

The Cape Hatteras Flying Service
Box 97 Buxton-on-Cape-Hatteras
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The Editors, SOUTHERN ACCENT
327 Avenida Alcazar
Coral Gables, Florida

Gentlemen,

I would like to interest you in an article based upon an actual experience, a flight from Key West to Miami.

This was not just an ordinary flight.

In 1936 Key West was an isolated sort of place, stuck way out on an island chain dead-end and separated from Miami by 180 miles of superstition and catastrophe. Hurricane and business depression combined to hold off the inevitable recognition of this beautiful tropical island.

It was a small town. Its only attractions were Havana tobacco, Raoul's Place and Earnest Hemmingway.

I was a shiny new 2nd Lt. in the Air Force, complete with silver wings and brightly polished ego. On a 30-day leave from the 1st Pursuit Group, at Selfridge Field, Michigan, I was visiting my best friend, a young doctor in the Public Health Service, stationed at the Naval Base at Key West.

The enchantment of azure waters, the phenomenon of fighting game fish, the novelty of sun-tanning in mid-winter --- all were impressive, but something seemed lacking, until I saw it!

"It" was really something! A dented, rusty little airplane. Belonging to a Cuban, or rather an ex-Havanan, named Ramon, this little aircraft had already served a Spartan purpose --- bringing Ramon from Havana to Key West, 90 miles over open water in the dark of the night and under circumstances even darker, involving revolution and a change of regime in Cuba.

You've heard of a "built-in headwind?" Well, this little flying machine had a built-in jet stream!

You probably never heard of a Taylor Cub. Ask any teen-aged boy about this fore-runner to the modern Piper and he will react in one of two ways; either call you a Square or tell you he has a model of it in his antique collection.

In those days Pan American Airways ran a sporadic schedule into Key West, en route to Havans, perhaps twice a week. They also maintained a field and hangar, although I never caught sight of another land plane during the month I used the field. The Cub and I and Doc had the field, the hangar, and, for that matter, Key West and the Jewel Islands, all to ourselves.

Having freedom of the skies over Key West and gaining confidence in the little 40-horse engine with each succeeding flight it was only natural that we should invade Boca Chica. Doc and I flew over and landed on the golf course. This did not produce the enthusiastic welcome we had expected for the tail-skid plowed a furrow down the middle of the fairway.

But when the night-flying phase came on the following week, we delighted the fun-seekers at Raoul's by buzzing over the place, trailing a staccato sound and a faint trace of the perfume of the snake that had already bitten us -- most probably at Raoul's, earlier!

I wanted to fly the Cub to Miami. Doc had business there and Ramon concurred without wincing. This Ramon was one of the nicest guys you could ever find. Besides, he said, I might just as well get the Cub licensed while in Miami. This business about no license was news to me but, reflecting something of Ramon's composure, I indicated accord with the proceedings with a somewhat Tex-Mex-tinged "Si, Senor."

The flight to Miami, the main part of the story, adds up to a bit of mystery, complete with denouement, which is really no "big deal", causes reader to come rather abruptly and satisfactorily to the end, leaves him with a smile, or perhaps evn a chuckle.

I believe there is a singularity about this little piece which would fit in with your purpose and editorial policy.

May I write it for you?

Yours sincerely,

Franklin M. "Bill" Cochran
Franklin Miller Cochran.