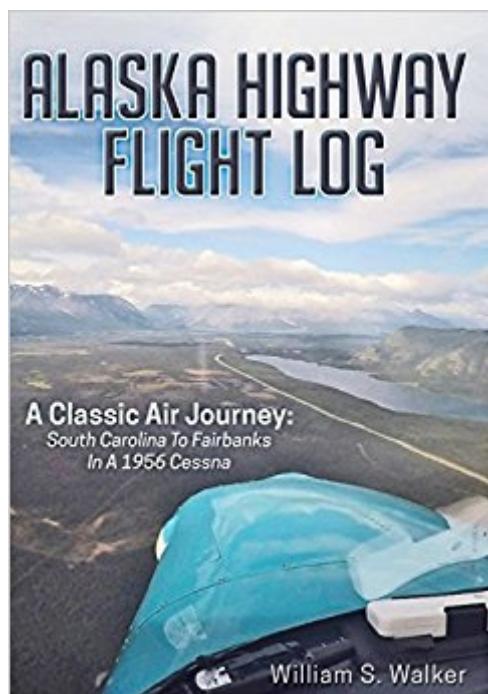


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# Alaska Highway Flight Log: A Classic Air Journey: South Carolina To Fairbanks In A 1956 Cessna



## Synopsis

In the summer of 2015 aviation writer William Walker, joined by fellow pilot Albert Finocchiaro, flew from coastal South Carolina to Fairbanks, Alaska, in Walker's 1956 tailwheel Cessna 172. Flying low and slow up through the American heartland, across Canada and along the famed 1,387-mile Alaska Highway and then back, the two pilots completed a 7,000-mile flying journey of discovery. Walker's detailed, daily flight notes form the heart of his book, *Alaska Highway Flight Log*. The book was written to provide in extended form, the details of a cross-continent journey that is at or near the top of most general aviation pilots' travel wish lists. The *Alaska Highway Flight Log* began as a five-part series of articles in *General Aviation News* in 2016. Reader reaction to the series was highly favorable, leading to an expansion of the stories to a full-length book. *Alaska Highway Flight Log* is complete with detailed maps, an in-depth log, showing the individual legs of the trip and a collection of the best of more than 2,000 digital photos taken during the flying journey. "The trip to Alaska did not disappoint in anyway," Walker writes. "It is one of those ultimate journeys for aviators because it takes most of them completely out of their comfortable environments, not for just a four-hour stint or for four days, but for weeks or longer. We were in the air 74 hours, flying more than 7,000 miles. It was probably the longest flying trip I will ever undertake and perhaps the best I will ever fly, although I hope there is even better to come."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I grew up alongside the approach path of the local grass airfield at Nichols, S.C., and have enjoyed

airplanes and flying all my life. It seems like every day I meet someone who tells me, "I always wanted to learn to fly." Pursue that dream and learn to fly I always offer in encouragement. Once they've earned a license, the next thing most pilots want to do is go somewhere and eventually to fly somewhere distant. That's where a journey to Alaska comes in, because it's a long distance from practically everywhere and invariably ends up at or near the top of the most popular general aviation flying destinations. I wanted to fly my own airplane to Alaska for much of my adult life but had to wait several decades until the time and my finances were right. The 7,000 mile trip from coastal South Carolina to Alaska proved to be one great, unforgettable flying adventure. I wanted to share my adventure through the pages of this book with the hope that some of those who read about the trip will eventually make it themselves in a light aircraft. ~William Walker

Flying To Alaska--A Cross-Continent Adventure Join writer and pilot William S. Walker on one of general aviation's most revered long-distance trips--a flight to Alaska. Walker writes, "Alaska is one of those ultimate journeys for aviators from the Lower 48 because it takes most of them completely out of their comfortable environments, not for just a four-hour stint or for a few days, but for weeks or longer. We were in the air 74 hours, flying more than 7,000 miles in a 59-year-old Cessna. It was probably the longest flying trip I will ever undertake and perhaps the best I will ever fly, although I hope there is even better to come." *Alaska Highway Flight Log* is Walker's personal daybook of the trip with distances, maps, airport identifiers and, foremost, his personal observations on the flying trip of a lifetime. William Walker is a senior writer for the national publication *General Aviation News*. He is an instrument-rated private pilot who has flown his 1956 tailwheel Cessna 172 on story assignments throughout the Southeast during 15 years with *G.A. News*. Walker is the author of outdoor books on long-distance river paddling, Alpine skiing and adventure travel and has written and edited for newspapers and magazines in the United States and Europe.

Book review, *Alaska Highway Flight Log* by Williams S. Walker Flying is the ultimate freedom and the ultimate challenge, as William S. Walker demonstrates in the telling of his 7000-mile, roundtrip flight from Marion, South Carolina, to Fairbanks, Alaska, in a two-seater, with co-pilot Albert Finocchiaro. To be suspended above Mother Earth in the pilot's seat of a small plane and see hundreds of miles on a clear day is, in my view, freedom unmatched by any other experience, except walking in outer space. The flying challenge is to successfully pit your knowledge,

experience, skill, intuition, patience, and common sense against the vagaries of Mother Nature's fickle and sometimes furious weather patterns, as Walker vividly describes in this flight log. I wanted to experience the flight of Walker's Four-Five-Golf (the two-seater's call sign) as fully as possible. So, while reading and I strongly recommend this I followed Walker's flight path on satellite photographs at the Google Maps website. As an added bonus, the site had ground-level photos of many towns along the flight path. Both give the reader a good feel for the awesome terrain that Walker and Albert overflow and the places where they landed or overnighted. At one point, having the satellite photos on my computer made for particularly exciting reading because I could see Walker's predicament as he described the final approach of Four-Five-Golf into the Yukon's Whitehorse airport. There was the densely populated area beneath his plane (read casualties, if he misses the runway) and a cliff looming in his windscreen, as he lost altitude. I'll leave to your reading the fate of Four-Five-Golf as it approached Whitehorse. Maybe it should be renamed "Whitenuckle" in Walkerspeak. This is a great read for those who fly small planes and for those, like me, who always wanted to fly one, but never got to sit in a pilot's seat. Long before Tom Cruise electrified would-be pilots with his need to "turn and burn" in the movie Top Gun, my generation of skydreamers had our imaginations fired by the exploits of Ernest K. Gann in his memoir *Fate is the Hunter*. Gann flew cargo over the perilous Hump (Himalayas) between India and China during World War II. I remember his description of almost making history by crashing into the Taj Mahal on a hot day when the air was not heavy enough to lift his plane over that world treasure, until the last seconds. I thought of Gann and his Taj Mahal scare as Walker described the Whitehorse airport approach. I was pleased that Walker paid tribute to Gann, to other pilot legends, and to some non-flying legends like Buddy Holly, The Big Bopper, and Richie Valens. You'll have to read to find out about them. Fate was, indeed, their hunter. Walker not only relates a once-in-a-lifetime adventure, his chapters contain an abundance of local color pertaining to his stops en route, as well as useful flying information and common sense tips, especially for pilots who don't normally venture away from home where weather and ground facilities are familiar. At the end of the book, the author also provides three pages of flight planning guidelines for those who want to fly from the U.S. to Canada and Alaska. I suspect that those three pages alone, chock-full of websites and other specifics, are worth the price of the book. I enjoyed Walker's flight log as an adventurous diversion and vicarious realization of my dream to fly. However, for me, an armchair pilot, the ultimate message of this book is not that flying is freedom and a worthy challenge, but that we all must make time (and plan) for our wildest dreams. Walker's

dream flight was decades in the making. Read about it, enjoy, dream things that do not yet exist in your life, and know that they are possible.

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