit tricky to get the mill from the ramp truck to the Budget truck but we managed to get it in and secured by the door by dark on Monday March 25, 2008.

My friend George Shadowens was instrumental in getting things rigged into the truck as he has had experience with trickier items being amongst other things a retired navy chief. With George's help, retired climbing ropes and a come-along we rigged the mill into the back of the truck early Tuesday morning. Then we got the bright idea to come-along the lathe up the ramp rather than pester Jack McAlister of Shaker Valley Auto Body to bring his ramp truck back up....(You might say Jack was tied up having a “bang up” business season for late winter).



Illustration 4: George Shadowens



Illustration 5: Rigged mill and lathe, the anchors for the come-a-long was a retired climbing rope belayed off the sides of the truck.

The lathe turned out to be pretty easy to rig due to the fact the headstock sits on a set of steel wheels I

made for it a few years back to make it easier to move it around the shop. Now for the fun part, how to get the fuselage of the airplane in. A few years back I took the fuselage out of the back room of the house one last time through the sliding door opening by putting the fuselage on the work bench and moving it out of the house. So....a little variant of the method should work.



Illustration 6: April 10, 2006 the fuselage exits the house for the last time...

Other than requiring holding ones breadth the move up the ramp into the truck turned out to be a non-event.



Illustration 7: Note the coupling of the tackle between the nosegear and the work bench

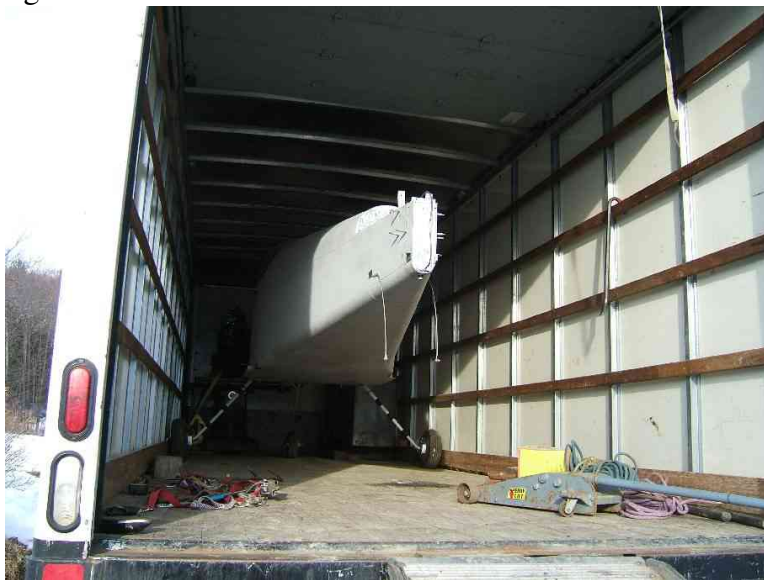
The key was to tie the lift/drawing tackle to both the nose gear and the work bench to avoid any oop's in the form of the fuselage slipping off the bench.

The only other hitch was the fact that the main gear spread is greater than the door opening but about right for the width of the truck on the inside (after you take the large locking nuts off the axles. A little



Illustration 8: A happy rigger...now to get the main gear inside...

wiggling and the fuselage was in.



Gee, now all we had to do was figure out how to get a room full of boxes squirreled away in and around the truck. But first, off to pick up my older brother aka relief driver at the airport. Jim, my older brother had called a few days earlier with a cryptic question: does that truck have a standard or automatic transmission....why?...blown knee cap....This should be fun, the march of dimes driving team aggravated by my back which was in none to hot a shape either.

Wednesday morning we started squirreling boxes into place in earnest...well...as fast as you could tunnel your way in up front to stash them.

At one time I had planned to cut up all the old cross country skis we had but boy was I glad I didn't as they worked great as stays to keep the boxes packed up front. I managed to squirrel boxes all over and around the lathe and mill to the point you couldn't see the machinery when I was finished.



The large fiberglass engine cowling pieces were a storage problem the skies fixed very nicely when I duct taped some together to form a rafter in the top of the truck to hold the cowlings. I wound up getting more stuff into the truck than at first I thought was possible. Taking the time to pack and stay the boxes up front meant I could use the space on the sides of the fuselage, under it, and behind it for other items...like household stuff....particularly the China Hutch Cathy wanted. It turned out the hutch fit just nicely along the wall after the lathe. The forward section of the truck was becoming a bit of an Egyptian tomb problem: beware putting in the box that plugs the access too early....Some things would be left at the end for want of a way to get back up front to squirrel them away...oh well.



Illustration 9: Stuffing the front around the fuselage, the wings were about to go in next



Illustration 10: The china hutch made it across country without a scratch, here it is safely ensconced along the side of the fuselage

Knee Pads: Sure was glad I had a good pair of knee pads which I lived in while tunneling in and around the under side of the fuselage to move and position boxes. Not the fastest nor easier way to load a truck.





The wings were a piece of cake after the machinery and the lathe. But the airframe parts were taking up a large part of the volume available.

By the time Jim and I left at 2:17 am Thursday March 28 in a snow storm the back of the truck was stuffed. I managed to get the sofa in, stashed under the rear of the fuselage. I had stuffed the elantra station wagon for it's jont on the toe bar. At the last minute I had a little wrestling match with the laser printer I forget about and after a few warm words of encouragement it got packed...upside down on the front seat the elantra. (Didn't seem to bother it, it now works fine). Now for the approximately 67 and half hour jont west that would consume about \$1500 dollars in diesel!

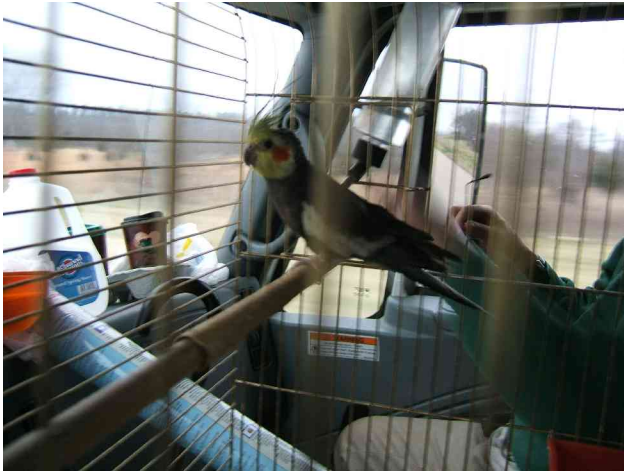
The ride: We started out in a snow storm and the roads were so bad in Canaan it took me over an hour to crawl out of town over to Enfield where Jim hooked up the elantra to the tow dolly. I was clueless how these things worked but Jim has lots of experience having a fifth wheel trailer...although the budget set up for the dolly was tricky. On the way out through Vermont and Massachusetts we had two yahoo's pass us the first one sort of made it...passing in deep snow...he got about fifty or so feet in front of me before doing the random walk routine...fortunately he didn't waltz into my lane but over the edge and down the embankment...adios...one down.... now the next folks...real smart...passes doing a good 70+ after the snow had changed to sleet and freezing rain...made it past us just fine...but I noted to Jim to expect to be seeing them again soon... Sure enough, they took out a slew of guard rails in Massachusetts down into the ditch and then into what looked like a stream for good measure. Nice swath of destruction. But then again....we weren't the smartest rocket scientists on the road that morning either. I've been through Westfield Mass a zillion times...and I know there's a low bridge in town....with a truck detour....and yep, you guessed it...drove past the turn off in town just as that fact dawned on me....now...let's see...do we try to back up 50 yards with a tow dolly....uh nope!...or do we take the right turn at the light and up the side street....That side street turned into a circus at the morning rush hour with everybody and his brother backing up so I could swing over onto the wrong side of the road to get the elantra to clear the corner... I seem to recall clipping the corner would have been particularly bad as I seem to recall a fire hydrant...anyhow everyone was real nice about backing up, moving forward, or over, or just generally getting out the nutcase in the budget rental truck's way.

Now it was smooth sailing up and over the old railroad over pass bridge posted for six tons....and then a jont through the side streets of Westfield to get back on track. I think the Westfield cops that do traffic duty to detour the trucks to the point where you can get under the bridge were really glad to be rid of us.... Onward....westward ho...

Originally the plan was for Jim and I to do the driving and Anna the cat and Corkey the Cockatiel would be along for the ride. It turned out there would actually be five of us on the trip: Phil, Jim, Anna, Corkey....and Betty....Betty the Bitch!.... It turned out the budget truck in addition to being equipped with the usual assortment of idiot lights also has some warning horns to go with them. It turned out that after you started the truck everything would be hunkey dorry...for the first 20 or so miles and then Betty would show up...Betty in the form of an alarm clock like beep-beep-beep...to accompany the red engine light. My brother-in-law who we stopped on main street in Torrington CT to say adios to thought it was a stuck glow plug for the diesel and suggested looking for the fuse to pull Betty's vocal cords. We never did find the fuse so we had to put up with the incessant beeping all day and night. Can make you a bit cranky....

As it turned out Corky would have the best time of the bunch of us on this trip. He liked to look around and see what was going on. Most of all though he had the best sleeping accommodations. Jim and I found the truck practically impossible to get any decent sleep. You never could stretch your legs out enough. I finally at one point went back to the Elantra and got in the drivers seat and slept in there. Anna was none to thrilled to get in the truck in Canaan in part because the diesel was clanking away. One donation of blood to the cat later and she was in the truck and to keep here there she initially got stuffed in her cat box with a spare pair of shoes stuffed in the opening to avoid any last minute chase the cat in the middle of the night scenarios.





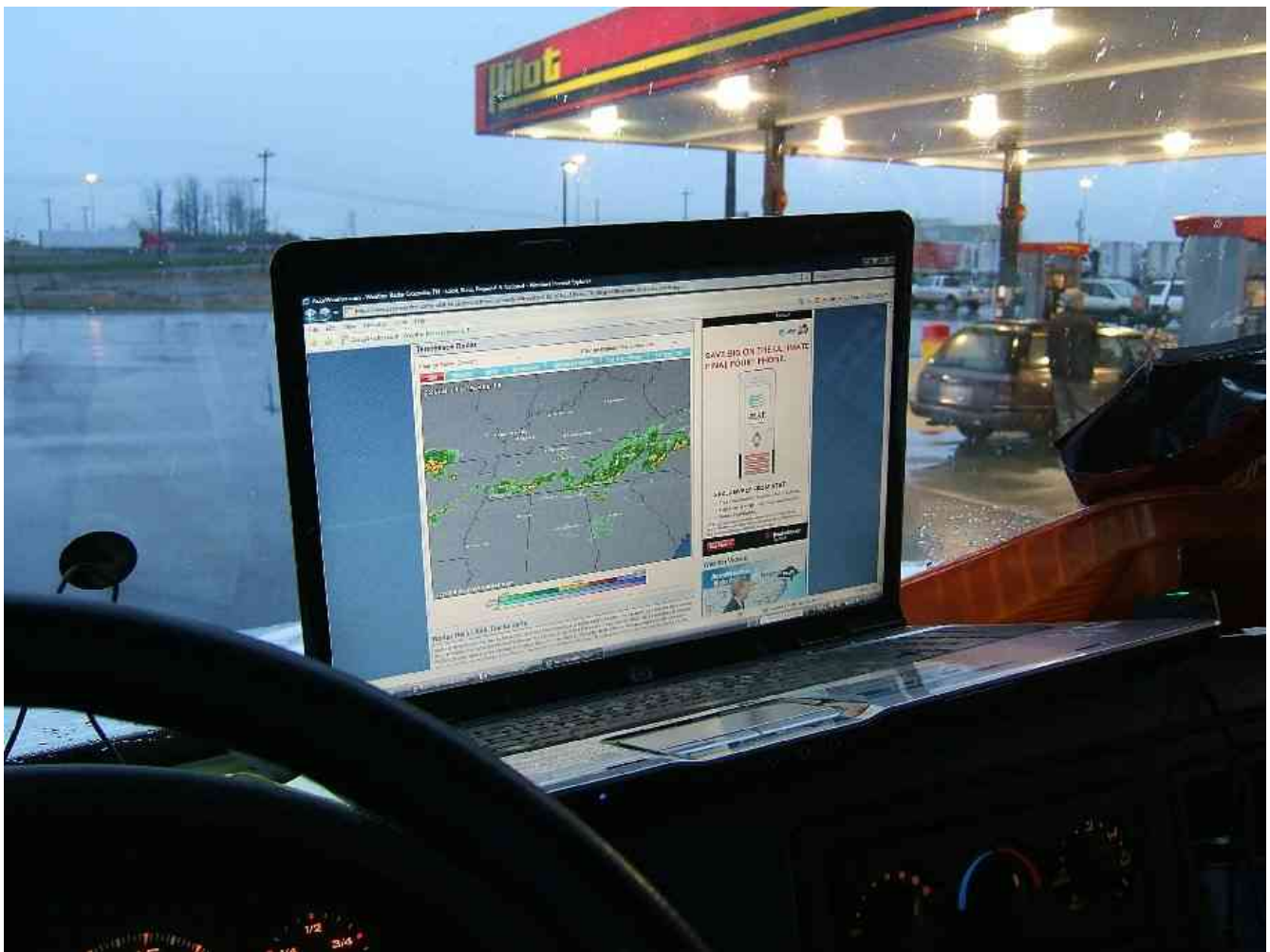
Anna soon settled down and set up here “lair” in the “cave” between the driver and passenger seat. After a while you'd stick your hand down there between the seats and wiggle your fingers and she'd come by for a neck scratch. After a while she got the hang of it and came up for a visit now and then to get petted or wander around the dash board.





Illustration 11: Tennessee....Rain...just like back in February

The drive started out in snow in New Hampshire and we got the full meteorological tour: Snow, sleet, freezing, rain, and rain. I think we missed getting any hail. Jim got a full tour of east coast weather and New Hampshire was his first real introduction to driving on snow. Hey, why not just throw em to the wolves! Nothing like on the road training... Tennessee and Arkansas were rainy just like in February, only this time Tennessee didn't get flattened by Tornadoes a day after we went through like what happened when Cathy and I drove through back in February to get her and her car out to Flagstaff so she could start work with USGS in Flagstaff.



We had used Cathy's laptop and a gps to track our position and the weather back in February which gave us plenty of warning of how bad the storm was up ahead. Like the trip in February this one had high speed internet access pretty much the whole way using the verizon card inserted into the laptop to link to the cell towers along the way. Here on the march trip the gps shot above shows the rain located in Tennessee more or less right on I-40. Onward and Westward....put the brick back on the pedal...

After we entered Oklahoma the weather then on was pretty much smooth sailing. The roads in Oklahoma proved to be something else. Our first 24 hours had found us going from Canaan New Hampshire to the welcome rest area just inside Tennessee. I had hoped to polish off the second 24 hour leg with the welcome center rest area in New Mexico. Unfortunately the concrete road through Oklahoma City proved to be a challenge. Generally after the Mississippi river if you aren't doing at least 75 you are going to get run over. Oklahoma City was no exception for most folks, but the warped concrete though the city set up a very nice natural frequency harmonic with the truck's suspension and I couldn't do much more than 35, 40 tops. I figured if I changed lanes at all we were going to get creamed by a truck zipping by on either side. We finished the night snoozing in a truck parking area on the side of the road in the Texas panhandle a couple dozen miles shy of New Mexico.

The next morning I dutifully went into the DOT scales with everybody else and got the annoyed wave off by the lady running the DOT scales. There weren't many scales open during the trip but up to the

New Mexico scale I had been driving into them. Typically they are now set up on I-40 with a set of lanes and lights, and if they want to weigh you they set the light as to which lane you're supposed be in. I got green lighted for the scale once but they changed their mind and switched lights at the last minute and it was smooth sailing. We weren't sure if we had to go through the scales or not when we left and elected to drive through them as I figured with homeland security these days it would just be my luck to have some DOT cop come chasing me down the interstate.



Illustration 12: Landscape typical of the New Mexico/Arizona boarder area. Looks a lot like the scenery stylized in the movie "Cars" doesn't it...

The scenery definitely improved as we went through New Mexico and into Arizona. We played tag your it in the pass and be passed back and forth with trucks all across country.



It was a nice ride if a bit windy on the last leg through New Mexico and Arizona. The head winds throughout the trip..and a lead foot...kept the gas mileage in the 8gpm range for a fuel bill of about \$1500 in total.

Here's a shot of the road coming into Flagstaff with the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe railroad coming into town on the right. Rail lines I hear are making a come back hauling containerized freight. The BNSF does a lot of tractor trailer and container hauling including the transport of doubly stacked 53 foot ocean going trailers.....lots of them.....whole trains of them.



Here's Cathy greeting us Sunday March 30 at about ¼ to five local time. What goes in must come out!. Unpacking the truck was a tedious affair. Fortunately we had some of our new neighbors help. The couple on the right moved to Flagstaff two years earlier from North Dakota in a January move. They were a lot of help as we were all running out of steam at this point. Folks at the apartment complex didn't mind me commandeering a couple parking spaces for a few days while we sorted out how to get everything off loaded from the truck.



The boxes were very tedious and time consuming to remove from the truck because they were all in front over the fuselage and stayed in place around the machinery. So Phil got to be the human conveyor belt pushing boxes from under the fuselage to the rear of the truck for removal...too bad we left the knee pads back in New Hampshire. OUCH!.

Once the boxes et al were out of the truck it was time to figure out how to get the machinery and airplane parts out. We had to abandon the work bench with the steel wheels in New Hampshire. We had arranged to borrow a cart from the local Home Depot but after locating a storage facility for the plane I noticed they had a ramp area out in a their back lot we could use to off load the fuselage.

The offloading of the fuselage almost worked without a hitch!...ALMOST!. Came all the way across country with a large heavy block of steel just sitting in the metal counterweight basket hanging off the engine mounts of the fuselage. Unfortunately the fuselage had to be tipped tail down somewhat while removing it from the back of the truck and onto the gravel ramp. And gravity being what it is... the weight slid back and off the basket and bounced down between the engine mount and the firewall. This left a nice set of scratches on the nice powder coating on the engine mount and good ding in the firewall. Things could have been worse. We got across country with only one or two spots on the fuselage where the couch rubbed through the primer.

I think my ego was more bruised than the plane. Still if I had only put that retention strap on the block of steel before taking the fuselage out. Oh Well...



I had toyed around with the idea of removing the lathe in a reverse of the move we did back in NH but decided against it as I would have to do all the work alone, and I would still be left with the problem of how to get the mill out. I looked around the area by the storage facility and spotted a “Tow Rite” truck at a welding shop up the road with some irregular weldment's on it's back. Looked like they had experience at rigging more than wrecked SUV's so I gave them a call. The owner's son (on the right) came out and we rigged both the mill and the lathe off the truck and onto the floor of the storage unit in about two hours. Nice folks, definitely worth the expense to hire a ramp truck to rig the machinery. I suspect if I had had them take off the fuselage they would have spotted the loose weight issue. Oh well, it only takes a moment's in-attention.





Happy to have the trip behind us. Now to get a hanger and finish the plane...but that's another story!
Phil