

National Aeronautics

In This Issue

Mars Rovers

Earn

Accolade

Page 2

NAA's First

Century

Page 4

Viewpoint

Page 5

Book Review

Page 6

"Vijay 10"

Wins

Mackay

Trophy

Page 8

Autogyro Sets New Mark For Distance

FLYING WITHOUT stopping for over five hours in a home-built autogyro may sound like too much of a good thing, except in this case, the pilot--Andy Keech of Washington, D.C.--earned himself a place in the record books for his effort.

In his Little Wing LW-5 aircraft, nicknamed "Woodstock," Keech turned in a figure of 617 miles as the longest "Distance Without Landing" for autogyros in its weight class (less than 1,100 pounds) and any autogyro, regardless of weight. At takeoff from North Little Rock, Arkansas, the autogyro weighed 1,088 pounds, including 50 gallons of fuel. Keech touched down the same day--February 22, 2004--at Hickory Regional Airport in North Carolina, after a flight of five hours and 38 minutes. Most of the trip, he flew at altitudes of 11,000 to 13,500 feet.



Keech and "Woodstock"

An autogyro, also known as a gyrocopter or gyroplane, isn't a very common machine, even though it has been in use since the early 20th century. It uses rotary-wing technology, like a helicopter, to generate lift. However, the rotor is not powered by an engine; rather an autogyro, like Keech's, usually uses a propellor to move the aircraft forward. The forward motion produced by the propellor causes the rotor to spin, creating the lift that is usually produced by an aircraft's wings.

Although his route took him over the hills of Tennessee and the mountains of North Carolina, Keech says he did not have a lot of time for sightseeing, as he "was busy with time and distance calculations, navigation, and fuel management." Keech said he was extremely happy with his aircraft's performance.

"Woodstock made exceptional time, and I spent the last hour regretting that I had not aimed at setting a longer distance for her to cover," Keech said. "The official requirement is that, before leaving, you state the distance to be flown as well as naming the destination airport. Little did I know that I would land with two hours of fuel remaining. Enough for more than another 200 nautical miles. But a bird in the hand is good enough."

Previously, the record in this category was held by an Englishman, Barry Jones, who flew an autogyro 585 miles without landing in 2003.

Andy Keech has been in the news before; last October, he took off in the Little Wing on a transcontinental flight from Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, to San Diego, California, and back to Kitty Hawk, setting speed records for an autogyro on both the westbound and eastbound legs. He averaged 10 miles per hour (with stops) going out and 20 miles per hour coming back. Including the stops, it took him 19 days to complete the round trip.