

There I was at 7,500 feet

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Ercoupe N2567H

I was living in Jacksonville, Florida, in the early 1970s working as an electrical engineer for the local electric utility. Several of us engineers were aviation buffs, and I had earned my private ticket in the late 60s. We couldn't resist, and four of us bought a somewhat bedraggled 1946 CD model Ercoupe with no radio. We quickly put a radio in when the airport installed a tower, because the tower made it clear they were tired of phone calls and light signals.

At the time, I had a roommate, Roger, who was a very poorly paid entry-level banker. Roger had no money, so I let him sleep on my couch until he earned enough to get his own place.

Roger's attractive fiancée lived in New Orleans and he very much wanted to visit her. Unfortunately, it was 12 hours each way in his not so healthy VW. I volunteered to take us in my newly acquired, but well used Ercoupe. It was four hours each way, and we agreed to split the cost of the gas. The other part of the deal was that I got to sleep on her couch while we were in NOLA.

Great VFR flight over to Lakefront, except for a flat tire on a 1945 vintage tube during a gas stop. The FBO pumped it up and it was magically repaired. It was a fun weekend, especially for Roger.



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The return VFR flight was routine until, at 7500 feet over Lake City, Florida (yes an Ercoupe will go that high) Roger tells me he "has to go". I explained that we were almost back to Jacksonville, and there wasn't anywhere to stop before we got there.

Roger said, really loudly "I've got to GO!"

Not so much as a soda can in the airplane.

I slowed down to about 60 mph and pulled down the windows. On an Ercoupe, that makes a convertible. Roger kneeled on the bench seat, and turned to the side as I held him in by the back of his belt. Roger was 6'8", and a lot of him stuck out over the top of the windshield into the slipstream, which was cold. When he was finished he turned back, sat down, and put his seatbelt back on. We then promptly descended for our approach into Jacksonville and were soon on the ground. He must have been desperate, as I later tried to get into the position he was in when I was on the ground, and could not do it.

Roger wasn't interested in flying anymore, which I never quite understood. After all, it was his fault he didn't go to the bathroom before we left; not the airplane's. Besides, he didn't have to drive 24 hours in a VW bug.

This is a true story! Roger was only 44 when he passed away. I told the story at his funeral. Somehow, the comic vision of lanky Roger relieving himself literally in mid-air just fit the effort to remember Roger's humor and sense of adventure. ✈