

My good friend Stuart invited me along for a ride on his trip from PIE to Bangor (BGR), Maine, which was his first day of his multiple day trip to Kenya in a brand new Cessna 208B Caravan he was delivering to its new owner. For those of you who don't know Stuart, he is about the best instructor you could ever have and was mine for a part of my training. Since then, Stuart has been transporting planes around the world, and whenever he is in town, I try to get with him to listen to his stories and learn from his experiences.

The plan was to meet in PIE at 9 and start on out. I expected that I would be able to fly some of the time, learn a ton and even get some IFR time in, but I wasn't completely sure how much, nor did I care, I was excited about the trip and excited about flying a big, new, turbine airplane. After getting a late start, we loaded up at 10:30 at PIE for the start of our trip. Stuart's plan was to sit left seat for the first leg, then put me in left seat for the second leg. I wasn't arguing especially since by this time, my excitement was turning in to nervousness, since I was a little intimidated by the size of this beast. The other part of the plan was to fly VFR to EYF (Elizabeth Town, NC) and then IFR the second leg. Stuart started the engines, what a sweet sound listening to a turbine start up and knowing you were going to be flying her. We then taxied out to the runway, lined up on 35R and pushed the power forward with the brakes on to watch the engine gauges spool up to make sure we didn't have any problems. The feeling of power was great. He then released the brakes and off we went. As soon as we were up, Stuart handed me the controls. They were heavy, as was the rudder. When I commented about this, Stuart showed me all the trim control we had. We had elevator, rudder and even aileron trim, which was great because if your fuel is unbalanced, it makes a big difference (I think you can put 200 gallons in each tank, that's over 1300 lbs each side!). We stayed under class B, so there we were, a big beast flying at 1000 ft and 160kts, I'm sure it was a great site from the ground. We picked up flight following around Jacksonville and then were dropped off just north of there. All through the trip I was looking at the checklists (including emergency and in air engine re-starts), learning about performance charts of a turbine engine and learning about the GPS instruments. Stuart also mentioned the price tag of this bird, which was \$1.67M. When it came time to land, Stuart asked me if I wanted to do it. I said I did, but that I was a little nervous being I was in a big plane (and expensive). He told me, just keep it fast (90 kts.) and flair a little high since we are a lot higher than the 172 I'm used to and there would be plenty of runway. I would guess the 172 floor is about 2 ft off the ground, while the 208 is about 4.5. Doesn't seem like a lot, but when you climb up there, I bet it's like going from a 4 door sedan to a tractor trailer rig. EYF is a non-towered airport and when we were about 20 minutes out Stuart called and talked to the FBO owner, who is also a friend, and told him we were coming in and asked if he had some fuel. He did, so in we came. About 12 minutes out, we started our descent at 1000 ft per minute. Right before I turned final at 120kts I dropped 10 degrees of flaps, then after turning final, 20 degrees went in, then when I cleared the fence, the flaps went to 40 degrees. When you put in 40 degrees of flaps, the nose on the plane seems like it wants to pitch straight up. It was all I could do to push on the control to keep the nose down. I flared early, and was using a lot of runway when Stuart commented that I would need to land eventually (a little sarcastic if you ask me). I landed mains first, with the nose a little lower than I had wanted, then I held the nose off for a while. After putting the nose down, Stuart started using beta on the throttle to slow

us down even more. If you've never been in a plane that can reverse its prop, it's a great feeling, no standing on the brakes to make a taxi way, just reverse the prop and the plane will stop in no time, no stress, very easy. You can even use it to reverse the plane out of a tight spot, but we didn't get to do that. Stuart then taxied the plane to the fuel depot where we proceeded to take on 400 gallons of fuel, 200 in the ferry tank and about 100 in each wing. That topped off the wings, and only filled the ferry tank half way. It was now around 2, and we were hungry, so we filled our bellies with FBO food, which at this FBO wasn't too bad. I filed an IFR flight plan for Stuart direct to BGR and we headed out to the plane.

Climbed back in the plane, now with me in the left seat and I initiated the startup procedure. 19 steps if I remember correctly, one of which Stuart leaned over to do, in case there was a problem, which if there was, could toast an engine very quickly. These turbines seem really easy to start and they sound really good. I then proceeded to taxi to the take-off end of the runway, again using beta to slow the plane down when needed. Our run-up was another dozen or more steps and we were ready to depart. After doing our radio calls, I lined up on the end of the runway and held the brakes while I throttled up the engines and watched the gauges. When I couldn't hold her back anymore, I let off the brakes and started down the runway, increasing the power until it was where we wanted it to be. At 75 kts, I pulled her off the ground and up we went. Called the local center and we were cleared IFR as filed direct to BGR. They put us up to 4000 ft. for a while and I had the opportunity to punch through my first real cloud. It was a really weird feeling. Here you are doing 165 kts (190 miles per hour) and about to run in to a cloud. I know I was supposed to be watching the instruments, but I couldn't help looking at the window while we penetrated and had all the clouds rushing by so fast. When the thrill was over and we were bouncing around in the cloud, I was all over the sky, 100 ft high, 200 ft low, 10 degrees left, 10 degrees right, then out the other side. Stuart, in his calm British accent said something to the effect of "I think we need to work on your technique", I didn't disagree. For the next cloud I was ready, head down looking at the instruments, but still had the fast sensation in my peripheral vision with the clouds going by. I did better, but wasn't really used to the HSI and was only a little better than the first time. Stuart then brought up the flight director, which consists of two yellow triangles to the left and right of a main orange triangle. The object of the "game" is to "fly" the orange triangle where the yellow triangles tell you to. Yeah, right. I think I did worse than the first time with nothing. After a few more tries, I was really getting used to this new "game" and was able to keep the plane right on track going in and out of clouds. I was actually starting to have fun. We were then cleared all the way to 9000 ft. for the rest of the flight once we were clear of some airspace and now we were above the clouds. I was still flying IFR and using the flight director and with no turbulence, I was getting pretty good at it. Especially with the plane all trimmed out, I could almost fly hands off. Stuart didn't let me get too comfortable and in his easy going manner, started asking me questions, or having me look something up in the manual, or on the GPS and every time he did that, I would end up 15 to 20 degrees off course, or 200 ft high, or something. He would then remind me that I needed to divide my attention in order to not mess up so bad when I was doing something other than flying. It was a great lesson that he continued to do for the entire rest of the flight. He also gave me a tip that it would be easier to use my

feet to nudge the plane a few degrees right and left. He showed me and then I practiced it. I have to admit, I wasn't very good at it and I still need a lot more practice, but the practicality of being able to use your hands for something else, while steering the plane with your feet is a great idea and I will continue to practice. At this point in time we are now around New Jersey and for some reason ATC was going to route us out over the water to the east. We started doing that, then decided since the weather was now clear with little to no clouds, that we would cancel IFR and continue VFR direct. We notified ATC, climbed to 9500 ft and went VFR. ATC kept us in flight following for the rest of the trip, so the only difference what we were 500 feet higher and going direct instead of all over the place. It was nice. The sun was starting to set now and we were to the west of Boston. We would get and hear reports of other plane locations all the time, there was a ton, and you would see some of the planes, especially commercial, flashing their lights to be seen better. I thought that was a great idea and I tucked it in my mind for later use. We also heard a gentleman who was asking ATC what the altitude and direction of a plane at his 12 o'clock was. ATC claimed there was no other plane. The man persisted and stated that he had one in site. My first thought was that I was going to see a UFO, but after a second, Stuart said that it was probably just a star, and no sooner did he say it, than another pilot came on and said the same thing over the radio. I would expect the first gentleman was pretty embarrassed, and I know I would be. Stuart and I talked about that for a while, since we had a really clear sky with lots of stars, lots of boats on the Atlantic off to our right, and it was really hard to tell what they were, planes, boats, stars, UFOs, etc. With the sun set behind us, there was still some light in the sky, and we got a call that there was another Caravan that would be climbing through our altitude heading south as we were heading north. I picked him up easily and told ATC I had him in sight. When he said he was still looking, I turned on my landing lights and heard, "Thanks, traffic in sight" from the other pilot. Made it a little easier for him to see me, which was comforting for me. So now we've been flying for about 5½ hours from EYK and I've had nothing to drink. As you can imagine, I've now de-hydrated myself to the point where I've got a nauseas headache and I almost can't wait for us to be on the ground. So I started drinking some water. It was too little, too late. My head was pounding and it was time for me to land this plane, at night, behind a C130 heavy that was on a long IFR final. Did I mention this plane is worth \$1.67M? We put the plane in a 1000ft per minute descent, which wasn't so bad, got down to 2000 ft pretty quickly and slowed to 500 ft per minute since we would have to extend our final to clear the wake turbulence of a C130. I went through the pre-landing checklist, dropped 10 degrees of flaps and made my base to final turn at about 1000 ft and kept it wide to stay out of the wake turbulence from the C130. The 4 light VASI had 1 red light, I was very happy. Dropped flaps to 20 degrees and I followed the VASI down showing 2 red and 2 white most of the time. As I got close, I saw the third red and give it some throttle. Crossed the threshold and dropped the flaps to 40 degrees again and again had to lean on the yolk to keep the nose down. I flared early again, but not so high and kept the nose up. During the flair, I heard the stall warning start to go off, and as I lowered the nose slightly, the mains touched down. It was a beautiful landing if I do say so myself. I then put the nose wheel down and put the prop in beta to slow us down and get off the taxi way. Stuart then taxied us to the tie-down. When I got out of the plane my head was still pounding, but I was in a great mood from having a great flight. I took some aspirin, another bottle of water, and then we went

for dinner. I couldn't eat much for dinner, except soup and a Guinness. We talked about my flying, the flight, what I learned and what I needed to work on. It was a great way to end a great day. 2 beers later, my headache was finally gone, and the day was done. We called it a night.

The next morning I bid farewell to Stuart and wished him the best on the rest of his trip as I headed to the airport for a commercial flight. I went through Chicago back to Tampa, and I swear my landings were much better than either of the two landing done by the professionals. Maybe I'll give them some tips next time?

Thanks Stuart for the fun, friendship and the lessons. I really enjoyed the flight.