Squawk Talk

by Kas Thomas

MOUNTAIN FLYING isn't everybody's cup of gypsum, but—whether because of the splendid scenery, or because I fly too often without an oxygen mask—I always find the experience exhilirating. Especially when it can be done with somebody who knows the topography to a tree.

On the way back from a recent trip to the Left Coast, I had a chance to RON with longtime *LPM* sympathizer (and Vail habitue) Barry Stott, now head of his own Part 135 outfit in Telluride, Colorado. Barry met me one balmy Tuesday in April at the Combs-Gates complex on Stapleton's south ramp. Accompanying him was a sheriff.

"Kas, this is Bill Masters," Barry explained as we shook hands. "We'll be going down to Fremont County to pick up a prisoner and transport him to Montrose. It's only a few minutes out of our way."

"No problem," I replied, grinning the wan grin of the recently discharged. Business is business, after all. In the Part-135 trade, you don't turn down last-minute odd jobs. (And far be it for me to interfere with state correctional activities.)

Introductions (and preflight) completed, we strapped ourselves into Two Mike Charlie, Barry's backcountry workhorse: a '72 Turbo Aztec, renovated throughout, with single-piece windshield, Bendix radar, Silver Crown panel, and Texas Instruments Loran. Yes, *Loran, in Colorado*: Barry routinely uses it for primary VFR navigation all over the Centennial State. As we booted the system on Denver's ramp, the reception display came up in the 800s (a readout of 999 is perfect; anything down into the 600s, usable), and as Barry poked correction factors into the set, he confided that the TI unit would get us to within a tenth of a mile of Fremont County's windsock —which it in fact later did.

"Getting these engines to start, hot, is a real pain," Barry pointed out, changing subjects. The OAT was around 80; density altitude had to be 8,000 feet or more. Barry had left the dipstick doors open (for cooling) until just before boarding, but of course that wouldn't be enough to preclude a hot-start.

Barry's procedure, which met with excellent success, was to hit the boost pump momentarily with mixture rich, then crank (throttle cracked and mixture in idle cutoff) until the engine came to life, which would take from 10 to 20 blades of the two-bladed prop. (At this point, the mixture would be adjusted to the cruise-lean range to keep the engine running.) The essence of the procedure seemed to be: *Keep it lean, and keep cranking until it starts.* And it worked. In the next day and a half, I never saw Barry flood an engine, and I never saw an engine fail to start using this technique.

Within a few minutes, we were rolling down Denver's Two Six Left, manifold pressure at 33 inches. Lifting off about 3,000 feet down the tarmack, we tucked rubber and, turning 90 degrees, made a beeline for Pike's Peak, 50 miles due south.

Barry's voice crackled over my David Clarks: "We've been noticing a slight manifold pressure problem with the right engine. Haven't been able to figure it out. See how the manifold pressure increases with every airspeed buildup, and decreases in the climb? We've checked filters, alternate air, and a few other things. We're still trying to get a fix on it."

I played with the throttles and studied the GEMs.

"You know, we topped the left engine after that valve broke," Barry remarked (see "The Engine Clinic," June '87). "We just got done replacing the left turbo, too. The compressor looked good at first, after the valve crunch, so we kept it in service. But it started disintegrating about 10 hours later, so we figure the wheel must've gotten damaged somehow."

I couldn't find any big problem with the right manifold pressure—just some twitchiness, and a tendency to lag the left engine in climb. It could be a million things; most likely, a prematurely closing wastegate. "It's not acting up for you," Barry said, frustrated. "Of course," I noted. "It'll wait till I'm gone to act up again."

THERE WERE AFTERNOON buildups all over the area; we turned on the RDR-160. "Ever take Archie Trammell's radar course?" Barry asked. No, I said. "A *wonderful* course—unbelievably good. He teaches you things about radar you just never find anywhere else. Like zeroing the tilt: Everybody thinks that with the tilt set to zero, you've got zero tilt, right? The dish is pointing straight ahead, right? Wrong. Most installations are way out of calibration. But then you've also got the problem that you're flying at difference angles of attack at different airspeeds. And in a climb, you're looking up, not straight out."

Barry fooled with the tilt knob. Mountains loomed just ahead. "Right now we're quite a bit lower than some of those peaks up ahead," Barry went on. "If you know how to work the tilt, you can separate weather from mountaintops, and mountaintops from your airplane." We were flying under a scattered-to-broken layer, and *virga* were visible under many of the