



The 2006 Around the World Race

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(Editors)
With records and analysis from Jared Smith**

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This Journal reflects the work of the many pilots who both flew the legs and wrote about their experiences in such engaging detail. If nothing else, the Round the World Race is a wonderful community event. Thanks to all.

Dawn was breaking over Europe as the fourth annual Round the World Race was about to get under way. The three teams were scrambling to formalize their plans and to mobilize their contingents of volunteers—emails were flying through the wires. At 1700Z, the Berlin Airlift was set to begin and the teams had to be fully ready to get things started—en masse.

The contestants were the defending champions FlightSim.com, the older hands at AVSIM, and the young upstarts at Sim-Outhouse. Each group had been preparing for months—flying mock relay races around different parts of the globe in winter weather and into some surprisingly difficult airstrips.¹ New pilots had a chance to learn the ropes and old hands to meet the new teammates.² In 2005 FlightSim had so thoroughly out-organized the opposition that they had volunteers waiting two and three deep for every flight. Their planning, scouting, and enthusiasm were simply unmatched. But this year, both AVSIM and Sim-Outhouse were ready to rise to the challenge and make their own way. Not to be outdone, the FS guys got to work early as well.³

The Planning.

As with every race, this year's event would incorporate some novel twists to provide new and interesting challenges for the teams to conquer. The Race Committee had been in intense preparations for months, designing features, perfecting some and abandoning others, in order to make 2006 the best year yet. As before, the sets of Bonus Airports were designed to encourage the

¹ Jeff: Many of the happiest memories I have of the race occurred before the race even started. Informal practice sessions started in December progressing to full fledged on line practice sessions in January and February. Team practice had already taken us around the world twice before the drop of the official flag in Frankfurt. Practice sessions tended to be much more freewheeling because the team was not subject to penalties for mistakes. As a result many of us pushed aircraft to the limits of their endurance. Memorable practice legs include: (1) The Alaska-Siberia Warbird Race (Mustangs, BWK, P-38, Avanti) with Gazer, MM, WT11, Alex, jt_williams. (2) Himalayan Hideaways – Finding as many tough short places as we could in the highest mountains in the world (Concorde Anyone?). (3) Three Concorde Practice Sessions. Who would have guessed that these would become some of the best attended practice sessions? (4) Tour de Norway - Gazer's attempt to lure the unwary into leaving scraps of aluminum all over the fjords of Norway. Great fun. (5) Manolito's Monopoly – Checking the website at work to see how many successive off-line practice legs Manolito would complete before I got home. (6) Alex Instructs – sfofficer's online training session that devolved into a pell mell multiplayer race to Furnace Creek with WT11 and jt_williams attempting to land on the same runway at the same time from opposite directions. (only the 2nd time I have beaten Chis – got him in Siberia too by taking the clean 51H) (7) Combat at Courchevel – After an afternoon practicing tough airports in the Alps and WT11 (the Porter Master) demonstrating ultimate STOL (he landed the Porter on the Courchevel ramp using 38m mesh, no flatten, coming down the mountain), the session breaks down into 3 way aerial combat with Gazer, Alex, & Captain L.

² Jozef, new to AVSIM: Never having flown in multiplayer, I understood very soon that this was an essential tool to add something special to the race. And now I am addicted to multiplayer! Teamspeak was another tool I had never used before but which came in very handy at sometimes.

³ Our practices started in early December – after we discovered that S-O-H had been hard at work for a couple months. Those guys are fast, we could not let them get too far ahead. A couple of our more memorable runs were from Canada to Mexico, and London to Addis Abba, with up to a dozen pilots participating.

teams to fly to different, interesting, and daunting airfields scattered over the four corners of the world. This year, the real spark to the inventiveness was new team member Reggie Fields. The result was a play-balanced set of bonuses that allowed for multiple routings, each of which would be more or less competitive with each other. The teams would, of course, chose their own way but the idea was to provide many roughly equal alternatives.

More controversial was the idea of a "Pressure Altitude Restriction". Here, pilots would be limited to a maximum altitude of 8,500 feet Pressure Altitude (which, naturally, varies with the local weather). The goals were several. First, pilots were encouraged to learn how to manage variable weather conditions and maintain a restrictive altitude (as must all pilots, especially GA pilots, in crowded airspace). Equally, the altitude restriction would force teams to consider more carefully the implications of different (and sometimes unfamiliar) mountain ranges for cross-country flights. Managing one's way through many parts of the world would require a good deal of forethought: the challenge was to navigate around some mountain ranges and through hidden high-altitude passes. During the pre-Race testing, the teams (especially AVSIM) objected to the concept. After some discussions, a compromise was reached in which the PAR was to be applied only in the Eastern Hemisphere. All this added to the strategic challenge.

When the special rules were announced, including the Bonus Airports, the planning teams started their work.⁴ For AVSIM, the two gurus (Jeroen and Jan) caucused and came up with an inventive way to maximize bonuses and minimize time. Equally, the FlightSim team considered a number of alternatives before coming up with an essentially similar overall strategy. For Sim-Outhouse, Panaka, Gnoopey, EasyEd, fliger747, and Ferror ran numbers and quickly generated a couple of decent plans. Willy drew up a flight plan for the Alpine Challenge. And Panaka made a Berlin Airlift Flight Schedule that enabled the team to get the maximum number of bonus points.

The Berlin Airlift

Sunday evening, February 19, 2006. 1700Z

Team FlightSim, AVSIM and Sim-Outhouse. EDDI. Berlin, Germany.

On Sunday morning, the forums were alive with planning and exhortations as the teams prepared for the first event. The Berlin Airlift required a considerable participation from each team as well as artful coordination as different pilots had to be assigned, and reassigned, specific tasks.

Team FlightSim

Team FlightSim rounded up 13 pilots for the kickoff of the 2006 race – setting six pilots on the runways at EDDF – Frankfurt, four at ETNW - Wunsdorf and three at EDHL – Luebeck as we tried to get eight loads of cargo from each origin airport into EDDI – Templehof in Berlin within

⁴ AVSIM's Jeroen: "First a few words about the planning. I may enjoy that part even more than the actual flying, I've always loved solving puzzles and this may be the ultimate one. How to find a path around the world that fits the requirements of both equipment and goals to be used and reached as effectively as possible. I know many people don't really like it much, but I love it. Weighing routing options against each other, considering time won and lost when attempting different combinations of bonus airports.

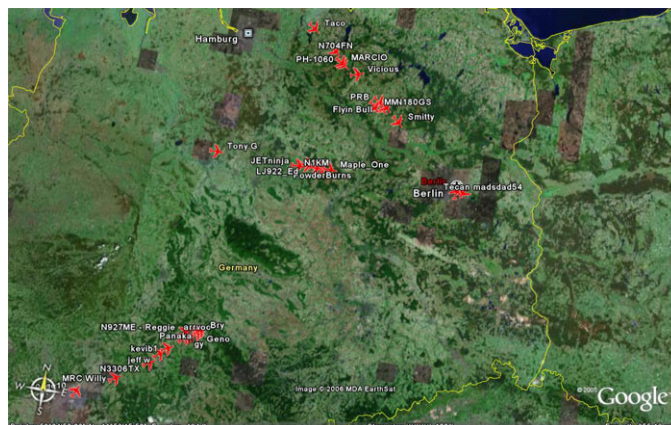
the three hour time limit. The sun was setting, the snow starting to fall, and the team was ready to fly.



The Champions getting ready at EDDF.

The runs went well – but the maximum bonus required eight successful flights from each airport. That wasn't to be as we lost a couple of the DC-3's out of Frankfurt when pilots had to step away from the computer for family commitments.

Still Maple One (Bob), ApolloSmith (Smitty), N180GS (Ed), N1KM (oblio), Geno (Gcurtis), N22CA (Andy), N3306TX (Mike), codge (Steven), JohnM (John), LJ922 (Ed), N704FN (Mark), Swi_TZer (Pascal), Tony G (Tony), VP-DPW_sandman (Dave) and N927ME (Reggie) completed runs to kick the 2006 race off with a bang !!!



A satellite view of Team FlightSim at work.

Smitty got a great screenshot of Google Earth showing 25 pilots being tracked from the three teams in the air headed to Berlin.

Team Sim-Outhouse.

Race day, the green flag drops, and all teams began the “Berlin Airlift” opening phase of the race. Senator_Tehocan did an outstanding job as Team SOH Berlin Airlift Mission Control

(SOHBAMC)! He kept track of how many flights of food, chocolate, and coal had been delivered, and also *tried* to coordinate landings as many planes were always on approach to the field. That proved almost a hopeless cause, however, since most of us just landing on the first runway we saw, like we always do! We officially delivered 10 loads of food, 10 of chocolate, and 9 of coal to Tempelhof (EDDI), a great effort. Unofficially, we also delivered several crates of schnapps, dynamite and relative bearing grease. In addition, several Tempelhof banks reportedly could not account for several hundred pounds worth of gold bars after the airlift. Not sure what that was all about.



PRB, on approach to Tempelhof, R4D



"Flight of the Goonies". Panaka and gaggle

Team AVSIM.

When 1700Z arrived, a full contingent of Team AVSIM had gathered. Jeroen took the initiative by setting up a clever planning allocation of pilots that ensured that the longer, riskier, flights would be completed without wasting resources from the shorter flights. Chris took over as the "ATC" flight coordinator and managed to maximize cooperation. Everyone had gotten familiar with the DC-3s and managed their flights in the cold winter night to "supply" Berlin Tempelhof. By the

end of the evening, some 20 pilots had flown their Gooneys in the AVSIM team and easily completed the full mission. (In one amusing incident, Vince discovered that Mike had mislabeled one of the routes (EDHL-EDDF!) and had flown the wrong way—perhaps the surprise is that only one pilot fell into this inadvertent trap.) Happily, with full force, the team had gotten off to a good start.

Despite misgivings about pilot availability, the Berlin airlift reenactment went off very well. During training and planning we'd wondered whether we would get more than 6-8 people to show up, in the end there were nearly 20. So many in fact that we built up a very comfortable margin (also due to some good tallying and planning of routes to be flown).

- Jeroen



jwenting and team ready for start



svenks en route

The Race Begins

Team FlightSim. EDDI. Berlin, Germany.

The reigning world champions (hehe) led off from Berlin heading for a "northern mark". N22CA - Andy took off with the official baton for the team, and his, first official leg of the race – EDDI – ESSD Borlange Air Base in Sweden in the P-38J Lightning. The rules required that the team make one stop above 60N latitude – and ESSD was just perfect in distance and location to meet that requirement.



The Northern Lights illuminate
Maple One as the first Wingman

New to the 2006 race was the Wingman position – with the capability to takeover should the unthinkable happen. Another brand new to the race pilot - Maple One - Bob set out in his P-51 to be the first FlightSim flying wingman.

Another requirement for the 2006 race was that all flights taking off from airports in the eastern hemisphere had to be flown under 8,500 feet elevation. There was an allowance for a short time above that altitude – but most flights would be made at 8,000 ft altitude on the autopilot.

Things got dicey – the weather in Europe was not nice that Sunday evening as Andy came close to the airport. N3306TX – Mike was on FSNav and

able to give Andy directions to line him up with the runway. “the visibility was so low I thought there was no possibility I was going to get down no matter how hard 6TX tried. Then out of nowhere the approach lighting faded into view directly in front of me. Lowered the flaps and gear and plunked her right down on the runway, although I did bounce once or twice. I wish I'd gotten a shot of that final approach, but I was too busy trying to keep my wits!”

Tony G in his trusty FSD Cheyenne LS400 pulled out of Sweden headed for Kaunas, Lithuania – EYKA – which he accomplished in just under two hours with some adverse winds.

At ESSD, Borlange Air Base in Sweden, I picked up the baton for a run to EYKA, Kaunas in Lithuania, in what else? The FSD Cheyenne LS400 with detpilot as wingman.

What a flight. Started off knowing the weather at the destination airport was about 400' ceilings with 2SM vis, but no precip. I wanted to take some pics on the way down but as soon as I dropped from cruise I went in to solid clouds until about 150' from the runway.....Turned out to be 1SM 300' ceiling with heavy snow!!!”
--TonyG



Tony G and the Cheyenne

Team AVSIM. EDDI. Berlin, Germany.

The race began in good order. But any hope of spoiling Mr. Murphy's good time were dashed immediately. Jeroen (jwenting) took off in the P-51H with Harvey (arvoo) as Wing. But partway through this first flight it became apparent that the gear wouldn't retract and may have been damaged. Accordingly, Jeroen diverted to ESMQ and, with some relief, landed safely.

Despite wanting to give the honor to someone else I was asked to once again (3rd year in a row now) fly the first leg. Some time after taking off from Berlin for Mariehamn I noticed my performance was not what it should be and fuel seemed to evaporate. A quick check by one of my wingmen confirmed the worst, my landing gear had failed to retract and I was flying with everything hanging out. A diversion field had to be sought and was found in Kalmar, Sweden. There was only one tiny problem: the field was completely fogged in and it was night. Worse, no one knew whether my gear would survive a landing without catastrophic failure. Only one thing to do: approach really low and slow (in fog) and put it down as gently as possible. So I puttered in at 200ft above the ground (any higher and the ground was invisible) and gently lowered my damaged gear to the grass next to the runway. A sigh of relief went up, the landing went perfectly and the aircraft was intact.
- Jeroen



Sweden in dense fog.

Immediately Jan (Gazer75) jumped in and flew his Baron B-58, accompanied by Alex (sfoofficer) in a similar aircraft, to Mariehamn's EFMA to hit the "Northern" target. Good teamwork had prevented any serious loss of time to this startling turn of events.

Sim-Outhouse. EDDI. Berlin, Germany.

By the time the Berlin Airlift was over it was already 8:00 pm, local time. Ferror took the first leg out of Tempelhof in the Beechcraft Barron 58, with Panaka as wing. Both pilots landed safely at Paradubice, just outside of Prague, Czech Republic (LKPD). We planned to knock out as many of the required planes as possible while the PAR rule was in effect, since that most of those planes didn't operate very high anyway. We were off to a good start.

Moses03 grabbed the baton next, flying the Cessna 172 Skyhawk, with Willy flying wing. After an hour they landed in Bratislava, capital of the Slovak Republic (LZIB). Rumor had it there was an international cornut supplier's convention going on down there, and they wanted to check it out... Panaka, with Gnoopey as wing, took the next leg into Belgrade, Serbia (LYBE), leading a section of Beechcraft King Air 350s, arriving at 11:30 pm. This was the 4th of 11 required planes for the race. Milton Shupe was up next. He took his big Howard 500 solo (no wingman) into Athens, Greece (LGAT), arriving at 01:21 am local time.

Day Two Monday February 20, 2006

Monday morning, February 20, 2006. (0000Z)

Team Sim-Outhouse. LGAT. Athens, Greece.



dcc, en-route to Behbehhan

PRB took the next leg in a P-38H, with Taco following as wing in a P-38L. The pair of Lightnings headed south across the darkened Mediterranean Sea, landing safely at Borg El Arab, Egypt (HEBA) at 3:00 am. Next, Willy bagged our first bonus field, as he flew his Spitfire Mk XIX into I Bar Yehuda, Israel (LLMZ), on the shores of the Dead Sea, with dcc flying as wingman in a black P-38M. Ace_Hyflyer was up next, as he took a P-47M, with PRB flying wingman in a P-38L, into Basrah International, Iraq.



Moses03, with dcc ahead, Vega flight

Up next dcc, with Moses03 flying wing, lead a pair of Lockheed Vegas on a quick hop across the border into southwestern Iran, to land at Behbehhan (OI0M). This was team SOH's first daylight leg, and that resulted in the first of many great screen shots from this race.

Next we made two attempts at Kerman, Iran (OIKK), a 3-hour bonus field. Located 5,700 feet into the hills of central Iran, a combination of weather, PAR rules, and Mr. Murphy conspired to foil the plan. First Willy made the attempt in a P-38H, but aborted after violating the 8,500-foot ceiling rule. Next Ferror

made gave it a shot in the DeHavilland Hornet, but overstressed the ship while twisting and turn-

ing between the mountains to stay below 8,500. We decided as a team to abandon this bonus attempt and keep the baton moving. Willy provided this account of the ill-fated flight:

I made the scout run last night to OIKK and while I had to hand fly it, it was a beautiful nap of the earth run in clear weather. Then I took the baton up into the hills and right after the wheels left the ground the visibility went to less than 1/4mi. I gave it what I feel to have been a good shot, but about 10 minutes into the flight using the GPS as a ground radar, I was at about 7,500 when a granite cloud popped up in front of me. No where to go but up and I busted the PAR then. After a couple of minutes trying to back down into the valley and discussion with other team members, I aborted and Ferror gave it a shot.
-- Willy.

Willy, in the Spitfire Mk XIX, with Flyin Bull as wing in the DeHavilland Hornet, took the baton to Konarak, in southern Iran (OIZC), arriving at 1:45 pm. At 3 min over two hours flight time, we incurred a 9-minute penalty before the next leg could depart. Panaka was up next, flying a P-51H, with kevi1b along as wingman in a Hawker Sea Fury. They took the baton to Jaisalmer, in north-western India (VIJR), arriving there at about 3:30 pm. Ferror took off in the DeHavilland Comet to complete another classic flight with Flyin Bull as wingman in the DH Hornet. The flight landed safely in India's famous "Pink City", Jaipur, (VIJP) as the sun went down.



Ferror, with wingman Flyin Bull, headed for Jaipur

Panaka next lead flight of Ford Tri-Motors, Gnoopey as wingman. Completing another classics flight, they brought the ungainly Tri-Motors into Agra Air Base, in northern India (VIAG), not far from the Taj Mahal, after an uneventful night flight, arriving at 19:06.



**Panaka in Ford Tri-Motor,
Leaving Jaipur as Ferror looks on**



**Panaka lands at VIAG
as next baton flight prepares to leave**

Next up, kevib1, took off in a Hawker Sea Fury, with Ferror flying wing in the DH Hornet. They took the baton to Saidpur (VGSD), in northern Bangladesh, a jute-processing and export center, landing safely at 20:53. Gnoopey picked up the baton next, taking off in his P-47M. Gregory Paul flew wing in the speedy P-51H. They flew in darkness into the mountains of northern Burma to land, picking up a 3-hour bonus, in the small town of Putao (VYPT). Good thing it was past midnight, there is a political prison there, but the baton flight made it in and out without anyone noticing. Next, Moparmike took a P-38L, with Taco flying as wingman in an F-5E photo Lightning. They landed safely at Lashio, Burma (VYLS), made famous by the Flying Tigers and the 23rd Fighter Group in WW II.

Ace_Hyflyer had the next leg, flying the P-47M, with txnetcop flying wing in an F-5E photo Lightning. They headed southeast into Thailand. The wingman was lost en-route, due to a collision with an unknown aircraft, leaving our intrepid baton carrier to continue on alone. This would not be the last time interference with on-line on-lookers would cause us problems. Ace_Hyflyer arrived safely at Sakon Nakhon (VTUI), in northeastern Thailand at 01:33. Senator_Tehocan took the baton next, with Ferror as wingman, in a section of DeHavilland Hornets. They headed out across the South China Sea to the XiSha Islands, arriving safely at YongXing airport, on tiny Woody Island (Z24D), at 02:27.



Moses03 headed for RPUB

Moses03 took up the baton next in the Dornier Do-335, with PRB flying wing in a DH Hornet. We flew into the rising sun eastward towards the Philippines. It was nice to fly in daytime again. Headwinds and trying to keep up with Moses03 in the 335 had me running a little low on fuel, and I throttled back a bit just to make sure. At 29,000 feet the Hornet is a little faster than the Dornier, but at 8000, the 335 was faster, and I was using up a lot of gas. Moses03 arrived safely at the mountain resort town of Baguio, Luzon, Philippines (RPUB) at 07:15, bagging a 5-hour bonus in the process.

While Moses03 made the tricky approach into the little field, I circled over the Lingayen Gulf, checking out a couple of beaches, then landed as soon as the next baton flight was safely away.

Next, fliger747 took the baton in an F4U-4 Corsair, with Gnoopey flying wing in the P-47M. This flight originally intended to head for Airport General Santos (RPMR) on Mindanao in the southern Philippines. A decision was made to divert to Mactan-Cebu International (RPVM) in the central Philippines, due to time concerns. Fliger747 arrived safely at 08:20.



**Gnoopey landing the
P-47M at RPVM**

Monday morning, February 20, 2006. (0000Z)

Team AVSIM. EFMA. Mariehamn, Finland.

After the near disaster in Sweden and quick recovery to Mariehamn, Harvey and Lucas (Captain_L, as Wing) took their P-51Hs through the dark night to Brest in Balarus (UMBB). Unfortunately, Harvey crashed. He had gone through his checklist—but forgot to reset the altimeter for the landing field. While he was descending nicely, the ground rushed up and intervened unexpectedly. (!)

After having flown a successful wing for the diverted first leg I took the baton back south again as lead. Although this was my first baton leg ever I was pretty confident with very few nerves. I'd flown a lot of practice legs over the last few weeks and didn't think there was anything I couldn't handle. I was slightly concerned with using the Mustang as I hadn't properly got a "smooth" landing nailed down, but I'd managed to get it landed safely very consistently and wasn't overly concerned. The first 3/4 of the flight was a great light show with Aurora Borealis all the way.



**Aurora Borealis
graces arvoo's first RTWR leg**

Coming in for the approach and everything was fine. ILS with glideslope and nice long runway, no problems. Came in over the threshold got a 3 point attitude, cut the throttle for the customary bumpy landing and bang. The plane stalled and dropped a hundred feet and buried itself in the runway. I couldn't believe it, first crash of the race down to me, I was completely gutted. I handed the baton over to the wingman who almost immediately crashed as well. What a disaster.

I hear people telling me on TeamSpeak that "its ok" and "don't worry about it" but I can hear the disappointment in their voices. 2 hours lost already and the race has hardly started.

For a brief instance I felt like throwing the towel in, going to bed and crawling back to work and leaving the race to "proper" pilots. But as my girlfriend will tell you, I have a real stubborn streak in me. And I resolved that I would not go to bed until I'd completed a successful baton leg....

-- Harvey

And then Lucas, in his first flight, was thrust the baton:

When he said he crashed I started rushing things and turned base a little too soon. I lowered the flaps and gear to try to get the airspeed down as I was a little fast from turning base too early there for having to make a steeper descent. I was hovering around the max gear extension speed and the gear did not go down. The runway was fairly long so I flew a long way to bleed off some speed. I then retracted the gear and the gear unlocked light went out. I touched down the gear collapsed and I to crashed. This was very embarrassing and was not the way I wanted my first leg every to go. Unfortunately it happened. I tried to figure out the cause. I discovered that there was a delay after the gear unlocked light went out until the gear was safe. Then a gear locked light turned on. In the rush I forgot to pay attention to this important information. Everyone learned, or was reminded, not to rush and take your time. If you are not comfortable with an approach, go around. When flying wing treat it like you actually are carrying the baton and are the lead pilot.

-- Lucas

(Tough for a first flight—but veterans understand the nature of the event and the courage needed to learn and then take the baton again.) Quickly, Mike (MM) and Dave (stoneC0ld) took a Pony and Jug (P-47M) to repeat the leg. The uneventful flight was a comfort; getting the wheels down safely after a failed leg was the real charmer.

So Team AVSIM had already had two crashes and a diversion—in the very first couple of hours. Not a good start.

Happily, Chris with Lucas as wing, got their Ponies to Constanta Romania's LRCK quickly and professionally. And Harvey, quickly retaking the baton, flew (with Dave as Wing) over the Black Sea to Koyna (LTAN) in Turkey. LTAN is surrounded by mountains and the visibility was miserable.

The time is now 3.22am (GMT) it's just 3 hours since I planted my plane into the runway, but I was determined not to get any sleep until a successful baton leg. I volunteered and was given the chance to fly into Konya in Turkey to which the guys bravely agreed. Take off and enroute were fine but as I started planning my approach I began thinking I'd made a bad choice for my "come-back" leg. The airport has no ILS, is surrounded by 3000ft hills and to make things worse the weather is lousy. At this point the nerves kick in big time. I carefully planned everything carefully, giving myself a good long approach with my TAWS enlarged on my second monitor. But as I begin my descent through 3000ft I enter what can only be described as the blackest cloud I have ever seen. I'm shaking like a leaf by this time, and I'm navigating purely by GPS. At about 500ft the runway appears and I'm in pretty good shape. The runway is suddenly below me and I'm so scared I nearly forgot to descend and am flying about 10 feet above it. Finally I ease it down, bounce once, bounce twice and then rollout, barely touching the brakes in case it noses over. Finally it stops, and Duenna pops up to confirm a good leg.

I post the baton free and then collapse into my chair, a physical and nervous wreck. In many years of pc "gaming" I really don't think I ever did anything so demanding and rewarding as this 1hour 30 minute flight. Feeling on top of the world I crawled into my bed and was asleep instantly
--Harvey

Next up was Hamish (Speed) accompanied by Joe (Sonar5), in the Pony and Avanti, flying "down" to Metzada, Israel (LLMZ) to enjoy the thick below sea level air! No problems.



**Speed descent
to the Dead Sea.**

My most memorable flight was the first one, carrying the baton from Turkey to Israel. The destination airport was a bonus airport because it was on the edge of the Dead Sea at 1200ft below sea level. I flew the P-51 Mustang and experienced an awesome sensation of speed as I dove under the zero mark on my altimeter, below the cliffs that form the west bank, and zoomed down the dead sea at 400knots, holding off from decelerating and lowering my gear until the last couple of miles on final. It was great seeing half a dozen team mates waiting for me there, all in Mustangs.

--Hamish

Jeroen then took the baton (along with Dave whose computer almost immediately CTD'd) and made the trip uneventfully...only to crash just as he stopped his landing roll out. So, back to LLMZ and Chris making a quick pickup run to Tallil, Iran (Z16N) along with Bryan. And then Sven (svenks) and Vince (thespazz) to mountain-encircled Shiraz, Iran (OISS).

All very good, got set up, weather looked nice at Tallil... Hmm, better do a weather update, it had been some hours. Began the download, might take up to 20 minutes. Refresh the forum page...Gazer announced that I had the leg (and it was still OISS!) and that Chris was on final. Good thing I started the WX download earlier... now, it's finished. Wow, was that a mistake! From nice weather to thunderstorms in a flash, so to speak!

Not much to do about that, Chris landed – Baton Free! Grab it, final checks... Throttle forward...and Lift Off!

POW! Almost immediately I was tossed around in turbulence. The P-51 is a really nice plane, but not too stable. I looked at my Weatherset2 display: Turbulence factor 4. I don't recall having flown in anything more than 2, and I got blown all over the place – including too high. I think I reached 8900 ft briefly before I got it under control again. It was hand flying for the first 45 minutes. I got a small breather somewhere along the line, but only some 5 minutes.

Finally the storms cleared. Looking backwards, the clouds looked harmless enough – but I knew!



svenks out of the frying pan...



into the fire.

Time to check out OISS, something I didn't have had time to do before. Well, it's not exactly at sea level here... M.O.O.N – that spells mountains... Turn on terrain on the GPS. Sure enough, mountains right in my path. And they looked like they just might be a little too high. Being offline, I had no scouts to ask for advice so I just plodded along – but I did check out the weather at an alternate airport, just in case.

As I got closer, I could begin to see the mountains growing out of the haze. They did look mean – and high! But as I was able to zoom in on the GPS, I could see a nice-looking valley some to the southeast. Worth a try, even if I would have to do a really sharp turn to get into it. And there was no guarantee the last mountains wouldn't prove too high after all. New course: 130.

Fortunately there weren't too many clouds, or I would not have tried it. But I did find my valley (a little late – there WERE clouds) and turning the wings close to vertical, managed the turn. But the trouble with valleys is: They tend to get narrow as you go along. This one wasn't too bad, though, but the ground did rise in greeting. And I really wasn't sure of the last part, before turning towards the airport: The GPS terrain feature is good, but you can only see "High"...not "How High". And if it proved impossible, would I have room to do a 180 without busting altitude? Better slow down, to be able make a quicker turn.

The mountains kept coming closer and closer below, and I nudged the Pony up another 100 ft. Easy does it. I was now at 8400 ft, but I could see over the mountains! And there is the valley leading to the right – with the airport! Gentle turn, city in sight...Now where is that <censored> airport? There, there!! Fortunately I was already down to 250 kts, so I killed the throttle and lifted

the nose that I had lowered going down into the valley. Flaps, wait for 150 mph, gear down, more flaps... It all happened so quickly when I finally got there! Good landing, bit of bounce – I'm down! Brakes...not too much, the Pony likes buck if you are not both gentle with her.

Whew! Safe! Off to post...Argh, this stinkin' modem is taking way too long. Finally, post is up! And the guys must have been sitting with their finger on F5, because it didn't take more than a few minutes till the baton was on the way again. Ok, do the Duenna stuff – but the screenshots would have to wait until my ADSL got fixed. Boy, did I feel good – and relieved that there was good visibility - and daylight!
--Sven

Vince flew wingman for this leg—his first for AVSIM. His experience is pretty much standard fare for first-time flyers—perhaps more eloquently expressed.⁵

Next were Alex (Fw190D) and Bryan who managed the flight to mountain-encircled Kerman, Iran (OIKK) without drama. But what followed was complicated. Heading for Kandahar, Afghanistan (OAKN), Jozef took the baton with Harvey as wing.

Flying from OIKK to OAKN in Afghanistan, I had some serious problems after takeoff to get over the mountains to the east while staying below the 8,500' pressure altitude. In fact I started this leg

⁵ I sat next to the runway with Alex who was flying wingman to somebody. In all my excitement I can't remember who. The baton flyer came in landed it was picture perfect, We ran up our engines taxing into position when the unthinkable happened. The plane that had just arrived flipped over. I tried to warn them about those crazy RPG packing Iranian gophers. They're small but they can lift 1000 times their weight. The person who was slated to run our leg grabbed the baton at the originating airport and took off running. Suddenly without warning Alex was the leader for our leg and with no one else available I became his wingman.

It didn't bother me at first. But as the pilots came inbound I got more and more nervous. And then it was decided Alex would fly the next leg and Svenks would fly the baton for this round. I didn't want to be alone on my first flight so Alex came up with me as well as Speed. I took off as a thunderstorm was approaching but it hadn't quite hit yet. As I took off and climbed out engines screaming I could not help but scream a YEEHAAHHHH back at my teammates. My first flight as a Team AVSIM member had begun.

The flight was mostly uneventful. It was bumpy but I dunno if that was because of the turbulence or me bouncing in the cockpit from the excitement. As Alex flew with me he noted that there was going to be a slight diversion from my course due to some unusually high ridges along my path. This made me a little nervous (on top of the lots nervous I already was) as my HDG hold on my Autopilot was INOP and so I would have to hand fly the approach. Alex flew ahead and gave me vectors as I went.

"Turn left to heading 080", "080 Roger", "Your low, Climb to 8200", "8200 Roger" "Turn to heading 123 and fly directly to the middle hill", "Roger now on 123" I watched as the terrain got closer and closer. If I had a GPWS it would have been screaming at me. I was thankful not to be in the Dash8

"Turn to heading 133" I turned... "133 Roger" The terrain got closer and closer, I imagined in my head bits of paint flaking off the underside of my P-38 I was right on the line. A bump of turbulence. I glanced at the Altimeter. "I may have breeched the Altitude restriction" I nervously stated. A moment then "Nothing we can do about it now, just worry about getting on the ground.

Another moment... then the terrain fell away. "I'm out!" I exclaimed excitedly desperately trying to keep my nerves in check.

"Good Job... Airport is on your 2 o'clock." As I brought the plane to the ground I was somewhat disappointed to hear that Svenks had gotten his baton post in. But I still felt accomplished.

It was my first AVSIM flight. It wasn't easy.. But it was the most ##### fun I'd ever had sitting in front of a computer, The truth is for a while there, I thought I was really in the P-38.

as 'baton pilot' but crashed into the mountains while trying to keep under 8,500' altitude. Jwenting (Jeroen), who was on multiplayer too at that time, advised us to start over again with Arrvoo (Harvey) as the baton pilot while I was recovering from the crash. I joined him then as wingman and made it this time safely over the mountains.

--Jozef

The flight was thereafter smooth as silk over the barren desert. (What made this potentially controversial is that had Harvey merely continued on as Jozef's wing, the team would have had to wait out a half hour penalty. Instead, by returning to OIKK and initiating a "new" flight, Harvey saved the team about 15 minutes. The problem was that the sequence was not clear from the forum message board. It was only after a verbal investigation that the matter came to be understood.)

Now Jeroen got back into the P-51H and headed for Jalalabad (OAJL)—this time running nap-of-the-earth over the mountain ranges along a route pre-planned by Jan. "Hairy landing in the dark after a neck breaking flight low over the mountains in the dark." Nerves of steel.

Here was a moment of truth. The team had chosen to hit the northern target immediately after leaving Berlin. But that choice risked running into darkness before reaching the two trickiest mountain runs in Pakistan. And the team lost the gamble. So now it was a matter of running these "below PAR" canyon legs in the pitch blackness of the uninhabited mountains. Specially prepared, and showing real courage, Jan took his trusty P-38 and flew the twisting valley up to Chitral (OPCH). Well enough done. But then the real challenge arose—landing on that tiny strip with nearly zero visibility knowing that any wrong move would brush the granite shoulders and lead to a wreck. Done!

Chris relieved, followed the same twisting route out of Chitral and then had to thread the needle to slip through the high mountain pass to Shrinagar VISR. Harvey flew at his side. Again, professional job professionally accomplished. This was followed by Jan's "mountain man" run in the P-38 to Delhi's Indira Gandhi VIDP. Lucas ran backup—with a bit of extra drama—that was icing on the cake.

These three legs, piercing right into the heart of the mountains on a moonless night proved critical. These flights were clear acts of courage and airmanship above and beyond the normal. (Team FlightSim was equally up to the task.) Congrats to these pilots.

Almost anticlimactically, running through the nighttime Indian subcontinent, Harvey (with Chris) ran the baton to Patna (VEPT) and Mike (with Leon) pushed on to Guwahati (VEGT)—where the visibility was minimal but the presence of teammates made finding the airport a snap. Jan with Craig (cbtaylor) then dodged through the mountains (again!) to reach Myamar's Putao (VYPT)—finding the airport shrouded by dense fog.⁶

⁶ CB Taylor. I flew the VEGT-VYPT leg as Gazer's wingman. It was dark, about 2-ish in the AM, local time, and the destination was nestled in the cup of a mountain range in eastern Burma. Gazer had the TAWS gauge so he elected to fly a more direct route, while I took a more conservative route as backup should he have trouble with the tricky approach. Did I mention that VYPT was a poorly lit field, at best? Fortunately Gazer was able to land safely, using the next leg's pair as a reference. I was not so lucky. I thought that once the pressure was off I wouldn't have any trouble, being no slouch at landing at LIGHTED fields, but this was like flying into King Kong's armpit.

Monday morning, February 20, 2006. (0000Z)

Team FlightSim. EYKA.

Bjpilot – Brandon - flew wing as the team was aiming for the bonus airport on the shores of the Dead Sea – 1,266 feet below sea level. N180GS – EdGeneer – zipped 515 miles across Europe in the Beech Starship to near the north coast of the Black Sea – Chisinau in Moldova, with skyprince25 flying as wingman.

The route took the team to Ankara, Turkey – and the capital of that nation was not hospitable to Team FlightSim.com in 2006. The airport chosen for landing was Etimesgut Air Base, because the ILS runway was closer to the team flight path than other airports near the city.

Unfortunately, the dark night, thick clouds and a ridge on the glide path for the 2,622 foot elevation airport claimed three of the team pilots – first N3306TX – Mike in the P-38, then his wingman codge went down in the Starship. That set the team back to Chisinau, and skyprince25 took off in the P-38, with Tony G flying wing in the Cheyenne.

Things looked good, but skyprince25 could not find the runway on the first approach. Trying to go around, the granite clouds jumped up and crashed his aircraft. That left the landing fourth attempt to wingman Tony in the trusty Cheyenne. Despite the continually horrible conditions, Tony completed the landing. However, for the first time, the team had to wait out the 30 minute penalty for transferring the baton to a wingman.

When N704FN – Mark was able to roll off the runway in the Avanti for the non-stop flight to LLMZ and the bonus – it was 05:52 UTC – 4 hours and 20 minutes had passed since the landing in Moldavia. The race had been underway just short of 10 hours, and we had lost almost 2 and one-half in weather and terrain.

Oblio flew wing while several pilots scouted passes to help Mark stay under the 8,500 foot limit. The sun rose as he climbed out of Ankara, a nice thing for the visual landing at the lowest elevation airport in the world. He made it 34 seconds under the two hour time limit.

MapleOne – Bob – set out to regain some of the lost time.

Team Sim-Outhouse had turned south out of Berlin, aiming to meet the requirement to land on the continent of Africa. They set down at LLMZ a little short of four hours ahead of the FlightSim team. The AVSIM group followed a path similar to the FlightSim team – but like S-O-H, they flew the required Beech Baron leg early in the race. They got into LLMZ one hour and 50 minutes ahead of the FlightSim group, but landing problems in the P-51H put them back at the Dead Sea an hour and 40 minutes later.

The race was neck and neck with MapleOne nine minutes behind AVSIM. His quick leg to Basrah, Iraq, ORMM, with Reggie flying wing, and Obilo flying the P-38 into OISS – Shiraz, Iran put the FlightSim team on the ground three minutes ahead of AVSIM.

With no good reference for height above ground, due to lack of ANY features whatsoever (at least in my FS world), I pancaked short of the runway at a fairly good rate of decent. Everyone on TeamSpeak was very supportive, and I appreciated that. On the bright side, I learned a few good lessons for next year.

SimOuthouse was forging ahead quickly on a straight course – avoiding some of the bonus airports off the direct course.

Team FlightSim had learned some lessons in Turkey. The mountains across Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan would require some careful flying to stay under 8,500 feet and avoid crashes. Smitty took on the role of scouting the path into and out of Kerman, Iran – OIKK. The departure especially was tricky with a wall of mountains to the east of the airport – with only a couple tight passes possible by the rules.

The race organizers had been fiendishly cruel. The bonus airports in Pakistan, OPCH – Chitral, and India, VISR – Srinagar would be especially difficult. Chitral was up a tight canyon with almost no room for error. Srinagar was in a nice open valley, but the only route from the west was through a very tight canyon following the river. A risky route out of Sinagar to the east was possible, but very little margin for error in the terrain. To make matters worse the sun was setting and the two airports would have to be entered and exited at night.

Coming out of Shiraz, sandman make a quick 50 minute trip to Kerman, covered by N704FN in the Avanti.

Geno got on the board with his Flight One C-441 Conquest to follow Smitty's route out of Kerman bound for Kandahar, Afghanistan – OAKN. On his wing was another new to the race pilot – f14driver – Tom – in the Starship.

Woke up, logged on and got the call to prepare for primary with the baton merely 15-20 minutes out. Fired up my trusty C441 Conquest II, as I'm not quite completely comfortable in the faster low-flying aircraft.

Dealt with some tight terrain issues coming out of OIKK and staying under the 8500' ceiling, but made it through okay due to excellent planning and scouting by the whole team. The remainder of the flight was quite uneventful, watching the sand go by below.

--Geno

The time factor was beginning to tell on some of the folks who had stayed with the race from it's start. An hour or two of sleep here there was not keeping them fresh 18 hours into the race. Plus some folks actually had to go to work as Monday dawned.

The Team FlightSim Ironman took the baton for the coming incredibly difficult leg into Chitral – John – taking the flight in his P-38. Reggie flew along without much confidence of being able to actually make the landing as the wing in the P-38.

The sun had set as Geno landed in Kandahar, so John's flight was almost completely in the dark. Though the official distance was just short of 400nm, the altitude restrictions made for some big diversions – closer to 500-525 nm of flying. When John set down, not only was it dark but visibility was down to about one-half mile.

Being in Switzerland, John was able to fly the leg from work before heading home for the day. It also helps to be the boss!!!

The international nature of the team is critical to the race. Pilots from Australia and New Zealand on one time schedule, European pilots on another and Canadian and US pilots spread across several time zones all worked together to keep the team in the air.

Sandman was up for the torturous leg from OPCH to VISR, at the end of a long day. A change in the rules for 2006 turned out advantageous for the team. Due to the very tight terrain, sandman met some granite clouds on takeoff. Thought the two hour clock was still running, the rules now allow the original pilot to restart. Finally in the air, he flew the canyons perfectly in his Starship to a safe landing in India. Reggie followed along in the P-38.

Smitty had scouted the east route out of Srinagar, and took the baton, also flying the P-38. Geno tried to fly wing, but couldn't get over the ridge. Once clear of the airport, the team had to scramble because Smitty was getting strange readings on his fuel situation. There are not a lot of good night landing airports in that part of the world.

We found one for him at Chandigarh Air Base – VICG – the only lighted airport for miles around.

I've spent most of my time flight planning and putting together FSNav plans to get us through the mountains, but did take the hop out of VISR. The airport is settled in a nice mountain valley. We approached through a valley to the north so as to stay under the 8500' altitude restriction. To go back out that way would mean an additional 100 miles of flight. On the south end of the valley, it was possible to quickly over the hills and then descend below 8500 feet within 2 minutes - the point at which your flight would be invalidated.

I scouted it once and set three waypoints in FSNav to go over the lowest point in the mountains. One was for the climb from 8500. Once was for the point at which if I wasn't above 8900' I'd be dead. And one was for the point at which I needed to descend. I then set to real-time and weather and saw it was foggy and dark. I knew I'd have to trust my instruments and my once-flown plan.

All went mostly as planned, but my original plan was flown at 200 knots and I was now flying hammer down in my P-38 and I was far to one side of my planned route, which meant I'd have a higher hill to climb. When I hit my ascent point, I dialed in a 2000' fpm climb to 9000'. I could see the hint of trees and mountainside below me. As I crested the peak of the mountain, a high voltage line tower buzzed past my wingtip giving me a scare, but I had made it. I quickly descended and completed the rest of the flight, which was shortened by the fact that I had changed panels to one which did not recognize my external tanks and so I was carrying 900 pounds of fuel I couldn't use!
--Smitty

Codge was ready to go as Smitty landed, but soon had to abandon his flight due to computer glitches. Oblio stepped in to restart the flight with the baton in the P-38, and Geno's trusty C-441 on the wing. A safe and fast run across India advanced the baton to Gorakhpur Air Base – VEGK, where a couple fast Starships waited anxiously on the tarmac. F14driver – Tom took off for his first baton leg, with N108GS – Ed along on his wing. The pair closed out the first 24 hours after departure from Berlin as they safely set down at Guwahati – VEGK – the team's last airport in India.

Putao in Myanmar – VYPT was a bonus airport. Sandman was still at it even though the sun was up outside his Australian home – flying over the ridge and into the valley.

Putao was the second airport on the route which all three teams crossed.

Sim-Outhouse got there first – at 17:35. AVSIM was three and one-half hours behind at 21:10, with the FlightSim team hitting the ground 17 minutes later – 21:27. The AVSIM and FlightSim teams had each earned nine more bonus hours than Team S-O-H.

S-O-H had picked up five of the required classic aircraft flights, while AVSIM had two and FlightSim only had completed the DC-3 in the initial Berlin Airlift.

Day Three Tuesday February 21, 2006

Tuesday morning, February 21, 2006. (0000Z)

Team FlightSim. VTCC.

As a pair of P-38's rose out of the pre-dawn darkness of northern Myanmar, one of the disorienting effect of the race was beginning to make itself felt.

The race started at midday on the US east coast, with the sun setting Europe. Just 26 hours later, the teams are seeing their second sunrise as they charge around the planet toward the sun. In the distance of 1,500 to 1,800 miles, a twelve hour day or night passes – the teams losing three to four hours each half of a day.

Team FlightSim's first airport in Thailand was Chiang Mai International, VTCC with Oblio setting down his P-38 with wingman Smitty right behind.

The plan was to fly several of the required aircraft down the length of Thailand – pretty good weather, no terrain issues and several airports close together to gain the maximum mileage in the required one hour minimum baton time frame.

First up was Maple One with Swit_zer on his wing in a pair of Lockheed Vega's for a quick trip 140 miles to Phitsanulok – VTPP to hand the baton off to N108GS – Ed Geneer in the default C-172 – skyprince flying wing.

With the Skyhawk leg completed at Takhli Airport in Nakhon Sawan – VTPI – (Yes, some of us old folks have actually been to a few of these airports – not as pilots and over 30 years ago)

Maple One was willing to risk one of the widow makers of the race – the DeHavilland DH-88 Comet, with N927ME – Reggie taking the wing position as they gained another 160 nm to enter the peninsula of Thailand at VTPH - Hua Hin Aero.

Codge took the baton for the next short hop – taking the classic Piper J-3 Cub, N108GS came along as wingman. The crosswind on landing caught codge, so Ed took over and completed the flight at VTBP - Prachuap Khiri Khan.

The 2006 RTW race for me was one big steep learning curve with not one successful leg flown! The first thing I learnt was onboard graphics is unsuitable for RTW racing. I managed to secure a suitable graphics card about half way through the race.

Then I learned about the limitations of dial up internet. Mainly that you don't want to have more than 3 or 4 people on the server at any one time.

It is OK and I would not let only having dialup keep you from the race. You can always fly offline and post your Duenna jpegs like everyone else.”

--Codge

Though Codge had his challenges in 2006, his enthusiasm, continual help with scouting and dedication supported the team to the finish line. He will be back for 2007.

After waiting out the wingman transfer penalty, Skyprince with the baton and N22CA – Andy as wingman took the King Air 350 for another 280 nm to near the Malaysia border at Songkhla – VTSH.

The run of six required aircraft was finished up with Smitty taking the Curtiss Jenny 40nm from VTSH to VTSK – Pattani Thailand, with Ed Geneer flying wing.

It was just a year before when Ed came on Team Speak wanting to join the race – as they were entering Thailand. Trying to work out the classic aircraft requirements for that race, Ed offered to try his hand at the DC-3 – for the first time. A year later, another race – and Ed is back at near the same place flying a pre-WWII aircraft.

Smitty was the only one able to make the Jenny behave in 2005, and after flying the 2006 run also – he’s looking for someone else to adopt the aircraft.

Six hours and forty five minutes had passed since the team started flying the required and classic aircraft – 730 nm had been covered and a couple hours of daylight remained, but it was time to get back to faster birds and cover some ground west to east.

The Jefman Airport at Sorong, Indonesia - WASS - was the next goal – a bonus airport which is almost like an aircraft carrier on the western tip of New Guinea. The FlightSim team had planned to use their wildcard flight to cross the islands of Indonesia to Sorong. But before the team could to the skies in the only jet aircraft leg allowed in 2006, they had to get within 1,500 nm of WASS.

That was Tony’s task in his trusty Cheyenne LS400 – running from VSTK to WION – Ranai, Indonesia – a tiny island in the South China Sea – 465 nm with Oblio taking the wing spot in the P-38. They landed at 0804 UTC – 1604 local time for the last daylight landing in a while.

Ed Geneer was ready in the Citation X for the flight to Sorong, with John M coming along in the Lear 45. But Ed had no problems as he crossed over the islands of Borneo and Sulawesi (Celebes).

The airport at Sorong was another place to compare team progress. The Sim-Outhouse Team had crossed Thailand headed east over the South China Sea to a bonus airport in the Philippines. They arrived at Sorong at 03:32:20 UTC.

The AVSIM team pulled a surprise out of the hat to fly the Cessna Citation X jet for their wildcard from Putao in Myanmar to land at Baguio RPUB – the highest elevation airport in the Philippines. They flew several required and classic aircraft through the Philippines before heading south to land at Sorong at 09:45:58 UTC.

Ed put the Citation down for Team FlightSim at 11:04:29 UTC in Sorong. The FlightSim team had completed six required aircraft to put them even with AVSIM in that category, but they were

one hour twenty minutes behind, and AVSIM had picked up an extra bonus airport. The Flight-Sim team was also wondering about the Sim-Outhouse strategy, being seven and one-half hours ahead on the clock, though slightly behind when bonus airports were added to the total.

It was completely dark on the island of New Guinea as f14-driver took off in the Beech Starship headed for Tembagapura Airport in Timika, Indonesia – WAPB – the only lighted airport near on the southern part of the island within flight range of Australia. This was about as close as the team planned to come to codge's home on New Zealand, and he was wing for Tom.

The pitch black island with no lights or reflections did not help Tom pick up a ridge near the airport, and he went down, as did codge right behind him.

John M and Reggie jumped back to WASS – Sorong and took off headed for Tembagapura – John fast in the P-51 Mustang and Reggie in the P-38.

One of the strange things which seems to happen each year, also occurred at the same time. A brand new pilot came on the server, looking for an opportunity to fly a leg into his home Australia. Hicksey had to download a race eligible aircraft, practice and shoot night approaches at the target airport and get setup to fly the 575nm leg to Weipa, Queensland, Australia.

Right after John set down safely in WAPB, Hicksey took off and averaged 301 nm groundspeed to land safely in Australia just five minutes short of the two hour time limit. Sandman allowed his fellow Aussie to carry the baton into their continent, but stayed on his wing in the Starship.

Smitty took off after the one required landing in Australia, headed for Mount Hagan, Papua New Guinea – AYMH – a bonus airport and one of the most difficult landings on the large island. Smitty had to deal with the challenge of the 8,500 foot maximum altitude as he made the night approach into the narrow valley in the highlands – the airport altitude is 5,363. Hard to believe the 'tropical' island has so many mountains over a mile and a half high. Geno was Smitty's backup in the Cessna Conquest.

Maple_One was ready to push hard out of Mount Hagan as the team had several hours of island hopping ahead as Team FlightSim planned to start the trans-pacific corridor on Wake Island. The goal was the unlit small airport of Emirua – ERU – which is located near the northeast end of the New Guinea offshore islands. He made the trip quickly, but unseen palm trees jumped up and grabbed the P-38 Lightning he was flying to end the chance of a safe landing.

Reggie had followed Bob out of the mountains, but decided to not chance the unlit airport after Maple One's misfortune.

I diverted to Kavieng AYKV, the only lighted airport in the area. I was sure I could not make the landing in the dark at Emirua. Landing at Kavieng would force the next leg to Truk to be over 600 miles. A safe landing was more important than the potential overtime penalty on the next leg. As Bob was trying to find the airport at Emirua, I altered my course to be near Kavieng, and when Bob went down, I was starting to descend into Kavieng. I made a good approach but it was DARK. The runway lights and the T-VASI lights came into view. Not real familiar with T-VASI setup and with no other visual reference did not make a good descent on final. I hit the throttle and pulled up the gear to go around. Almost lost the aircraft on the downwind leg, there was absolutely nothing to see but a black screen. Made the turn and came down about 1,500 feet down the 5,000 foot runway. Heavy braking got me stopped before the trees at the end of the runway. I was right at the two hour flight limit so we had not extra minutes to wait after the 30 minute wingman trans-

fer penalty.
--Reggie



Truk Sunrise greets John

John M waited out the 30 minute penalty before taking off in the P-51H for PTKK – Truk – one of the greatest scuba diving places in the world. F14_driver, Tom, was wing on the 600 mile leg as the sun rose just before they landed. “Great flight, one I really enjoyed!” John M.

The race was 49 and one half hours old – the team had crossed 138 degrees of longitude – about a third of the distance around the third rock from the sun – almost 7,000 miles great circle distance, though the team had flown over 10,000 miles – all but the wild card leg flown under 8,500 feet altitude.

Continental Airlines flies across Micronesia stopping at these islands four times a week in the real world. No one reported seeing a B738 making a visual landing as Oblio and Reggie took P-38's to Pohnpei – PTPN. The last time Reggie made the flight from PTKK to PTPN was in 1973 as a passenger in a Continental Micronesia B727 Combi.

Tuesday morning, February 21, 2006. (0000Z)

Team Sim-Outhouse. RPVM. Cebu, Philippines .

Moparmike took the baton next, with PRB, once again, flying wingman. Each flew a P-38L for this flight. Moparmike provided this account of the flight:

A pair of P-38Ls took off from Roxas in the Philippines (RPVR) heading for the sunny little island of Naha Indonesia. Myself (Moparmike) carrying the baton at the yoke of Richard Bong's "42" and PRB piloting "Jane" as wingman. The weather was beautiful and winds were favoring the pair of Lockheeds so the decision was made to extend the flight to WAMR on the island of Morotai. I wanted to see Morotai again anyway...if only to reminisce about the good ole days of dog fighting the Imperial Japanese forces in CFS2. Taco also tagged along for a portion of the trip, personally I think he was just daydreaming of the glory of shooting down Admiral Yamamoto's transport. Aw heck, all three of us were! :-)

) With the superb flying weather and not a Japanese warbird in sight, with the only problem encountered being a practical joke played on #42 by it's ground crew. Someone corked up my Pilot Relief Tube!!! After solving that dilemma, the over water flight turned to the monotony of staring at the clock and thinking "Are we gonna make it in time?" With little time to spare we pressed onwards. The approach to WAMR got a little hair raising with a healthy crosswind but both #42 and Jane made successful landings, albeit a little bouncy, with four minutes to spare in the two hour time limit.
– Moparmike.



**Moparmike and PRB,
Lightning section headed for WAMR**

Next, dcc took the baton solo (no wingman) down to Sorong-Jefman, (WASS), on the northwestern tip of New Guinea, in his black Night Lightning, P-38M, loaded with rockets, just in case... He arrived safely at 10:19, bagging a 5-hour bonus for Team SOH.



dcc's P-38M, on the road to WASS, loaded for bear...

Ace_Hyflyer took the next leg, once again, with no wingman. He took the big Republic P-47M down to Snake Bay (YSBN), on the island of Melville, just a few miles north of Darwin, Australia. He brought the baton down safe at 13:16 local time. The reason for not going directly to Darwin on this leg was that we planned to knock off a classic plane requirement during the short hop to Darwin. Aussiemann jumped in the Piper Cub, and Gregory Paul flew wingman, in the Ryan NYP. This was a little unusual but would work out, since we still needed to fly each of those planes. Aussiemann had PC troubles and had to transfer the baton to Gregory Paul, who completed the flight in the Ryan NYP, arriving at Darwin (YPDN).

PRB took the next leg in the P-38L in what would turn out to be an ill-fated flight to Kalgurung Airport, deep in the Northern Territory, in central Australia (YKKG). Willy flew as wingman in the Spitfire Mk XIX. PRB added this account of the flight:

First I was booted from the NetWings server, but decided to continue off line. Then I lost contact with the SOH site for a period of time, and finally I lost real weather. Without real weather, I thought I would be in violation of the rules, and figured I had to transfer the baton, which I did, after re-establishing contact with the SOH web site. Willy arrived safely at YKKG at about 15:50. As it turned out, I had a perfectly green duenna after landing, and probably would not have been in violation of the rules anyway. Not to mention, when I lost the ability to update real weather, I was in thick soup with about 2 nm visibility. My shipmates on the ground at YKKG were in perfectly clear real weather! It was poor decision making in the heat of battle, on my part.

-- PRB

Moparmike was back in the air for the next leg, once again in the P-38L. Flying as his wingman, Flyin Bull was in the DH Hornet. They flew the baton to Ayres Rock (YAYE), deeper into central Australia, for another 5-hour bonus flight.

By this point in the race, team SOH was beginning to develop, very broadly speaking, into a two-shift team. There was the North American shift, and the European shift. This was not intentional, and it resulted in some teammates staying online for long periods of time. Ferror, Panaka, and Gnoopey in particular fell into this category during much of the race. The good news is that the baton was idle for only one point in the race, and then only momentarily. And lest we forget, Aussiemann anchored the SOH team “down under” in Australia!

Ferror took up the baton next, flying in a P-38J solo to the old rocket testing and satellite tracking station at Woomera, South Australia (YPWR). Panaka was up next, flying the F4U-4. His wingman, kevi1, flew in the Sea Fury. They took the baton southeast, to Victoria, landing at Airport Avalon (YMAV), in Geelong. Sadly, they landed at 10:40 PM, long after the National Wool Museum had closed for the day. Ferror was back in the cockpit next, this time in a P-38M, and again, with no wingman to keep him company. He took the black Lockheed twin down to Tasmania, landing safely at Hobart (YMHB), arriving at 23:40. This was the entrance to one of the corridors, our first for the race.

Gnoopey took the baton and Panaka took dash-2 for the corridor flight to New Zealand, in a pair of “Seven Ton Milk Bottles”, the big Republic P-47M. 924 miles and just over 2 hours later, they set down at dawn in the beautiful city of Queenstown (NZQN). This landing also represented our south 45-degree latitude requirement.

Moparmike took the baton in a Cessna 195 for the 5-hour bonus flight to Milford Sound (NZMF), only 40 miles from Queenstown. Flying as wingman, Senator_Tehocan chose the DH Hornet. Both arrived safely at the rather short strip at Milford. Next up, Taco jumped a P-38L, and his wingman, Willy, jumped into an Aero Commander 680 for the next hop, another 5-hour bonus flight to Mount Cook National Park (NZMC), up into the mountains of New Zealand. The Hor-



**Moparmike at YKKG
ready to head off**



**Moparmike arrives
at YAYE.**

nets were back in action on the next leg. Senator_Tehocan took the baton, and Moses03 grabbed wing slot. Auckland International was their destination (NZAA) and after a takeoff in darkness, they made it without incident, arriving in daylight.

The next leg was the wildcard. We had decided to make for the south pacific corridor (NTAA – SCIP – SCEL), but first we had to get to the entrance (NTAA). As it turned out, our Pacific Crossing would be fraught with peril. Ferror took the baton, and Panaka took wing position. They flew a pair of B-2 Spirit Flying Wings for the wildcard leg, heading northeast over the South Pacific, some 1300 miles to the Polynesian Island of Niue (NIUE), one of the world's largest coral islands. They arrived safely.



Ferror and Panaka, B-2 Flight over the Pacific



From Baton-1

We were now in the western hemisphere, and we could go high and fast! Moses03 took up the challenge and the baton, once again flying the Dornier Do-335. Flying wing this time was Taco, in the P-47M. They headed east to the Cook Islands, arriving safely at Avarua, on the volcanic island of Rarotonga (NCRG).



Moses03 brings the NDM into NCRG

Tuesday morning, February 21, 2006. (0000Z)

Team AVSIM. VYPT. Putao, Myanmar.

Stanging in the dark and remote mountains of Myanmar, the team needed a lift. The next leg proved critical. Jan and Jeroen had worked quickly and cleverly on the overall strategy and the next flight was their critical gamble. The team would use its Wild Card leg to fly a jet out of the smallish airfield over China all the way to the Philippines. Not only that, but the intent was to land at RPUB which is nestled high above sea level encircled by mountain peaks. This is a mountain resort, famous for its cool breezes and natural forests—not to mention headhunters. The runway is perched on a steep cliff side just behind a ridge. So naturally, this task fell to Chris and his Citation X. (Jeroen flew backup—safely enough.) Two hours and fifty five minutes later, the baton had moved the almost perfect 1445nm and had scored a bonus airport at the same time. This was all the more remarkable because of the pressure of putting the Citation X down on the mountain airport.⁷



**A welcome dawn greets wt1l on the
Wild Card**

**And then a challenging approach
to the mountain encircled Baguio**



The leg was uneventful until the approach. RPUB in the Philippines was a bonus airport, and for good reason. Terrain surrounds the runway on all sides, the approach was steep (see screenshots). I

⁷ Jeroen: Jan and I then came up with what proved to be the biggest surprise of the race. From Putao in Burma to Baguio in the Philippines turned out to be a perfect distance to use our wildcard, but would it be possible to get a fast large jet into an unlit short mountain runway?

Due to our previous progress through the mountains it was calculated that we'd arrive in the Philippines in early morning so there would be light. Chris volunteered to take his Citation X for a spin while I ran backup and would take my 737-800 to Clark in case he failed to get his Cessna into Baguio. Turned out our apprehensions were unfounded, Chris' pilot skills were second to none.

was doing about 1500fpm on the approach, will full flaps and speedbrakes. Fortunately the runway was long enough to allow for roundout float, but still had to pull her into reverse quickly and get on the brakes!

--Chris

To be sure, running a race encompasses a large number of events. And smoothly handling eighty-some departures/arrivals/baton handoffs is the main task. But it was at this moment that the AVSIM team felt that they had a chance to win. It was the combination of the ingenious planning (Jan and Jeroen) and skillful piloting (Chris) that made the move successful. From this moment it was a matter of pushing on. Clever tactics and brilliant psychology.

The good humor was enhanced by the Team's deciding to handle a number of the required Classics. The sun had risen bright over the Philippines and the weather was clear. And a number of closely bunched airports were immediately available. So the matter of flying.



**wt1l ... keeping the unstable Ryan in the air
and then bringing it down safely**

**Finally, MM and fellow Cubbies on Parade
"Let's play two," says Ernie Banks.**



A bunch of pilots were on hand and so there were plenty of volunteers. As it happened, the order was Joe and Vince (Ford Trimotor), Dave and Chris (Jenny), Harvey and Joe (Vickers Vimy), Chris and Buzz (buzzbee) (Ryan), and finally Mike and Jeff (jt_williams) (Piper Cub J-3). The team had "knocked off" five of the more "classic" of the Classics. As important, an enormously good time was had by all. These classic flights present an opportunity for the team to gather and fly together in gaggles—all with huge grins on their faces. This in contrast to the more serious business of executing the legs one after the next with full concentration and seriousness of purpose.

Then...back to the race.

Hamish and Jeff took their Ponies to Cagayan De Oro RPML (extending their original range). Carrying on to the Indonesian archipelago, Dave and Joe took Avantis to Morotai WAMR. Dave's FlightSim had an "illegal operation" and he had to transfer the baton to Joe. So here Joe's wingman flight saved the team. Next, Buzz and Vince in P-38s to Sorong WASS in fine fashion. (However, Buzz discovered that his realism slider was wrong, so he "handed the baton" to Vince and called a 30 minute penalty on the team. Properly.) All followed by Alex to Timika WABP (he forgot to close his cockpit for 200nm—leading to an emergency request for hot chocolate on landing!) and Jeroen to Bamagua's YBAM to "score" Australia. (The last was a bit tough as the field is poorly lighted—and landing in darkness was more interesting than expected.)

The race was now on, it was time to reveal our strategy to the world. From this point there would be no question as to our plans, as we now had to go either northeast towards Wake and Hawaii or Southeast towards New Zealand and Easter Island.

As rapidly as possible we blasted north, back first to pick up a difficult bonus airport in Papua New Guinea (another job for Jan who pulled it off despite unfavourable winds) and from there on island hopping towards Wake.

--Jeroen

Facing a tough flight into the mountains of New Guinea, the team turned to Jan who managed to thread his P-38 into Mount Hagen (AYMH). Sven provided the accompaniment. And the pair showed their real skill in pulling off another difficult mission.



Klas and svenks crossing the Pacific

Pushing on, Ponies carried Harvey (and Chris) to Emirua (ERU) and Jeroen (again with Chris) to Truk (PTKK)—the latter through rain and turbulence. (Jeroen was keen to see the wrecks in the lagoon.) Next, in Lightnings (and a lightning storm), Klas and Jan ran to PTPN. This was Klas' first flight, a rewarding if intimidating experience.⁸ And Lightnings again for Bryan and Sven to Enewetak Atoll (PKMA). Finally, a quick Pony run to Wake Island (PWAK) by Sven and Jeroen.

⁸ Klas: I just finished my first ever RTW flight. Even though the whole flight was over water and it was dark, it was still pretty interesting, at least the later part. About half-way, I began seeing some lightning up ahead, I actually thought it was quite fitting, since I was flying a Lightning. When I then came closer to the lightning, the plane started to rock around violently. I got advised by Sven to turn off the auto-pilot if the plane started to move around, so I did that, and tried to keep the plane on altitude and course by hand for a while. ... After I got out of the lightning storm, I thought: "Whoa, hope it's smooth flying after



Corral of Ponies at Enewetok



jwenting and svenks at altitude

Day Four Wednesday February 22, 2006

Wednesday morning, February 22, 2006. (0000Z)

Team AVSIM. PWAK. Wake Island.

Having reached Wake Island, the team entered the trans-Pacific Corridor. The first leg fell to Chris and Jan, flown in DC-7Cs in classic Pan Am and SAS liveries. The takeoff and flight were not the challenge, the approach and landing on tiny Johnston Atoll were. However, skill and determination prevailed and baton was freed to Joe and Dave. Chris and Jan's having cut the distance down, and now in the Western Hemisphere, they could use the Avanti's speed at altitude to move the baton quickly to the Hawaiian Islands' PHSF.



wt11 and gazer
ready



DC-7C over the clouds
and seven seas

The landing, halfway up the mountain, can be tricky but the team proved up to it in what was the first of the high altitude high speed runs of the race. Bryan and Tom were waiting in their Lockheed Vegas—and flew mostly downhill to Honolulu (PHNL).

As night was setting, Jeff spun up the DC-7C (in Northwestern colors) and took off over the Pacific for San Francisco. Mike (in a Pan Am 7C) followed.

this", which it of course wasn't. Then I had a little scare when I looked down at the altimeter and thought it said 8600', so I pushed my stick full forward and then noticed I was at 7600'. Then it was smooth for a while then another lightning storm, that held on pretty much until landing, had good smooth weather on final though.



Honolulu to San Francisco

**Jeff /s Northwest DC-7C ready in
Hawaiian rain squall,
climbs above a beautiful sunset**

**MM safely down at SFO
with "extra fuel"**



My first leg as primary baton pilot in 2005 race. Done in the cool clean unrestricted airspace of the western hemisphere. I count myself fortunate to get the opportunity to fly one of the last great propliners on the longest leg yet of this years race. I am confident we will be successful particularly as I am supported by wingman Mike MacKuen. Decide to take 65% fuel in order improve climb speed and stay below MLW on arrival at KSFO.

Climb to cruise altitude of FL240 without incident but encounter convective activity (thunderstorms, lighting, turbulence) in the first two and a half hours of flight.

Suddenly Jeroen who had been flying ahead in a DC-7C announces that he has overstressed without warning and without an overspeed. MM and I decide to reduce speed somewhat to avoid a similar fate. Last three hours require attention to winds as the circular wind phenomena creates numerous sudden overspeed conditions.

Small glitches with flaps and autopilot approach mode necessitate hand flying of the final but it goes smoothly and landing is without incident.⁹

--Jeff

⁹ Mike: A great Trans-Pacific flight as Wingman to Jeff. Thanks to the spirited company of the AVSIM team, the two main pilots were able to stay on task for six hours—despite the fact that they were both completing more than 24 straight hours without sleep. So kudos to Joe, Vince, and Alex, who stayed up through the North American night and to Jeroen and Sven who got up early in the European morning. The minute-to-minute updates about FS and SOH progress over similar Pacific runs were greeted with sympathy, enthusiasm and dismay. These long distance flights put a bond between pilots who take the same risks over these long hauls.

Alex's side-splitting humor, offering to scout out the satellite parking lot, the fencing, and route 101 for my overweight landing, caused the closest call of the night. Rolling on the floor and laughing out loud, I simply forgot my job. Mr. Murphy dropped by—shifting the wind and sending my airspeed 15 kts above the danger point. Happily, Murphy was just teasing and I was able to cut the throttles, kill the autopilot, and climb to slow down.

With dawn breaking and perfect weather on the mainland, Alex took the baton and headed south in the Comet to grab some distance and score a Classic. But nothing would be easy.

‘Comet The Killer’.

That’s my personal name for the DH-88. A fine plane in many regards, it nonetheless has vices that make even a seasoned stick somewhat wary. It’s just one of those machines that has to be handled just right... and it will bite something fierce if you deviate from it’s exacting requirements in the slightest.

This morning, the ‘Comet Run’ came up, a short 80 nm run from KSFO to KMER that was, in every respect, a milk run. I had made sure that I still knew how to handle the DH-88 with four stop-and-goes at KOAK, the weather was exceedingly clear and calm, and this being my neck of the woods, I knew the terrain as well as a kid knows his sandcastle. It was a 30 min run to the former SAC bomber case in the valley, and with a huge runway that could easily accommodate half a dozen touch and goes from a Cessna, I had not a worry in the world. Knocking this classic out would be cake.



An optimistic start...

I guess the plane read my mind as I started her up, and in a meeting with Mr. Murphy, concocted a plan to remind me that nothing comes that easy.

Sailing in on approach to the destination, I had the numbers pegged; a flat approach at 100 kias, centered up and coming down nicely. I thought my concentration was adequate as I came on in, because nothing felt out of the ordinary. There was no struggle bringing her to the numbers, no last second desperate corrections to stay on centerline. It was in every form and fashion just like the previous four approaches to landings as practiced earlier... except for one hidden change that was going to deliver that fateful bite.

I don’t recall exactly what I did wrong. Perhaps I pulled the power back too much or too fast, perhaps I overestimated my pull on the stick, perhaps my brain decided to take a fleeting vacation at the worse possible minute. All I do know is that, instead of holding the DH-88 at 5-10 ft above the asphalt and letting the airspeed bleed off to at least 75-ish before touching down, the mains came down rather hard at just under 100. It was about the worse thing that could be done, and gave every reason to ‘Comet The Killer’ to lash back at me for my terrible mishandling. With Murphy smiling devilishly in the background, the lady leapt to action to make my life rather interesting, if not downright miserable.

Come down too hard or fast in the DH-88 and you are rewarded with a bounce. That bounce carried me back up some 50 ft or so as the plane returned to the air. It was that one singular moment that I could’ve done something to avoid what was going to happen, but with better than 2 miles of runway available, my mind locked firmly onto the notion that this was salvageable. I manipulated the stick, trying to level her out and allow the excessive airspeed to bleed. If I could get that to happen, a successful landing was very much still possible. The only problem was that in all my flying the DH-88, I really didn’t have too much experience with trying to establish a float at this

The biggest worry was my loading too much fuel—which put the landing weight beyond the nominal maximum by 13,000 pounds. Happily, conditions were ideal on arrival. Knowing that the lead pilot, Jeff, had made a perfect landing calmed the mind and led to a greased landing. And, at the end of the day, the big ole bird needed only half the runway.

low a speed and with the added pressure of recovering from a bad bounce during a race.

Had I thought of that, I would've written off the attempt and gone around while it was still possible.

The wheels touched the asphalt a second time, and for the second time, they came down too hard. BOUNCE! Back into the air. I seized a quick glance at my airspeed and saw about 70 kts and dropping... and I knew I was in deep trouble. Besides being that much closer to stall speed, I realized that I had missed my chance to execute a go-around. Throwing those levers forward would do nothing else than create a huge amount of P-Factor that could, and probably would at this slow a speed – whip the plane right onto her back. The only option I had left was to hold on and ride out this tiger-by-the-tail, subject to her not-so-tender mercies. Murphy had to be laughing by now.

The third time the wheels touched the runway, they finally stayed put, only it was a lousy right-left affair that sent the plane skittering off to the right. My natural instincts took over and I jammed the rudder to the right to stay on centerline, only to find that it was mostly a useless gesture. I was already under 50 kias, and that tiny, undersized rudder wasn't deflecting enough wind no matter how hard I begged. I was down to brakes for directional control, and I hit the F12 key to correct my wayward track. The plane lurched back to the left, but not enough. I hit the brake harder...



a little bounce...

Much too hard...

I think the speed was under 30 KIAS. I say I think because everything became a blur, quite literally. The world suddenly spun by incredibly fast, and I knew I had done it when I saw my attitude indicator showing 80 or so degrees of roll. Sure enough, my cockpit went away and I was treated to the outside view of my plane, right wing imbedded deep in the dirt, and a message up top plainly informing me of what I already knew.

It took a long time for me to finally react to what I saw. I think I just sat there, a dumbfounded look on my face, for at least 20 seconds, before I keyed the mic and informed the rest of the team that I had just crashed. The anger then took over, and I quickly started resetting the flight. If allowed, I was not about to let Murphy have his way, and just had to go back to KSFO and put 'Comet The Killer' in her place.

--Alex



Down.

After Alex eventually made it to Oakland, Jeroen and Lucas took the Cessna 172s down to KMER.¹⁰ And then Speed and Vince (in the Avanti and P-38) got back up to "speed" (cough, cough) flying to KALS (with Vince's FS crashing, Speed was on his own). Facing unfavorable winds, he diverted to KBDG.

The most nerve racking flight was from California to Utah. Flying the Avanti, because there was no longer a pressure altitude restriction, I lost my wingman, Spazz, fairly early in the race. I believe he had a crash to desktop because he was trying a freeware P-38 he hadn't flown before and didn't install the sound files for it. While the flight was reasonably straightforward, I felt the pressure get greater and greater, knowing that if I messed up there would be no one backing me up and the small lead we had on the FlightSim.com team would evaporate. I received a great amount of satisfaction from planning my approach properly, steering a couple of degrees to the left, 10 miles out, so that I had the perfect distance from the threshold for a 90 degree right turn to final. As I crossed the numbers, I started shaking and broke out in a sweat. I almost let my nerves get to me, causing me to bump off the runway a few feet. However, with the Avanti being so well tempered, I quickly brought it under control and the landing appeared perfect to everyone else. I received a lot of thanks and praise for not letting the team down when it would have cost us.

--Hamish



Speed after battling headwinds.

Harvey and Sven headed eastward. This time, employing tremendous tailwinds discovered by the scouts, Harvey was able to extend the Avanti all the way to KMPJ. "Came down in the soup,

¹⁰ Lucas: I was wingman. Jeroen was the baton pilot I believe. We took off from Oakland. The weather was a little foggy but pretty nice. Finally I felt at home in a plane! We flew at about 5000ft and then intercepted the ILS for our destination airport. The weather there was not bad and Jeroen's needles were not moving so if I remember correctly made a visual approach and a perfect landing. I then continued with my approach and landed. As a descended I couldn't help looking up from the instruments and saw that the people flying the next leg were lined up and ready to go. I made my landing and taxied off the runway. A few minutes later, after serving the correct time delay, they took off. It I think that it was a perfect classics flight.

couldn't see the runway 'til 500ft AGL. A bit offline but corrected great and landed smack in the middle. Used the full 2 hour flight time for 813nm."

Next was Derald (kickin_chiken) in his first flight of the year—in the Cheyenne LS400, an old AVSIM favorite. This time the winds were smack in his face averaging more than 30kts headwinds, so he diverted to Longview, Texas (KGGG). Jeff and Eamonn (epwatson) picked up the baton and advanced it to Brownsville's KBRO. Eamonn's power went out, so Jeff managed on his own: "Encounter a lot of turbulence and it is a rockin' and rollin' flight but the pony handles it without complaint." (This was the second wingman on North America who had computer problems—the team was just lucky that these were not the baton carriers.)

But Mr. Murphy was not taking the day off. Next Jeroen in a P-47 and Klas in a P-38. On approach Jeroen's computer dropped framerates to 2-3 per second—and he had to hand off to Klas...who greased the landing at Mexico City's MMT0.

I finally got to try my newest addition, Pengie V the P-47M. During training and scouting she'd proven herself a sturdy and reliable aircraft with good speed.

Sadly during this flight something went horribly wrong. Framerates which on takeoff had been a normal 20+ steadily dropped until on approach I was averaging 2fps or less, not a good thing when trying to land a high performance tail dragger. I crashed (predictably) and DarkCharisma (who had been flying wing for me) immediately landed, reducing the damage to a mere 30 minutes.

Once again wingmen came to the rescue.
--Jeroen

Klas uttered the wingman's mantra:

... And then when Jeroen crashed on landing, my heart really started beating. Flying as wing and finding out the pressure is all on you heightens your stress level a bit. I must say that it was the most stressful thing I did in the race, mainly because you know that you don't have a backup...especially when you find out about it when on approach, expecting to do a regular landing. Luckily, there was no terrain on the approach, and an ILS, though the airport was at a high altitude, and the visibility was not too good. The landing went fine however, no problems at all to put my P-38 down on that long runway.
--Klas

After waiting the required 30 minutes, Sven and Jan (the Scandinavian duo) took their Lightnings to Guatemala City's MGGT in swift order.

Wednesday morning, February 22, 2006. (0000Z)
Team FlightSim. PTPN.

The route turned north to the restricted airspace of the test facility at Enewetak Atoll – PKMA, with Swit_zer flying the baton in the FSD Cheyenne, and Maple_One in the P-38L on his wing. The 540 mile trip to Wake was up next, with N22CA – Andy in the P-51H and N108GS – Ed taking wing in the Beech Starship.

Out at the home of the China Clipper, Tony_G and Reggie were practicing maximum weight takeoffs in the DC-7C and DC-7B. The plan was almost 2,000 miles to Honolulu. Well within the

range of the DC-7, this was a route the real aircraft flew many times. But while the weather was clear and no storm visible, PWAK was a problem for takeoff for the heavy aircraft. There was a 19 knot crosswind blowing square across the runway – requiring plenty of rudder and aileron to keep the heavy birds level as they gained speed to climb.

The crosswind was a real problem, Andy was coming in flying a tail dragger. He setup for the landing and made the touchdown, but the wind was pushing the aircraft off the runway. For over a mile he kept it straight, but after overrunning the end near the parked DC-7's, the Mustang tipped over and crashed.

And we gave those little planes of ours quite the workout, and not without our fair share of bumps and bruises too! I remember coming into Wake Island with that terrible crosswind. As soon as I got the thing down on the runway, the wind blew me off one side and I ended up nosing over in the dirt. Luckily, nothing was damaged except my pride. And my wingman was able to take over so we could start out across the Pacific.

--Andy

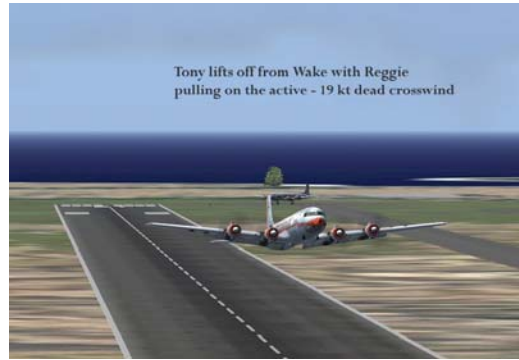


nothing damaged except my pride...

After Andy's experience trying to land on Rwy 28, Ed came in from the opposite direction, crabbed the Starship onto the runway and slowed to a stop.

That gave us 30 minutes to watch the sun and clouds before Tony rolled off Rwy10 with the Baton, Reggie about a minute behind on wing.

While most of the team went to bed, Tony and Reggie had a long evening of playing tag in the air. This was the first leg where the 8,500 limit did not apply, so the cruise altitude was planned for 18,000. The trip would take almost six hours.



Maple_One checks out Hawaii

**while
Tony and Reggie
Depart Wake Island**

**And then cruise over the Pacific
at FL190**



Maple_One stayed on the server with them while he worked on the night landing at the highest altitude airport in the Hawaii Islands – Bradshaw AAF at 6,190 feet up the volcano on the big island. He planned to take the Beech Baron from Honolulu to Bradshaw – completing the required aircraft flight and gaining the bonus for PHSF.

Out over the central Pacific as the light dimmed, Tony and Reggie flew within a mile of each other as the conversation crossed many topics. Disaster almost occurred when Reggie discovered his DC-7B in overspeed:

...six hours worrying all the way. About two hours out of PWAK I had an overspeed and ended up with 59.8 sec of overspeed - we all know 60.0 is the crash threshold. My descent into PHNL was about 150 nm long at 300-400 fpm to ensure I did not overspeed again.

--Reggie

Really though there was nothing to worry about as Tony coasted easily into PHNL's Rwy 8L – five hours and 44 minutes after takeoff. Maple_One was on his way to Bradshaw before Reggie set down 15 minutes later.



**Honolulu welcomes
Tony and Reggie**



**Geno climbs out of Hilo
en route to San Francisco**

N108GS Ed was back to take the short 30 mile hop from PHSF down the mountain to Hilo where Geno and Sandman were setup to fly their DC-7C's for six hours to San Francisco, hoping to arrive shortly after dawn.

Somewhere between Indonesia and Australia, the team worked out a plan for 4 pilots (Tony G, Reggie, Smitty and I) to be Baton/Wingmen for the 2 corridor legs from Wake Island to San Francisco. The 4 of us got together to figure out schedules, and it was decided that Tony and Reggie would go Wake Island to Hawaii, and Smitty and myself would go Hawaii to San Fran. We all had fair amounts of experience with the DC-6's/7's. Smitty's schedule began running tight, so he was forced to drop out due to the "real world", whatever that is.... 😊 I went searching for sleep around 5 hours before my leg was to begin, wondering who would fly wing with me into the United States. Tony and Reggie were established in cruise on the way to Honolulu.....



**There may not be a Heaven
But Somewhere...there is a San Francisco.**

I arrived on the tarmac at Hilo - our departure point for San Fran - with approximately an hour remaining in the first leg. No, I didn't get as much sleep as I had hoped. It was now 0330 local time for me - I wasn't exactly what you'd call "alert". But that changed soon as Tony and Reggie began descending into PHNL and I realized in about an hour, after 2 short hops on the island to pick up a bonus, it would be time for me to carry the Team FlightSim baton "across the pond" on a critical leg. Then there was the issue of whether or not I'd even have a wingman.... Turns out Sandman (David) had been practicing approaches into San Fran in the DC-7 and was comfortable enough in it to step up....whew!!! So I headed out to my DC-7C 'Seven Seas', the Pan Am Airlines Clipper Blackhawk.

--Geno

The two most critical legs of the race were completed safely – with both the baton pilot and wingman making safe six hour legs. The day had dawned in San Francisco.

Team FlightSim wanted to complete a few more classic flights and pickup a couple bonus airports crossing the United States.

John M had a very different flight from his last – after the P-51H for 600 miles – it was 86 miles in the Spirit of St Louis – Ryan NYP from KSFO to KMER.



**Unstable in all its axes,
John masters the Ryan**



**Oblio setting down at KCEZ
Gear...Gear...Gear**

Oblio – David – headed east across Nevada and Utah for Colorado in the P-38, with Geno pulling out the Piaggio Avanti to fly wing. The promised jet stream winds did not materialize, so Oblio had to set down short of his target at the airport in Cortez, Colorado.

Sandman and f14_driver had some trouble but got in their Starships off headed for Petit Jean State Park in central Arkansas – KMPJ – a mountain top airport 600 feet above the Arkansas River. Tom was lead with Dave on his wing.

They picked up a great tailwind – 45 knots, but the 772 nm distance was too much. Plus the weather was closing in with fog and rain in the central US.

The decision was made to divert to airport rich Oklahoma City – with N108GS – Ed Geneer planning to take the P-38 into KMPJ.

Tom – F14_driver – is a military aircraft fan, and worked extensively on some of the AI packages for the E-3 AWACS aircraft. So the choice of landing airport in Oklahoma City was obvious – KTIK – Tinker Air Force Base – the home of the AWACS aircraft.

Visibility was poor and Tom almost lined up to land at nearby KOKC, but with some help from FSNV flight control – put it down safely on the runway at Tinker.

Ed and Reggie in his Avanti on wing took the short 210 mile hop into Petit Jean. Raised in the state of Arkansas, Petit Jean State Park is one of Reggie's favorite real world weekend getaway spots (You can have three guesses who help plan some of the bonus airports and routing – and the first two don't count)

With less than a mile visibility, there wasn't much scenery to watch coming over the mountain top lake to land on Runway 3 – only an NDB on approach to line up or the visual landing. Ed greased it perfectly as always.

The winds were really working out well for the next bonus airport – First Flight at Kill Devil Hills on Cape Hatteras, North Carolina – yes very near where the Wright Brothers made the first journey into the skies – admittedly a short, but very important first flight.

A manpower shortage shuffled the lineup. Reggie was the only pilot on hand with an aircraft ready to maximize the advantage of the increasing jet stream – the FSD Piaggio Avanti.

After landing as wingman, Reggie took almost five minutes getting fuel and setting up the aircraft. Then it was off to North Carolina at FL390. The miles flew by with an average 98 knot tailwind, pushing ground speeds above 400 kts. Oblio was flying the P-38 as wing, shooting for KRDU – a smart move after Reggie's dumping the Avanti at London City last year.

This time the final stages of the leg were all math, trying to figure how close to KFFA the Avanti could come, but still land under the two hour limit. Reggie came on the Runway 20 ILS as the sun was about to set at KPGV – Greenville, North Carolina.

Down safely - Initially thought we'd have to land short - to meet time limit and started descent for a shorter alternate. When the numbers showed a possibility of making KFFA - was too low to go all the way. But still 392.8 kts average ground speed is not a bad flight in an Avanti.

--Reggie

N108GS – Ed and N22CA – Andy were up for another flight together – in Ford Tri-Motors for the 90 miles into KFFA and the bonus.

Ed and I flew those Tri-Motors into First Flight. The weather was so bad we basically flew with one hand on the controls and one hand on the little baggies!

--Andy

The rest of the team lined the runway at KFFA to guide Ed and Andy into a safe landing.

The team had been flying non-stop for three days and four hours as the night fell on the US east coast.

Wednesday morning, February 22, 2006. (0000Z)

Team Sim-Outhouse. NCRG. Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

Moparmike next took the baton for a solo flight (no wingman) in P-47M. He headed out across the Pacific, northeast, towards Motu-Mute (NTTB), located a few miles northwest of Bora Bora, in the Society Islands. An old P-40 base in WW-II, this would be a 5-hour bonus field. Something went wrong and Moparmike crashed while landing, sending the baton back to Rarotonga, where dcc prepared to make the next attempt. Flying the P-38M, dcc headed off to Moto-Muto with no wingman, but arrived safely.



dcc, approach to NTTB

The next flight would take us to the entrance of the South Pacific corridor. Col_GCO took up the baton in a P-38L, while Moses03 took up the wingman position in a P-38J. The pair of Fork-

Tailed Devils headed off to Faaa (NTAA), on Tahiti, the largest island of the Society Islands group. Both arrived safely at Tahiti, as darkness was closing in.

Throughout our race we attempted to give way to new pilots who hadn't yet flown legs and wanted to. This did not always work as planned. Often there were no such pilots available, and while it was inevitable that many pilots would fly several legs, when possible we tried to make room for pilots who hadn't flown yet. In that spirit, madsdad54 took up the baton next, flying his first leg of the race, in a P-51H. Flying wingman, also in a P-51H, was Gregory Paul. This was the first leg of the Pacific corridor, and the pair of Mustangs headed east into the darkening Pacific towards the Gambier Islands, some 890 miles away. Mr. Murphy wasn't even close to being finished with us during this trip, and one hour into the flight madsdad54 's suffered PC failure, and Gregory Paul completed the flight into Totegeie airport (NTGJ).

The "Foo-Fighters". What followed next was certainly the most heartbreaking of Mr. Murphy's attempts at playing havoc with us during this Pacific crossing. Willy, flying the Boeing B-377 Stratocruiser picked up the baton, while Moparmike flew wing in the Boeing B-29B. They were headed for Mataverí Airport (SCIP) on lonely Easter Island, some 1400 miles to the east. Both aircraft crashed on landing, and both crashes were influenced, to some degree, by what we began calling "foo-fighters", spectator pilots on line, not involved in the race, popping into existence at very inopportune moments.



Gnoopey, B-29B over the Pacific



On approach to SCIP

Gnoopey picked up the baton to re-fly the leg, with fliger747 flying wing, in a pair of B-29Bs. There was some confusion on the wingman rule at this point, not the first or the last time that would happen during this race. Some thought the 30-minute penalty applied if the baton was passed to the wingman, which it was. But since baton-2 crashed as well, the entire flight was lost, so the passing of the baton to the wingman rule was "overridden" by the fact that neither one actually completed the flight. It sounds "simple" now, but it generated some understandable confusion at the moment. Gnoopey and fliger747 made it to Easter Island without further incident.

Continuing along the corridor, Senator_Tehocan took the baton, and Panaka flew wingman, comprising another B-29 section. They headed for Robin Crusoe Island (SCIR), a rugged mountainous member of the Juan Fernandez Archipelago, rumored to still hide buried pirate treasure. As it would happen, the evil corridor was not finished with us yet, as Senator_Tehocan would crash while attempting to land the big Boeing.



Senator_Tehocan and Panaka, preparing to leave for SCIR

The final leg in the corridor was flown by Ferror, in the Hornet, with Gregory Paul flying wingman in the P-51H. They headed for Santiago Chile, arriving safely at the Arturo Merino Benitez International Airport (SCEL), Chile's largest airport.

With the corridor behind us, we decided to divert south to score some bonus points. The next leg was flown by fliger747 in the F4U-5N. Flyin Bull flew wingman in the Hornet. They headed down the Chilean coast, making for Tepual airport (SCTE), near Puerto Montt. Flyin Bull had computer problems, but fliger747 arrived safely.



On course to SCIR

Day Five Thursday February 23, 2006

Thursday morning, February 23, 2006. (0000Z)

Team Sim-Outhouse. SCTE. Puerto Montt, Chile.

Gnoopey next took the baton solo (no wingman) to the Cabo Juan Roman airport at Puerto Aysen, Chile in the Republic P-47M, scoring a 3-hour bonus.

Taking a page from the "Don't Push Your Luck" book, we decided to try another no-wingman leg, as fliger747 took off with the baton in the back of the F4U-5N, making for the next 3-hour bonus stop, a tiny un-lit dirt strip at Rio Mayer (SCOH.), on the border between Chile and Argentina. Lady Luck decided to teach us a lesson and fliger747 crashed while attempting to land in the dark, something *very* unusual for our resident real life 747 driver! JETninja picked up the battered baton in the P-38L, making what he described as a "hairy" landing. Moses03, in the Howard 500, flew as wingman.



PRB landing at SAWH

The next leg was to the 5-hour bonus field at Ushuaia (SAWH), Tierra del Fuego, the southern most city on the planet. Flying the P-38L, Taco picked up the baton, with dcc flying as wingman in the P-38M. Taking off in the dark from Rio Mayer would prove troublesome as both Taco and dcc crashed into mountains on take off. More confusion over the wingman rule ensued as we tried to figure out if dcc could re-fly the leg, this time as baton holder. The answer turned out to be “yes”, as dcc tried to say at the time, but a majority of pilots on line trying to in-

terpret the rule in the heat of battle while the baton stood idle, came up with “no”. In the end PRB re-flew the leg in the P-38L, along with Gnoopey as wingman in his P-47M. Gnoopey got there first, while I carefully threaded my way through the mountains in the dark. If you are approaching from the north, as we were, there is a line of mountains just before you reach SAWH, which is on the coast. Once you clear the those mountains, it’s a hard right turn and steep descent to the airport.

Next, fliger747 took the baton in his Vought F4U-5N to the Puerto Deseado (SAWD), a small fishing port on the coast of Patagonia. JETninja followed as wingman in a Lockheed P-38L. Both arrived safely.

PRB took the next leg to the Argentinean Navy base at Comandante Espora (SAZB) in the P-38L. Flying without a wingman (we at Team SOH like pushing our luck this way), he arrived safely. After this flight PRB added this:

This was the most difficult approach and landing of the race for me, and maybe the most difficult I have yet experienced in my entire desk-flying career! It was 10:00 pm local time when I took off from Puerto Deseado, and the weather was fine. At SAZB however, weather was the problem. Spotters on deck there were reporting heavy rain and thunderstorms. As I started my descent I started to run into bad weather while still at 20,000 feet. There was no way I was going to be able to see the field at 10 miles. It wasn’t until about 2 nm that I started to see the red “tags” of Ridge, Spaz, and Fliger747, parked at the field. Without them there I would never have found the place. At 1 nm I still could not see the runway. The only thing in my world was the dim ghostly red “tag” letters in the darkness ahead, heavy rain, and the comforting hum of two mighty Allison engines to my left and right. At something less than one mile I saw the runway, dove for it, and set the Lockheed down. I was glad to be in the Lightning for that one.

-- PRB



**Panaka at SBFL
ready to leave for SBRJ**

Flyin Bull took the next leg to Buenos Aires (SABE) for a 5-hour bonus stop, flying the DH Hornet with no wingman. We went through a series of no-wing flights during this time, luckily without incident. Ferror took his DH Hornet to Hercilio Luz airport (SBFL) in Florianopolis, Brazil. Next, Panaka took the baton to Santos-Dumont airport (SBRJ) for a 3-hour bonus. This field is named for Alberto Santos-Dumont a pioneer in early aviation, who, some say, was truly the first to fly a heavier-than-air craft.

Senator_Tehocan, took the baton to Sao Miguel Do Araguaia (SWUA), in central Brazil, flying the DH Hornet with no wingman. This was a 700-mile leg, and we would take an 18-minute time penalty after this one, not to mention almost running the short-legged Plywood Wonder out of gas... Senator_Tehocan provided this account of the flight:

Coming out of school, just on my computer, logging into the Netwings server. Baton 10 minutes out, no one to take it, so I just set up and was soon ready to rock. Took over the baton, took off and climbed to FL 288 with 4000fpm and engaged otto. Had a 40kt headwind, but it slowed down fast to 20 knots. According to gnoop, SWUA was better and I diverted. nice weather, nothing to blate aroun'. 150 nm out starting the descent. Turned out that I only had just enough fuel to make it, according to my computer. Approach was just as good as any, landed off the runway, but duenna still valid. looking to my fuel gauge: 7 Gals of fuel left.... Sure as hell, my hands were shaking!!
-- Senator_Tehocan



Ferror, waiting to leave for SEQU



Final approach to SEQU

Panaka took the P-47M, and the baton, to Sanarem International Airport (SBSN) in Brazil, with Gregory Paul flying wing in the P-51H. The wingman would be needed on this one as Panaka's P-47 suffered a tail-wheel failure on rollout, after landing, resulting in a "crash". Next, Moparmike took the baton in a P-38L to Tefe Brazil (SBTF) on the shore of the Amazon River. Flying as Moparmike's wingman, txnetcop suffered computer failure and Moparmike continued the flight into Tefe alone. Panaka took the baton to Tiputini airport (SETI) in western Ecuador, in the DH Hornet. Flying wing, Taco chose the P-38L. Ferror then took the baton in a P-51D, with wingman txnetcop in a P-47M, to Mariscal International airport, near Quito, Ecuador (SEQU), 9,000 feet up in the mountains, for a 3-hour bonus leg.

Senator_Tehocan, took the next leg to Olaya Herrera (SKMD), Medellín, Columbia in DH Hornet. Panaka, as dash-2, also flew the Hornet. At this point in the race the European contingent of Team SOH had been flying non-stop for some 12 hours or so and was getting a little fatigued. Overall this was the end of day five of the race and we were all starting to get a little frazzled.

Gnoopey was up next, flying to Juan Santamaria International Airport, at Jan Jose, Costa Rica (MROC) in the P-47M Thunderbolt. His wingman, txnetcop, also flew a P-47M. Both arrived without incident.



Jugs at SKMD
(Gnoopey, Ferror, and txnetcop)



Baton flight on the way to MROC
(Ferror in foreground)

Thursday morning, February 23, 2006. (0000Z)

Team AVSIM. MMGT. Guatemala City, Guatemala.

Leaving Guatemala City, Harvey and Mike (in Avanti and Pony) arrived at San Jose's MROC just after darkness fell. No problems, except that the server went down and the pilots had to transfer to BushNet's TeamSpeak. A similar pair of aircraft (Avanti and Pony) carried Dave and Greg (Soar-Pics) to Medellín's tough little city airport SKMD—nestled in the mountains—at which the landing was made in darkness. No sweat.

Then another irregular incident. Heading for Quito's mountain encircled SEQU, Lucas and Jeff took their ponies into the darkness. An immediate FS crash caused a return and a restart. Both flew on and Lucas made a fine landing under difficult circumstances for his first completed flight. However, the team thought there was something irregular about the flight and decided to "hand over" the baton to Jeff and self-impose a 30 minute penalty. On later review, the Duenna did not

show any discrepancies although other less official evidence looked out of place. Better safe than sorry was the team's decision. Better to err on the side of getting things right.

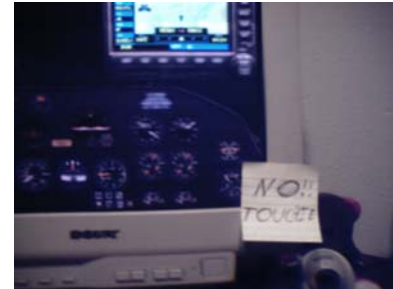
Flying out of Quito, Vince took the baton for his first official flight. The team's second consecutive baptism under fire. Alex flew wing.

I was pumped and I was ready to go but that old saying about your IQ dropping by 75% came true. That combined with Murphy's attempts to mess me up made this a hair raising experience. There was some concern about me climbing out from the airport so I decided that I'd use WEP for a little added boost. I had been using this technique successfully riding jumpseat in other flights so I felt pretty confident. On climb out however I got distracted maintaining my heading and airspeed and forgot the WEP Switch. All of a sudden my engine started bogging out. I hit the mixture control and when that didn't work suddenly my blood ran cold. "Guy's.... I have a problem" I radioed. It was decided to wait and see how my speed would behave and then either decide to restart or hand the baton off to Alex. But then the word came that there was some question to the validity to the last Duenna and we decided to hand it to the wingman and wait out a 30 Min Penalty.

After flying back and fixing the engines. I took a post it note and, inspired by Alex, wrote "NO TOUCHIE" on it. Placing it on the monitor over the WEP switch.

Take Two

But Murphy wasn't done with us yet. Taking off, I forgot the blasted Duenna. Quit reset. Duenna on. Take off. God I feel stupid now *heh*



Modern safety device.

Third times the charm... I hope.

About 20 or 30 Minutes into the flight I suddenly hear Alex on the radio. "WHA OH!!" His Avanti's autopilot for no apparent reason decided that the ground was a nice place to fly to. Luckily he had been nowhere near his max speed as he had been following my P-38. That was the only thing that saved him from breaking up from overspeed. Then my cats decided to get in a fight and run behind my computer PULLING OUT MY VIDEO AND SOUND JACKS. Much cursing and screaming before seeing my Blue light on the mouse was still on. Looking at the back of the computer and carefully plugging the speaker back in, I was rewarded with the Alex and Jeroen chatting on teamspeak and the sound of my engines. The video plug in and all is as it was.

Relieved, I sat down and just tried to calm my nerves after of course locking the cats in my bedroom. Surely nothing else could go wrong on this leg.

I was so nervous by the time I got where I was going that what should have been an easy affair flying in to the airport with flat terrain in moderate haze turned into a matter of me using all my will to fight off panic. I landed too far down the runway and dropped out my dive brakes praying "don't over run it don't over run it." The plane ever so slowly eked to a stop. I ran to the Duenna, ended it and posted my shot before a power outage or something as equally murphy-esque could do anything further to me.

Guys thanks for putting up with my borderline panic as we flew :-D
--Vince

Joe and Tom (in Avantis) climbed over the Andes to La Paz (SLLP) quickly enough and Dave and Greg (Avanti and Pony) hit Jujuy, Argentina (SASJ).

My first official RTW baton carrying leg was SLLP to SASJ. Getting the fully loaded P-51 LR off of 10 at La Paz's 13,000'+ elevation proved more interesting than originally anticipated. It was night, we finally got airborne and attained some positive rate, but certainly not enough to zoom away from the mountains southeast of the airport. So I relied upon the TAWS to warn me as I approached the mountains. as soon as I received an audible warning I glanced down at the ASI, saw that I was approaching 250 mph indicated, and banked hard parallel with the mountains to begin my climb out for FL270. Decent into SASJ was uneventful as I decided to wait as long as possible in order to avoid the east crest of the Andes. 30 miles out I put the Mustang into a steep dive that took me almost to redline before I pulled out 2000' AGL 7 miles from the runway. Alas, I still had too much speed to lower the gear and flaps, so a quick 360 turn was used to burn off the excess energy. Landing on 15 in the first light of dawn was uneventful.

-- Greg



jwentig catching the Andean winds

Then Speed and Sven (Avanti and Pony) to Mendoza (SAME), through headwinds and strong thunderstorms, and Jeroen and Harvey (Avantis both) to the "Swiss" resort city of San Carlos de Bariloche (SAZS). Jeroen: "Facing very strong headwinds flying south I climbed my Avanti all the way to FL400 in a vain attempt to find something reasonable before going down again to 18000ft and finally finding something halfway reasonable."

All professional flying. As Jeroen observed, "As time went on, uneventful flight repeating uneventful flight, it was inevitable something would go wrong, and it didn't."

Then followed a long afternoon. Sven and Vince in P-38s to Puerto Aysen (SCAS) along the Chilean coast without incident. Except that Sven fumbled the Duenna posting—which he later corrected. A quick investigation cleared the misunderstanding.

Jan and Chris took their Beech twins (KA350 and B200) into the slightly difficult Villa O'Higgins SCOH but had no problem. Jan reported, " Smooth landing, but a bit high on approach."

After waiting out the hour (for the Classic Flight), Jeff and Harvey (Pony & Avanti) hit Ushuaia (SAWH), the world's southernmost city. (This is the second year that Jeff has been the "Southern"

point man.) Turning north, the team made good time up the east coast of Argentina. Jeroen¹¹ & Harvey, their Avantis catching strong tailwinds, covered 717nm to Trelew (SAVT) and then Chris and Jeff pushed their Avantis to Buenos Aires' Jorge Newbury (SABE). Klas and Sven made a Lightning run to Brazil's Puerto Alegre (SBPA). And then Greg (Pony) and Jeroen (Jug) made it to Rio's classic airport Santos Dumont (SBRJ).¹²

My second baton carrying leg was SBPA to SBRJ. This flight started easily enough. Warm light of late afternoon in favorable weather. But the light and weather was lost as I flew farther and farther north. I could see (and hear!) the thunderstorms churning beneath me while I approached Rio at FL 270. Beginning my decent 70 miles out to keep it shallow, I was thrown into a wicked mix of turbulent air, torrential rain, lightning, and sweaty palms.

Twice I was rolled completely on my side and tossed about at the storm's will. It was the most violent weather (faithfully reproduced by AS) I have ever flown in in MSFS. Finally breaking out (more like being spit out) of the storm at 7000' and 15 miles I began my approach. I knew there was terra firma sticking up in the approach path to 2R, so I took a few extra knots and altitude into the experience. Having safely navigated around the natural and man-made obstacles in the dark I then had to burn the excess energy for landing on 2R's 4440' length. Not so easy. but I ended up rolling just a few feet off the end of the runway before being able to set the parking brake.

--Greg



Wingman jwentling
when the weather was gorgeous

Thursday morning, February 23, 2006. (0000Z)

Team FlightSim . KPGV

As Tony_G climbed out of First Flight headed for Charleston South Carolina, the team looked longingly at the Atlantic Ocean – the finish line was just a few thousand miles away, but the route to get to Frankfurt would take the team to the tip of South America.

Reggie followed Tony out of KFFA for KCHS, also flying a P-38. Tony's first baton leg in the twin warbird ended suddenly on short final with a DLL error crashing his computer. Reggie continued into the landing on Rwy 15 to complete the leg.

¹¹ Jeroen: The initial plan for that seemed too ambitious, the winds looked poor enough that a shorter leg was planned. But during the flight, with Jan flying weather scout, we found I could make the planned destination of Almirante Zar naval base after all, and guided my Avanti down to a landing there in the mid afternoon.

¹² Jeroen as wing: As Rio came closer the weather turned increasingly sour, until finally SoarPics and I were flying through constant thunderstorms and heavy turbulence. Worse still, it was now night so we were facing a night landing in inclement weather. Pengie V pulled it off, though on landing the wind caught her causing a main gear collapse, luckily the damage was light and easily repaired. But she'd now suffered damage twice in 2 flights over 2 days, was Murphy catching up with us at last?

Several folks started working on the legs across the Caribbean. The 2,100 foot runway at St Barts was a bonus, but would take a couple legs to get there. TFFJ was close to SkyPrince's home, and he worked on the night flight and landing.

After waiting out the 30 minute penalty, N22CA Andy took the P-51 out of Charleston headed for Nassau, with N180GS Ed on wing in the P-38. Andy's Mustang crashed on approach, so Ed had to bring the baton down at MYNN in his P-38.

Smitty and Maple_One had put in some hard practice on a couple airports in the Dominican Republic, watching for ridges and potential hazards in the final stages of the approach. The P-38 with Smitty at the controls took the baton after another 30 minute penalty for the crash, with Maple One's P-51H on wing. The planned airport was MDPP on the north coast, but favorable winds convinced them that they could make the extra 160 miles to Punta Cana – MDPC on the eastern end of Hispanola. The leg covered 640 nm in an hour and 45 minutes.

Xiphanopoulous – David – was the most frustrated racer for Team FlightSim for the first three days. Computer problems had kept him out of the action. His first leg was MDPC to TNCM in the trusty Avanti, covering 300 miles in just under an hour. N180GS – Ed flew along as wingman trying to keep up with the Avanti in his Starship..

Skyprince25 took the Twin Otter over the 17 miles and over the ridge to land at St Barts, where Tony was waiting to takeoff for South America. Having given up on the P-38, he was back in the FSD Cheyenne for the 560 mile trip to Paraguana, just off the coast of Venezuela. Xiph flew the wingman slot in the Avanti. Wish I had seen their takeoffs from St Barts. 2,100 feet is within the capability of the Cheyenne and Avanti, but a hill directly across a very small bay means a quick turn to port is necessary after clearing the runway. Perfect place for a climbing stall if the pilot is not real careful.

The Starship in the capable hands of N180GS – Ed covered the next leg into the downtown Olaya Herrera Airport, in Medellin, Colombia – SKMD – with Maple One flying wing. This airport is surrounded by high rise buildings, even though the elevation is almost 5,000 feet. Not a terribly difficult approach, but it is in the bottom of a valley with some good sized hills surrounding the area. No wonder almost all the real world traffic to this city has moved across the mountain to a new airport on the nearby high plains. Ed had no trouble slipping into the airport in the middle of the night.

A pair of Starships took the 400 mile flight to SEQU – Mariscal Sucre International in Quito Ecuador. The early morning sun helped baton pilot Sandman and his wingman codge make the approach down the valley between the mountains to the 9,228 foot elevation runway.

Frustration and fatigue was starting to tell on the FlightSim team. The trip across the United States to gain bonuses had not gained time on AVSIM due to crashes and the distances. Even though the FlightSim team picked up an extra bonus airport, we were now 8 hours and 45 minutes behind AVSIM, and two hours down on bonuses. Team Sim-Outhouse had crossed the south Pacific and gathered the bonus airports at the tip of the continent. They were charging into the Amazon basin northbound as AVSIM and FlightSim went down the opposite coast.

Maple One, baton, and John M , wing, set off on a lightning fast leg with their P-51H Mustangs headed to Lima, the capital of Peru. They set down at SPIM, covering over 700 nm well within the two hour window.

When I next woke up, we were in the Caribbean, headed for a couple of tough bonus airports. We had plenty of pilots lined up for a few legs, so I just hung around and kibitzed some. I got an assignment for a couple of legs in South America – one into a fairly easy bonus airport at SKMD and another long leg from SEQU to SPIM down the west coast to burn up some distance which I flew in the P-51H. Both flights were uneventful, with successful landings. After landing in Lima, Peru, I again went to sack out for a while.

--Maple One

Oblío in the P-38 with the baton and wingman Reggie in the Avanti headed for Chile, but winds were not cooperating and Oblío set down at Ilo, Peru – SPLO.

On approach to SPLO (Ilo, Peru) in low visibility conditions, I lined up on the first runway-shaped thing I saw. I didn't realize until I was almost at the threshold that it was a taxiway, not a runway! Without a moment to spare, I banked right and landed the P-38 safely on the actual runway.

--Oblío

The team put the fast turboprops up high, with Geno in the Avanti racing down to SCLL – Valdivia in northern Chile, Smitty covering down low as wingman, but Geno had no problem covering 650 nm.

Sandman in the Starship and wingman Reggie in the P-38M moved the baton down to Temuco – SCTC – a little over 600 miles as the team struggled to find favorable winds.

Swit_zer took the Aerostar south, with Smitty flying wing. The Aerostar could not find winds to make the trip to the bonus airport at Puerto Asyen. Swit_zer abandoned his flight as Smitty made his approach to land at SCAS. Flying at 14,000-15,000 feet, the P-38 has covered the 400 nm much quicker than the Aerostar up high. This was a decision the team would regret and vow not to repeat.

After the 30 minute penalty, Oblío headed to the next bonus airport – Rio Mayer at Villa O'Higgins, Chile – SCOH. A really interesting approach in FS2004 with the runway parallel to the river and an awful large looking bridge across the river right on the flight path on short final. (Advances with Google Earth and FSX now show the airport correctly on the opposite side of the river from FS2004 – but the bridge is still very close when landing)

Oblío averaged slightly over 275 kts in the P-38, with Tony_G giving the David Copley designed aircraft another try.

To close out the southward run, John_M and N22CA Andy took their P-51H aircraft to SAWH – Ushuaia, Argentina.

I flew wingman for John as he landed at the southern tip of South America.....The real secrets to our success though were the guys who dedicated themselves to flying as many legs as they could. And I can't forget all the careful planning either. I just came in and said "Tell me where to start and where to land" but the fellas who'd meticulously picked out our route were the ones who got us around.

--Andy



John touches down at the world's southernmost city.

Day Six Friday February 24, 2006

Friday morning, February 24, 2006. (0000Z)

Team FlightSim. SAWH.

Spirits were picking up on the team as darkness fell and they turned north. Everyone was flying well despite uncooperative winds and the team had gained over an hour back on the AVSIM team after their only problem in the Americas – now some seven hours behind.

By now – four days and seven hours into the race, the routes were pretty clear. AVSIM and FlightSim would cross the Atlantic on the corridor to Ascension Island on the same course. Sim-Outhouse was landing in Costa Rica headed for the Greenland – Iceland crossing.

Let me tell you, the number crunching with distances and times gets intense during the race, especially in the late stages.

Up the dark South Atlantic coast of Argentina and Brazil was the flight plan. Rio was the only required stop for a bonus airport before starting the oceanic crossing at Augusto Severo International in Natal, Brazil.

N180GS - Ed in the Starship and Tony_G in the Avanti racked up 700 quick miles to SAVT – Trelew, Argentina, followed by N22CA – Andy and Skyprince in P-38's for 600 miles to Buenos Aires – landing at SABE.

Oblío in his P-38 and xiph –David in the Avanti as wingman headed for Florianopolis, Brazil - SBFL (Note - too many Dave and David's on this team) . They did not get any help from winds aloft, so Oblío set down early at SBCM – Forquilha Airport in Circiuma. Night landings at unscouted airports can be dangerous.



**This is what SBCM would look like
when Oblío could see what was happening
maybe better not to see...**

On the flight out of Buenos Aires, Argentina (SABE), I diverted to Forquilha, Brazil (SBCM) from my original target of Hercilio Luz Intl (SBFL) to stay under the 2-hour limit. My wingman's computer had crashed, so it was up to me. My approach was so low that my nose wheel made con-

tact with the crest of a hill, but it wasn't damaged, and I continued on to a successful landing! Good thing I was in a P-38, rather than something less durable. It was nighttime, so I didn't see the hill. I replayed the approach in daytime to take the screenshot. Disaster was never more narrowly averted!
--Oblio

The P-38 (Thanks again for a fantastic aircraft Dave) was the workhorse as N180GS – Ed and Smitty headed for Rio.

Reggie was up to his old tricks, trying to find a place to safely fly the Vimy in the dark out of historic Santo Dumont Airport in Rio (SBRJ). The team decided to wait for daylight.

Ed safely completed the almost 500 mile run to SBRJ, where Maple One took over in his P-51H headed for SBIL – Ilheus on the coast. Reggie in a P-38 as wing.

Tony_G was waiting to take the baton in the Avanti from Maple One, with Oblio taking the wing slot as they flew into the sunrise, landing at SBJP – Presidente Castro Pinto International in Joao Pessoa.

That was 70 miles short of Natal – perfect distance for a one hour flight in the Vickers Vimy.

The Vimy is a fun bird to fly, with a very light fuel load. The takeoff at SBJP was not good in practice – the wind was blowing across the runway from the north and this bird has a lot of side surface area. It wanted to sail toward the trees before gaining altitude. So, I lined up for my takeoff run at the edge of the airport in the grass, lined up with Taxiway B – about 70 degrees off the runway heading. The lightly loaded Vimy flying directly into the wind lifted off before I crossed the runway and I was on my way to a landing between the runways at Natal, with John along as my wingman.
--Reggie

While John reloaded, Maple One took off in the B-29A headed for Ascension with the baton. John joined him in the air for the four hour and a quarter flight. Gnoopy even dropped by from Sim-Outhouse to see his creation flying.

I got up in the wee hours of the morning to find the guys coming up the east coast of South America headed for the ocean crossing. We didn't have pilots lined up the first corridor leg to Ascension Island, so I volunteered to fly it in the B-29A. John claimed the wingman position for that flight, and we set off to practice as the baton approached the jump off point for our flight. I got some screenshots of the Superfortress waiting at SBNT and during the flight as well. See the B-29 screenshots. That 4 ¼ hour flight was a LOT of fun! John and I and the guys were really yukking it up – at one point early in the flight I checked my GPS distance remaining and it was about 1142nm, so I started singing “One thousand one hundred and forty two bottles of beer on the wall, one thousand one hundred and forty two bottles of beer...” . Somebody groaned and said something to the effect of, “you’re gonna be way too lit to land that thing at that rate!” There were quips about a trail of beer bottles across the ocean, and who I had onboard to help me drink all that beer. I figured that Jennifer Anniston and Courtney Cox were worthy crew members, and off we went into hilarity best left out of this document. Anyway, I landed at Ascension, and as the next crew was leaving I again signed off to get some



Maple One in the Superfort

rest.

--Maple One



**After crossing the Atlantic,
John brings Gnoopey's B-29 down safely at Ascension Island**

Team FlightSim flew six heavy transport class aircraft on three corridor legs during the race – 16 hours of flying (32 flight hours when you count the wingmen), covering 5,300 nm – safely and with no problems. We are ready to start our own airline now !!!!

The leg from FHAW to Africa – GLRB, Monrovia, Liberia was just under 900 miles and a heavy transport class aircraft was not required.

Geno put the Avanti through it paces, covering the distance in two and a half hours, with Sandman in the Starship keeping him company. A bit faster than their trip from Hawaii to San Francisco a couple days earlier.

The classic caravan route across the Sahara Desert begins at Timbuctu in central Mali. That was another bonus on the world tour, with Oblio flying out of Monrovia to an intermediate stop in Mopti, Mali – GAMB. N180GS- Ed was flying wing.

Landing gear came down in the middle of the flight and could not be re-extended for landing. I tried a belly landing, but no luck....My CH Products Pro Throttle has more buttons than I know what to do with. It turns out that a couple of buttons that I never use were programmed to raise and lower the landing gear. I must have accidentally bumped one of them with my hand, and I didn't realize it because I had the sound muted so the engine noise wouldn't interfere with voice comms on TeamSpeak.

--Oblio

After Ed's safe landing at GAMB and a 30 minute wait, John_M headed for GATB – just 150 nm away in the P-51H. f14_driver – Tom took the wing in the P-38M.

Friday morning, February 24, 2006. (0000Z)

Team Sim-Outhouse. MROC. San Jose, Costa Rica.

PRB grabbed the baton in the DH Hornet, flying to Tapachula (MMTP), located in the SE corner of Mexico in the state of Chiapas at the base of the Guatemalan Highlands, near the border of Guatemala and the Pacific Ocean. Moparmike flew wingman in the Howard 500. After the flight, PRB added this commentary.

This was a strange flight. As I was climbing up to cruise altitude, got two brief over-speed warnings, something I had never seen in the Hornet before, and certainly not while in a climb. My wingman (Mike) at first suggested that it was just pressure changes, and that he was getting them too, and it was nothing to worry about. Then he said he was going off line, just like that. Shortly he came back online, and asked if I was still having KIAS problems, to which I replied yes. He responded, "Go off line, NOW!" Very dramatic! I did, and the problem went away. It was not the first time on-line weather cause strange KIAS and altitude anomalies. I completed the leg off-line without further incident.

-- PRB



**dcc's shot from his glider
of MROC
prior to departure for MMTP**

Ace_Hyflyer took the baton next in the P-47M, with Moses03 flying wingman in the DH Hornet. They flew to the Lic Adolfo Lopez Mateos International Airport in Mexico City (MMTO), bagging a 3-hour bonus in the process. Next, Milton Shupe flew the P-51H into Corpus Christi, Texas, USA (KCRP), with Willy flying dash-2 in the Spitfire Mk XIX. Willy wanted to do a few landing approaches on the USS Lexington (CV-16), but thought better of it at the last minute.

JETninja flew to Rooke, Texas (KRFG) in the Piper Cub, in an attempt to get one of our required classic flights out of the way. We decided it was a good time and place to get some classics out of the way. Even though it was dark, the weather was good, and Texas is flat with many small airports in the area. 1905Flyer3 flew as wingman, also in a Piper Cub. Upon landing, JETninja ground looped the little Piper, which has a nasty reputation for that sort of thing. He transferred the baton to his wingman, 1905Flyer3, who completed the flight safely. For the next leg, PRB, completing another classic flight, took the Curtiss Jenny to the Victoria Regional Airport (KVCT) in southeast Texas, with Canwhitewolf flying wing in another Jenny. The Jenny is a fun airplane to fly, needing a constant and rather strong right rudder input to make it fly straight. Still a classic!

Moparmike took the P-38L, and the baton, (sans wingman) to Petit Jean State Park (KMPJ) in central Arkansas, for a 5-hour bonus stop. The park was named for a young French girl who disguised herself as a cabin boy so she could secretly accompany her fiancée to the "New World". Mike was looking for some relaxing vacation time in this beautiful region. For the next leg, Flyin Bull picked up the baton, with Spaz as dash-2, in a pair of DeHavilland Hornets. Flyin Bull lead the section of Plywood Speed-Bugs to the Central Illinois Regional Airport near Bloomington, Illinois (KBMI). Mississippi was up next, taking the baton in the P-38L to Mackinac Island (KMCD), in Lake Huron, just south of the Canadian border, for a 3-hour bonus flight. PRB flew wingman, also in a P-38L. Mississippi had computer problems and transferred baton to the wingman (PRB). This was a fun flight with beautiful scenery and nice weather. Senator_Tehocan next took the baton to Chibougamau-Chapais (CYMT), Quebec, Canada. With Panaka flying wingman, they flew another pair of DH Hornets.



**Preparing to depart for CYJR
Ferror in P-38M,
Gnoopey in the P-47**



Gnoopey, on the way to Goose Bay

Next up, Gnoopey took the baton in the Republic P-47M to Goose Bay (CYJR), located in Happy Valley, Newfoundland. Ferror flew wingman in the Lockheed P-38M. After arriving safely, Gnoopey added:

Phew - pretty 'weird' landing into strong headwind around 17 knots to Goose Bay's 26 - underestimated 'ground effect' and floated down the runway for a loooong time - finally touched down on the grass on port side of runway - all in 3D VC - sorry for the adrenaline kick fellas.

-- Gnoopey.



Gregory Paul on the way to BIIS

Panaka, flying the long-legged P-47M, took the baton half way across the North Atlantic to Kangerlussuaq (BGSF) on the western edge of Greenland, with Senator_Tehocan flying wingman in another P-47M. This was the first leg of a North Atlantic corridor flight. Next, Moses03 picked up the baton in the DH Hornet, with Gregory Paul flying alongside as wingman in the P-47M. They stood out over the vast Greenland ice sheet, then across the icy Denmark Strait, landing safely at Isafjordur (BIIS), on the western shore of Iceland, picking up a 5-hour bonus stop. To complete the corridor, fliger747, fired up the Vought F4U-4 Corsair, and took the baton solo to Reykjavik, Iceland (BIRK).

Gnoopey took the baton to RAF Kinloss (EGQK) in Scotland in the P-47M with no wingman. Next it was off to London Heathrow (EGLL). Grumpos took the baton in the DH Hornet, with fliger747 flying dash-2 in the Vought F4U-4. Ace_Hyflyer took off on the final leg before the Alpine Challenge. Flying the Howard 500, he headed for Zurich, Switzerland (LSZH), with ke-vib1 flying wingman in the Hawker Sea Fury. Ace_Hyflyer suffered a computer failure and

passed baton to kevib1. At this point Team SOH called for a timeout for the purpose of starting the Alpine Challenge in daylight.

Friday morning, February 24, 2006. (0000Z)

Team AVSIM. SBRJ. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Completed Flights: 4. Cumulative Distance: 1,939nm.

Lost Flights: 0 for 0 hours.

In the next flight, Harvey and Jeff encountered the same thunderstorms plaguing the coast but persevered up the Brazilian coast to Salvador (SBSV), when Dave and Greg extended on to Natal (SBNT) to set up the Trans Atlantic flight.

Flew as wingman for Chris and Harv on runs north in South America. Would have been glad to give the opportunity to others but there were not many folks around during this period. Anyway got plenty opportunity for on-line banter with arrvoo. Almost as much fun as flying.

--Jeff



Lightning illuminates Jeff's Pony

While awaiting the baton at Natal, the historic jumping off point and a former center for Pan Am in South America, the gang got together to show off their Pan Am liveries. The locals must have been delighted to see so many DC-7Cs in one place at one time.



Pan Am DC-7Cs at Natal

wt1l enjoys the moon en route

Finals at Ascension Island



With FlightSim coming up the coast, the team had to make a clean flight to Ascension Island. Chris and Jeff took the DC-7Cs up into the night sky and headed eastward over the Atlantic.

Working the winds well, they managed to reach FHAW in just over four hours...despite facing occasional headwinds. As dawn broke over the South Atlantic, the team started to breathe more easily.

Next, Joe and Alex finished the Atlantic with a quick Avanti leg into Monrovia GLRB. Speed, backed by Vince, moved on to Bamako GABS and Jeroen on to Timbuktu GATB. ("Minor detail: some tall pylons of the local electricity board positioned conveniently on short final to the runway there. Having had warning I flew in a bit high and avoided being electrocuted." --Jeroen)

The Sahara was dry and lonely. Mike and Greg (doing double-duty as wing, this being the dead time) faced triple digits headwinds aloft and no useful diversion fields in the shifting sand dunes below. Working the weather carefully, they flew their ponies *under* the high altitude winds—eking out speed to beat the time limit—only to discover a swirling dust storm at Atar (GQPA) Mauritania.

In their Avantis, Harvey and Bry decided to engage in a little brotherly rivalry—racing each other to La Palma GCLA. It was "slowvoo v. the tortoise" according to the participants. The team waited anxiously as each, in turn, threatened to disable the other's equipment. Happily, no crashes ensued and both made it down in good order...

With the end of the race in sight my brother has driven up from London to stay for the weekend. I have a home network setup with FS2004 on both pc's and we fly multiplayer pretty regularly. So obviously we request a leg where we can fly together. We get the opportunity twice with the first to La Palma on the Canary Islands. Of course the sibling rivalry means this developed into a personal race, with both vowing to beat the other there, regardless of who was wingman and who was baton carrier.



Brotherly love at La Palma

As we were flying on a home network and not the usual server the rest of the team could not follow what was going on. And with Bryan and I continually baiting the each other this made for a little nervousness as I'm sure everyone thought we were going to knock each other out of the sky. We were both threatening to turn off autopilots and alter heading bugs while the other was on a coffee/toilet break. But the team needn't have worried, this is just "typical British humour" as Jeff likes to call it.

The flight went great, even with the tricky mountainside landing. And I was able to return the wingman favour to Bryan a couple of legs later.

--Harvey

Sven, with Vince, took a Lightning into his favorite airport—Madeira's LPMA. This is a legendary approach made all the more challenging by the PTSim scenery. But no problem for these pilots.

Then Jeroen took the Avanti toward Portugal, but he encountered one of those "sudden crashes". Jeff continued on with the P-51H to Beja (LPBJ). (With no backup, the sudden arrival of sloooooow framerates on final approach must have been disconcerting. Happily, only Jeff knew about this at the time...)

Completely unexpected crash by Jeroen in the Avanti results in my second wingman baton of the race. My last race leg. Beautiful day for flying but I am anxious about my payware Portugal scenery which on occasion has produced slide show flight sim performance. In the end – No sweat.

--Jeff



Jeff over Porto Santo
a beautiful sliiide shooooowwww...



Klas to Torino
for the Olympics

After the 30minute wait, the tortoise and slowvoo did a quick reprise of their brotherly battle—this time with Bry as the lead. A successful run to Zaragoza, Spain (LEZG) and then dash for a San Miguel. And, setting up the finale, Klas and Jozef (P-38L and P-51H) carried the baton into Torino, Italy (LIMF) in time to catch the start of the Winter Olympics. Klas, from Sweden: "Baton free, watch out Finnish hockey players!"

Facing the team now was the Alpine Challenge. The event had been designed so that when the leading team returned to Europe it would have to deal with adversity before taking the checkered flag. No coasting into an easy victory lap here. The Challenged worked to perfection.

The team faced a big decision. The European Winter night was hardly conducive for flying into these mountain airstrips. The normal threat of running into dark mountainsides was bad enough, but tonight a major winter storm was ravaging the western Alps. Under the rules, the team could accept a two hour penalty and stop operations until the next morning—and complete the Alpine Challenge in daylight. Strategically, this might have been the safest route to victory. But no, the team decided to press on, accepting the weather and darkness as part of flying the RTWR.¹³ Each pilot was assigned a leg to fly as lead or wing, with the best pilots heading the list. As it turned out the team decided to have the lead pilot repeat each try once before giving up the baton to the wing—the distances were short and "restarts" were preferable to accepting a half-hour penalty.

¹³ Further, the team decided to continue flying with ActiveSky as the weather engine—as it had always been more accurate and realistic than the standard FS Weather option. Tonight, that decision was to be important. The storm had shut down a number of Swiss weather stations and so FS Weather was producing clear skies. ActiveSky, on the other hand, produced the correct snowstorm. Ah, "as real as it gets"...

More important, the team's best planners had done their work. Jeroen, especially, had spent the afternoon and evening planning and plotting a route through the soon-to-be dark mountainsides.¹⁴

Alex took his trusty SR22 through the twisting gap in the Italian Alps up into Aosta's valley field (LIMW). Surrounded by mountains, he managed to creep along a low altitude and, using the GPS, found the airfield just in time. Safely down. But next was the legendary Courchevel.



Italian and French Alps



are beautiful in practice

There were two challenges facing Chris on this leg. First, he had to thread the needle—flying through a high Alpine pass—in order to avoid diverting far southward—and at the same time stay below the Pressure Altitude Restriction. Picking the right way during daylight hours is a little tough—doing so at night took some preparation. And second was the challenge of actually landing at Courchevel's airstrip built right into the side of a mountain—in complete darkness. The airport not only is on a mountainside, but the approach requires a quick curving descent in order to avoid the nearby peaks.

Chris took the PC6 Porter, quickly climbed out of Aosta and, using the GPS, was able to thread the needle well enough. Jeroen had already put in the time to set the route and the preparation paid off. Now for the difficult airmanship part. Chris cut his speed and dropped down into the granite-encircled airspace on approach...slowing with flaps hanging out...judging his descent onto the mountainside. Too high! Go around! But easier said than done—with the "far side" of the airport being solid rock. Happily, the Porter was born and bred in these Alps. Quick ascending turn, avoiding the unseen walls, and then a turn for another approach. This time a bit lower and slower...calibrating the descent onto the field just right...for a successful touchdown. Whew!

¹⁴ Jeroen: While flying over Africa and Europe (and starting in South America) Jan and I had started planning for the Alpine challenge. What route to take, what to do when we would (as now seemed ever more likely) arrive there at night and in bad weather (the forecasts called for low clouds, possibly high winds, and snow for most of Friday and into Sunday over the entire region).

Emboldened with our prior success in the Karakorum we decided to risk it. Create detailed flight-plans and fly the whole thing at night and when needed or possible on automatic pilot. This allowed us to take some rather severe shortcuts, including between Saanen and Ulrichen (a route I flew) scaling an 8200ft high glacier at night.

Courchevel weather was decent on the first approach, with about 3 miles visibility. However, nighttime can be disorienting, especially in high terrain. I made my first approach too high (even for the Porter) and elected to go around. In the few minutes it took to set up for my second approach, the weather noticeably worsened. Visibility dropped to less than a mile and the winds picked up. Not a good thing to happen at a 9000' foot elevation runway with 13000' peaks in the vicinity! The TAWS gauge was invaluable, and with my full faith in that technology, I made a blind approach through the terrain to the short runway. Once I had the runway in sight again and knew I could make the descent, piece of cake. The Porter is such a wonderful STOL machine!

--Chris



**Snowstorm, Dark of Night,
No Problem...**

The next leg, up to Saanen, was something for mountain goats(!). Jan had his trusty P-38 primed and running and, again using the preplanned flight path, edged his way between mountainsides towering above the 8500 ft altitude limit, managed to get through for a final approach into Saanen. The weather now had deteriorated considerably. Teammates lined up on the airfield to mark the way through the milky whiteness, but finals here were still a bit tricky. A normal shallow descent puts one into the side of a high ridge guarding the runway. So Jan had to come in high, dive down in the P-38, and make a dramatic landing in the swirling snowstorm. One could almost hear his heart pounding the TeamSpeak microphone.

Day Seven

Saturday February 25, 2006

Saturday morning, February 24, 2006. (0000Z)

Team AVSIM. LSGK. Saanen, Switzerland.

Then Jeroen to fly from Saanen to Ulrichen. Doing this flight quickly, in "racing" time, required a very quick ascent to climb over the Bernese Alps—picking the right high passes—and then a descent down to the military airfield at the Rhône valley's very end. A dramatic and beautiful flight in clear sunlight. But tonight the peaks were obscured not only by darkness but also by the blinding snow. Jeroen took off, made his way slowly and surely, and put down safely enough in a severe crosswind landing. (He had spent the afternoon and evening constructing these plans himself and was as well-prepared as one could be. Exhausted but prepared.) ... And then—the Duenna was wrong! It showed a daytime takeoff and landing. Clearly something had gone afoul with his system.¹⁵ So Jeroen restarted from Saanen and repeated the entire leg, this time making a secure baton handoff to Chris.

Again in the Pilatus, Chris climbed on his prop to make the high pass and then dropped down over the Lepontine Alps toward Lugano—twisting in from the north rather than flying the longer southward routing. This flight path required not only slipping past granite barriers that threaten to

¹⁵ Gnoopey of SOH was an ace here. The team were exhausted late at night (and early morning in Europe) and simply missed the error. Gnoopey caught the mistake and let the team know immediately—and thus saved the team from finding out much too late that it had an invalid authentication.

scrape both wingtips but also making a sharp turn and steep descent into Lugano at the very end. Not a normal by-the-numbers flight, even under ideal conditions. Tonight was far from ideal. But, again patiently, Chris kept to the flight plan—eyes straining to identify the barriers—until he could descend to the airport. In the event, all went well and the baton went forward. Jan quickly took charge, flying the P-38 at race speed up the Engadin valley past St. Moritz to Samedan (Europe's highest field). The difficulty here is merely keeping to the right valleys and making the turns in good order and then landing at a field that is normally closed in darkness—a task well managed.

Then another tight twisting route through the Italian Alps down into Bolzano—a flight that required great care en route to pick the proper turns because several likely valleys became dead ends under the PAR ceiling. Then a steep circling descent into Bolzano. Happily the weather started to clear so that darkness was the main danger. No problem for Chris in the versatile Porter. And then Jan's Lightning for the faster, but still dangerous, route up to Innsbruck. The peaks that form the walls for the legendary circling approach into Innsbruck (LOWI) were the last barrier—Jan had to climb and clear those walls and then quickly plunge into the airport below. And in his now experienced hands, all went well.

The Alpine Challenge had been met. In a dark driving snowstorm. The team felt pretty good about all this.

Great flying at night in poor weather by the best pilots on the team. As the AVSIM race pilots come on-line for the final tough legs; Chris takes charge and announces that the most experienced veterans will fly the Alps without wingman. Backup pilots are nominated but mostly this is done mostly as an honor. I am sure that our best flyers will bring these legs home and finish the race with a resounding performance. Alex, Chris, Jan, and Jeroen nail the final legs down closing the door on the competing teams. It is a joy to witness. Then a wild free for all flight to Frankfurt to stop the clock.

--Jeff

In what has become a bit of a tradition, Jeroen took the last leg into Frankfurt's EDDF. Almost the entire team was able to gather around, flying alongside Jeroen to the final destination. By the time EDDF loomed ahead, the dark sky was illuminated with the brightly lit names of the AVSIM crew. All went well.



jwenting bringing home the baton

Saturday morning, February 24, 2006. (0000Z)

Team FlightSim. GQPA.

The last bonus before the finish run was Maderia in the Altantic. I don't know how much wine they picked up in the brief stop. But to get there some long legs across the now dark west African and the central Atlantic had to be covered.

N180GS – Ed and codge in Starships headed to GQPA – an interesting airport in Mauritania – 615 nm closer to the coast. There N22CA – Andy tried his hand in the P-51, but Duenna didn't start and he had to pass the baton to his wingman, John_M, who went to GCLA in the Canary Islands.

Ed was back with the baton for the flight to Maderia (GCLA-LPMA) this time in a P-38, with Smitty wide awake and back on for the finish run on wing. N22CA Andy had everything perfect as the team returned to Europe with a landing at LEBZ – Talavera La Real Air Base in Badajoz, Spain. Skyprince covered as wingman for the 600 mile flight.

The race would end with an exciting run through the Alps – a challenge of eight low visibility, high risk airports with terrain issues enough to give any pilot nightmares. Since the Alps are in the Eastern Hemisphere, the 8,500 foot maximum altitude rule would apply to all those flights.

Xiphanopoulous – David – had spend a couple days researching the route and the legs were chosen. The first would be from the Caselle Airport in Torino, Italy – home of the Winter Olympics a few days before – to the mountain valley airport of Aosta, where the Alpine ski competitions had been held.

But before the team could start, the 750 nm from Spain to Italy had to be covered, and Maple One and his P-51H were ready for the challenge, covering the distance in an hour and 51 minutes on the last flight without an altitude restriction.

After my last snooze during the race, the guys were heading into the west of Spain, with the next couple of legs to Torino kind of up in the air (hyuk – hyuk). The total distance from the current destination at LEBZ to LIMF was right under the two hour range limit for the P-51H so I volunteered to fly it, rather than take slower a/c on two shorter legs. There was a little skepticism about whether I'd be able to make it, so one of the guys flew wing headed for a nearer destination just in case. As it happened, I picked up a real nice tailwind and made it to LIMF with about 7 minutes to spare. I arrived during local morning twilight, and we decided to jump right into the Alpine Challenge.

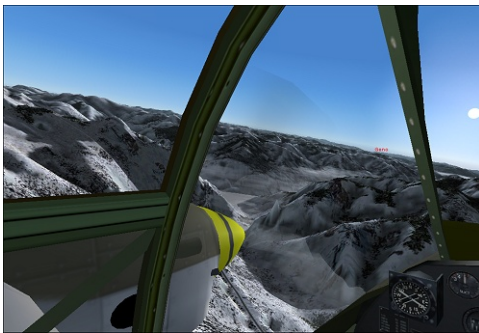
--Maple One

Reggie was waiting on the runway at LIMF for the flight to LIMW with the sun just rising. Flight Sim crashed just as he entered the mountains, but he quickly restarted and took off again – losing only 8 minutes. Though the straight line distance was reported as 34.3 nm, this flight and all the others took almost twice that distance through the valleys and passes of the Alps. Reggie, like most of the rest of the team was flying the P-38 through the Alps.

Oblio covered the short 37 nm jump to one of the world's most infamous and dangerous airports – LFLJ – Courchevel, France. Just 1756 feet of runway with a high mountain wall at the end to make sure you stop. No go-arounds possible at this 6,420 foot elevation airport.

Maple One took the flight to LSGK – Saanen Switzerland after skirting the coast of Lake Geneva. Then Smitty went deeper into the mountains to LSMC – Ulrichen.

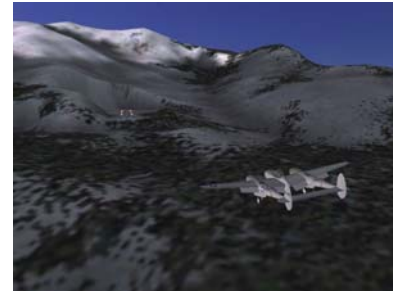
We had parceled out legs to all of our pilots, and my leg was the ‘long’ one from LFLJ to LSGK. I had gotten some practice in on the leg while I was waiting to fly the leg into Torino, so I set up at Courchevel and waited for Oblio to arrive. That was some exciting! The sun was rising higher and higher, getting lighter out by the minute with the baton passing from pilot to pilot with flawless precision! I got a couple of screenshots as Oblio lined up and made a perfect landing at that very difficult airport.... Again, the baton was passed quickly, and I took off in the P-38L. Flying through the Alps in decent visibility that early morning was the highlight of the race for me. I plunked the P-38 down at LSGK real nicely, and the baton made it’s way systematically through the rest of the Challenge, with only one minor hiccup at the end.
--Maple One



N180GS over the Alps

Geno moved the baton farther east to the shores of Lake Lugano – LSZA, where Xiphanopoulous took the leg to LSZS – Samedan. No one stopped to ski on the famous slopes.

Smitty took the baton over the mountains to Bolzano, Italy – LIPB and codge took the flight into Innsbruck, Austria – LOWI – however his flight validation could not be posted.



Oblio approaching Courchevel



...while Maple One waits

Xiph – David reflew the leg in 15 minutes.

The team was done – only one flight left to the finish line. They had completed the Alps Challenge in two hours and one half hours, including reflying one leg – the best of any team in the race.

Reggie was given the honor to carry the baton from LOWI to EDDF – Frankfurt to complete the race, with over a half-dozen wingmen, setting down in the P-38 at 09:13 UTC five days and a little over 16 hours since the start of another incredible journey around the world.

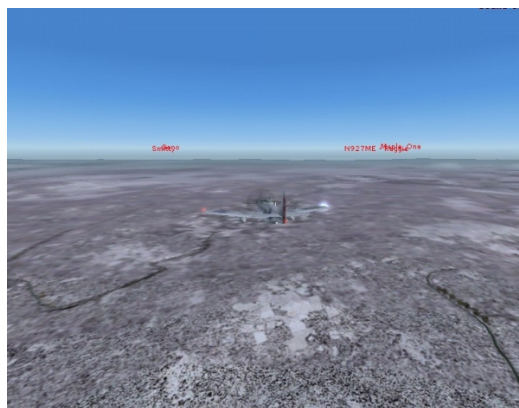
The final leg was not without a little drama. We had learned just how realistic Dave Copley modeled the P-38 including making the gear unsafe if lowered at too high a speed.

As Reggie lined up to land at Frankfurt, two green lights for the mains and a red for the nose gear.

A quick look showed it down. That was a long slow careful landing and rollout to put as little pressure as possible on the nose.



The Final Leg
Reggie and the whole gang



A few hours later all three teams gathered on the Bushnet server for a “Victory Lap” to Tempelhof in Berlin – a fantastic flight after a week of hard, but exciting flying.

Saturday morning, February 24, 2006. (0000Z)
Team Sim-Outhouse.LSZH. Zurich, Switzerland.

ALPINE CHALLENGE.

Moses03 took the first leg of the Alpine Challenge in the P-38L, with Willy flying wingman in the bright red P-38J YIPPEE. They arrived safely at Saanen (LSGK).



Moses03 and Willy, preparing to depart, fist leg



Gnoopey, leaving for LFLJ as Baton-2

Leg two was completed by fliger747 in the F4U-4, flying into Ulrichen (LSMC). Ferror flew wingman in the P-38J. Willy kicked off leg three, taking off for Courchevel, France (LFLJ) in the P-38J, with Gnoopey flying wingman in the P-47M. Willy crashed on approach to this difficult field, passing the baton to his wingman. Mr. Murphy wasn't finished with us yet as Gnoopey accidentally slewed the plane, invalidating the duenna. Ferror re-flew the leg in a DeHaviland DHC-2 Beaver, with fliger747 flying wingman in the F4U-4 Corsair.



Ferror on approach LFLJ, DHC-2



On deck

Panaka completed leg four to Aosta, France (LIMW) in the P-38L. Next it was back into Switzerland for leg five, grumpos completing the flight into Lugano (LSZA) in the Westland Lysander, with Ferror flying wingman in the P-38J.



Gnoopey, final approach to LSZS



Ferror, on approach to LIPB

Leg six took us to Samedan (LSZS). Gnoopey completed this leg in the P-47M, with Panaka flying wingman in the P-38L. Ferror completed leg seven into Bolzano, Italy (LIPB) in the P-38J, with Flyin Bull flying wing in the SA Pioneer.

Gnoopey took leg eight and the final leg of the Alps Challenge, in the P-47M to Innsbruck, Austria (LOWI), with Grumpos flying wingman in the Westland Lysander.

We were almost done! Ferror took the next leg to Coleman AAF, Germany (ETOR) in the P-38J. Flyin Bull flew wingman in the Blackburn Firebrand.

The final official leg of the race was also our final classic flight. Grumpos lead pair of Vickers Vimys, with Gnoopey flying wing, into Frankfurt, Germany (EDDF). We were all quite relieved it was over. It was a long grueling week of desk-flying, and a great job was done by all hands.



**Ferror, landing at ETOR
The final flight of Vimy's
standing by**

Sunday...



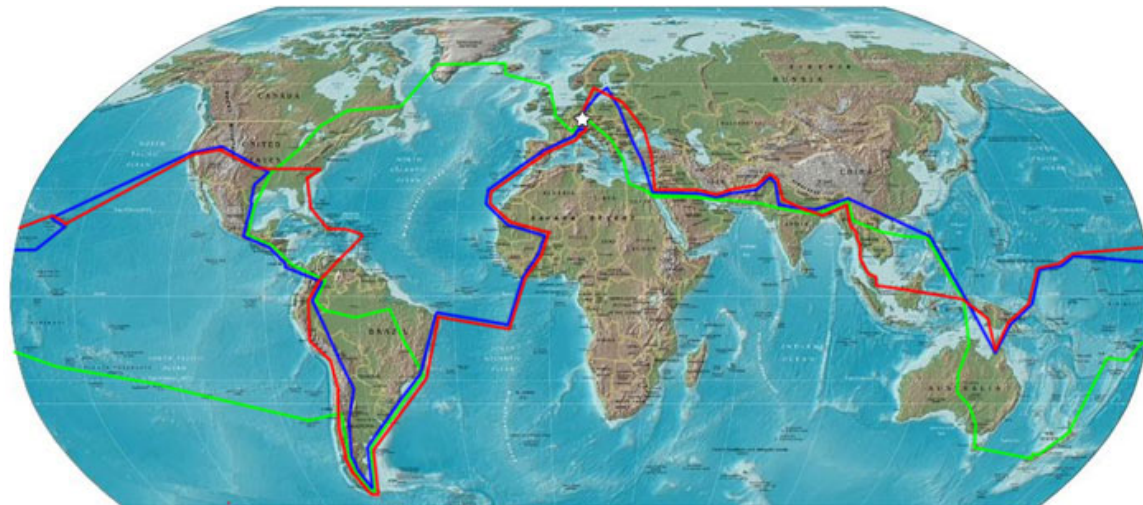
**The skies were alive with the sound of Goonies.
Pilots from Sim-Outhouse, FlightSim and AVSIM gathered
together in a wild crazy MP flight.**

The finale was a wonderful event. Pilots from all three teams gathered at Frankfurt to complete the around the world tour by returning to Berlin. All picked the DC-3—many in different and

colorful liveries. Team Sim-Outhouse had a full contingent, as did FlightSim and AVSIM. Pilots jumped between servers and the skies were filled with beautiful Gooney Birds. Its probably been fifty years since Templehof's tower has seen so many DC-3s in the pattern, lining up to fill both runways in order to get everyone down quickly and safely. Quite a wonderful sight.



Oblio leading the Victory Lap



2006 Round The World Race

Final Results

FlightSim

Legs flown: 82
Miles flown: 36252.12 nm
Average hop length: 442.10 nm
Avg. speed: 272.13 nm/hr
Required aircraft flown: 11
Bonus city hours: 102
Bonus airlift hours: 3.5
Total race time: 27.75 hours

AvSim

Legs flown: 81
Miles flown: 34471.07 nm
Average hop length: 425.57 nm
Avg. speed: 270.86 nm/hr
Required aircraft flown: 11
Bonus city hours: 104
Bonus airlift hours: 4.0
Total race time: 19.3 hours

Sim-outhouse

Legs flown: 82
Miles flown: 34572.49 nm
Average hop length: 421.62 nm
Avg. speed: 251.8 nm/hr
Required aircraft flown: 11
Bonus city hours: 93
Bonus airlift hours: 4.0
Total race time: 40.3 hours

The Banquet

John_M

“What a race, guys! I can't believe we're all this close, it's just amazing! Thanks for an unbelievable week, everyone! Now I'll need about 48 hrs sleep.

Maple One

We all landed at Frankfurt, and having taken second place in a very tight race, were pleased with our team effort.

I have to say that this was the most fun I've ever had with the flight sim ever. I met a great bunch of guys from all over the globe, learned more in one week than I'd learned in the previous year, and had an experience that I'll never forget. Thanks for the great time, guys!

Xiph – David

We finally made it! Congratulations to all the team members for some great days and nights of flying.

Bry Rosier.

As an offline Flight simmer for many years, this was a first and fascinating online introduction to the big wide world of online flying with a competitive edge. I loved every minute of it mate, and for next year and any other interim tournaments I will be more than happy to help and be involved. Well worth booking time off work to dedicate more time..."my main mistake" this time

around. Myself and Harvey are always flying around the world in different aircraft and scenarios to gain more experience.

The RTWR2006 was a superbly organised and structured event imo and team AVSIM thoroughly deserved the win due to dedicated pilots and superb route planning and rostering. I personally enjoyed all my Baton and wingman legs. Only wish I could have been available 4 more and following my teammates in their quests also. The only problem I found was the Duenna tool, A great piece of monitoring equipment but the constantly changing updates (particularly in reference to the flight log data changes, caused a few heart-racing moments when checking validity after landing before freeing the baton for the next leg :)

The DC-3 and Classic aircraft legs were a great addition, I had the honour of taking the VEGA for the Baton run, a pioneering flight 4 me in this aircraft. The rush of seeing your teammates waiting for your safe arrival at the destination airfield was one of the highlights personally for me. The AVSIM were very well organised, very supportive, very friendly, and great fun to be amongst. Unfortunately I had ISP problems "now resolved" during the build up and race so couldn't be online as much as I wished. Roll on the next event, and well done to all involved on a superbly executed race. Cheers Bry

N180GS – Ed

Congrats on this years race, and we'll get 'em next year. Many DC3's and I vote for something like this to begin the race next year... much fun having the teams on the same server for an event.

Been a blast, either way we came out...."

N3306TX – Mike

The Berlin Air lift was fun.

CB Taylor.

I thought the Airlift was a great idea to get the entire team involved in the race up front. It was a fairly easy task, I thought, and an excellent way to get teammates from all levels of experience involved. I thought the veterans at AVSIM did a great job organizing the team into the various supply groups, and scheduling to maximize the bonus for that effort. I really enjoyed the online aspect flying on Gazer's server and TeamSpeak. This is the first time I'd ever interacted with anyone else "live" in any kind of simulation or game, and it really brought out some of the enjoyable aspects of FS-ACOF.

Codge

Being too keen to make up for lost opportunities and the lack of a proper checklist saw me being into much of a hurry. I tried to fly the freeware Starship that was unfamiliar to me and very unrealistic I thought and I crashed somewhere near Indonesia on approach. In the second half of the race particularly, you are pretty tired after maybe three days of very little sleep the most basic of things can get forgotten. I had by now resolved myself not to fly unless absolutely necessary and just to scout for others and learn as much as I could so that I could make a real contribution in 2007.

Hamish.

There was quite a controversy on TeamSpeak one night when it was discovered by one teammate that the other teams had not been using full realism settings on many of the their flights. With particular attention to the vintage flights, this got some team members seeing red, calling for heavy penalties to be dealt out, while others on the team were pushing for understanding and for

the race to remain competitive no matter what had transpired. I think cooler minds prevailed as no penalties were applied for the transgressions and I believe most of Team AvSim felt that the lack of realism settings were honest oversights.

The race overall took a heavy toll on our marriages, loved ones, lives, jobs, and sleep patterns. Many of us, I'm sure, are still trying to repair real life, but only so that we may participate in next year's RTW race.

Jozef

In retrospective, I had a great time and don't regret having joined the team. Next year, Deo Volente, I will participate again. I met some familiar friends again and made the acquaintance with some other nice fellows.

Reggie

Another fantastic journey - new challenges - new friends - new flying skills. This race is the greatest thing in FS in my opinion and I'm very thankful of the opportunity to participate with such a fantastic group of pilots and supporters !!!!! Thank you for the privilege gentlemen!!!!

Harvey

From first reading about the RTWR on AVSIM a few weeks before the race, to studying the rules, getting involved in practices and finally the race itself, I can honestly say this has been the best pc/multilayer experience I have been involved in. For the last six years I have been heavily involved in FPS games and have played and led a few top level "clan wars", but this experience beats that hands down. My personal flying skills have increased significantly over the course of just a few weeks and has made me a real flight sim addict. But its more the team effort and camaraderie that developed that was the greatest thing about it. I can honestly say that it wouldn't have been too disappointing if we'd lost as it really was great fun just being involved. I like to think I lightened the mood and kept spirits up a bit when it was becoming a bit of a "grind", and I really can't wait 'til next years race. Well worth the 3 days holiday and 2 days off sick that I took.

Andy

With a sigh I sat back against the seat, something I had done a surprising number of times over the past week. I closed my eyes and let my thoughts drift back to the events of the last several days. We had done it. Flown all the way around the world.

Pushing the throttle lever forward just a touch, I looked around to make sure the way was clear. But I knew it was. The race was over. The word had come back from Germany less than three hours before, they'd made it in while I was resting. Reggie's P-38 had touched down in Frankfurt with the baton after the final run from Innsbruck.

A few light touches on the rudder pedals and I had back taxied down to the end of the runway and spun my little Mustang around to line up. I opened the throttle, and waited until the tail started to lift up before easing the stick back and slowly climbing away from the runway. Pulling the landing gear up, I switched on the autopilot.....So now here I am, with it almost over. A couple of our guys made it in to Frankfurst, where we'll make the last hop back to Berlin together as a group. I left my shuttle parked at the terminal, and believe me I'll be glad to get back home and sleep in my own bed instead of pulling into the parking area at these airports to doze in the cockpit.

I'm just half an hour out of Frankfurt myself, and this time I get to enjoy the scenery, like the Alps not too far off my right wing, rather than worrying about the race.

We had a great run. Did we come first? It doesn't really matter. Winning would be nice, but what we really enjoyed was the camaraderie, the chance to enjoy flying together, the chance to work as a team.

And will we be back next year? Absolutely. There will be some new faces, and some of the veteran pilots won't be back. But the team will still be together in some form. What about flying together between now and then? I know I'll be doing lots, and I hope the others will come out and join me whenever they can, both the ones I've known a long time and the new faces as well.

Hang on, it's time to begin my descent, let me adjust the autopilot.

And so that's pretty much our story, although others will offer it from their point of view as well over the next few days.

As for me I'm still looking forward to that bed I mentioned before.

So thanks to the memories one and all, I'll see you in the skies!