



International Bücker Meeting

31/08/2018 until 02/09/2018

Airfield Thun, Switzerland

Thun, 23 July 2018

MEDIA BULLETIN 06

Flying to The Cape of Good Hope by a Bücker

36 days, 11,200 km, 18 countries: Ingo Presser finished the Vintage Air Rally 2016 to South Africa with his Bücker Jungmann D-EEEEK in second place. At the end of August, he and his airplane will be guests at the International Bücker Meeting in Thun – and they will tell us about their great adventure.

The Bücker is for sure not an airplane for long distances; in case of the D-EEEEK of Ingo Presser, Germany, at least 270 miles in one go were possible, thanks to an additional fuel tank. However, the former airline pilot tackled the challenge of this long-distance adventure by the end of 2016. Due to freak weather, Presser could only start almost one month later than planned. In fall, he finally flew from Borkenberge, Germany, over the Alps to Crete, and then within 36 flying days from the north to the south of Africa: 18 countries, 11,200 km, until the South African City of Cape Town at the Cape of Good Hope. And, good hope was exactly what Ingo Presser and his co-pilot Bob Campbell needed more than once for the Vintage Air Rally.

If flying in Europe in an open biplane is a small adventure, flying in Africa with a vintage airplane is for sure a big adventure. The start was already a challenge, because to reach Egypt meant to fly 240 miles over the open ocean. If the motor stops at a flight level of 6,500 feet, within 6 minutes, the pilots will become long-distance-swimmers.

However, on the way to South Africa opportunities for parties arrive quite often: In Cairo, the second stage location, school girls welcome the crew members of the Vintage Rally by presenting red roses to them. Furthermore, a convoy of vintage vehicles patrols in front of the parked airplanes. In the evening, the British ambassador invites all to a dinner party – it will not be the last one on that long journey. This time, Ingo Presser and Bob Campbell must renounce: Their luggage did not find its way to Cairo, and this means for the Gala-dinner, they are underdressed. And, just to reveal, only in the City of Cape Town the two pilots would be able to get really dressed up again.

Time-consuming stopovers

The third leg is the first one where pilots need to fill up their tank during the flight, because the distance of 331 miles is longer than the Rally members can manage in one go. In Hurgada the refuelling of 39 planes takes more than five hours. When the sun sets, you cannot think of flying on to Luxor – and the pilots get a first taste of what is simply every day life in so many African countries.

Nature pushes man and machine to their limits, e.g. during the 8th leg from Sudan to Ethiopia, a distance of 470 miles has to be covered: Even in the high altitude of 5,500 feet, it is uncomfortably warm. The refilling of the tanks in Ed Damazin, the last town in Sudan, passes as what you fear to expect in such a place out in the bush: The hand pump works extremely slowly (but it works!). Even when the legs get shorter, e.g. the next flight is “only” 220 miles, the topography is demanding high claims: High mountains have to be overflowed. The machines, heavily loaded up, must climb up to 9000 feet, where a mountain ridge blocks the way and there is no other way around the mountains except South-Sudan. However, there is still the possibility to get small round holes which can perforate the wings or the fuselage.



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Held down at the airport

The first radio communication with the next airport is rather disappointing: Gambella ATC advises: There is no agreement for flying in the Ethiopian air space. With a sight to the fuel scale, which shows the fuel supply is dwindling, Ingo Presser makes unmistakably sure that there is no alternative. During the bumpy landing, the edge of the left wing and the right aileron touch softly the ground. However, this is not enough: As soon as the motor stops, at least a dozen well-armed soldiers, policemen and security officers surround the airplanes. All pilots are escorted to the airport building, all electrical and electronic equipment have to be handed in and the passports as well. Soon, all members of the Vintage Air Rally are interned in the waiting room of the airport. In the hall it is hot and sticky; anyhow, enough drinking water is served. Otherwise, it is time to wait.

After all, the Ethiopian state authority shows some heart for the precious ancient airplanes: When a heavy thunder storm comes up, the order is given that all airplanes can be put into a large empty hall nearby. After a night in the waiting room with bad food and sticky air, the prosecutor tells us, that all embassies of the newcomers have been informed. However, an outcome is not in sight and another day passes uneventfully.

It is an US pilot who gets a flash of inspiration: He has hidden another mobile phone in his airplane. With this phone he can get in touch with an allied US senator, who is friends with the then foreign minister, John Kerry. And suddenly, all goes very fast: After a second night on the luggage conveyor, the next morning is an airplane landing, coming from the capital city Addis Abeba, bringing high security civil servants of the government. Each pilot is examined. After that, all crew members are released the same day, under the condition to fly straight on to Lokichoggio, the next station in the neighbouring state of Kenia. A few days later the pilots fly past the snow covered top of Kilimanjaro, whose peak is 5895 m high – what a spectacular view. Other wonders of nature wait for the Rally members such as the Serengeti national park or the Victoria waterfalls.

A festival – and new turbulences

On the 9 December 2016, a relaxing day is on the program, but it won't be very quiet. For once, a positive surprise is on the agenda: Ingo Presser celebrates his 72nd birthday in a typical English club, with a bar made of precious ancient tropical woods in the Old English style. A few days later he gets once again into heavy turbulences: The stage destination lays south behind a mountain ridge, where a violent thunderstorm breaks over the west end as well as over the east side of that ridge. The flight between the two thunderstorms fails. Therefore, Presser tries to fly around the thunderstorm in the west, but his airplane is caught by heavy turbulences. Being well equipped with his Bücker which is authorised for acrobatic flight, the Bücker resists the strain of the storm. By stepping on the gas, Presser escapes the thunderstorm, flies against crosswinds and finally lands safely on his third from last stage destination.

A bit melancholic, the last leg is tackled on the 16 December to Stellenbosch near the City of Cape Town. Punctually at the appointed time, Ingo Presser is landing his D-EEEEK as the first airplane of the Vintage Air Rally in Stellenbosch. In the overall classification, after meeting the total flight time, the calculated fuel consumption as well as the meeting of the airway, Ingo Presser and his Australian co-pilot reach finally the great second place.



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