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FLYING HIGH

July 1993

It was July 1993. I was flying high over the Appalachian Mountains en-route to the Washington D.C. area to visit my son, his wife, and our new grandson. Sitting next to me was my wife, Janice. Riding behind her in the rear seat was Sarah, my teenage daughter. For Janice, flying never aroused the feelings of joy and adventure that I experienced. I know Janice was sitting there hoping that the engine would continue to function and wondering if her husband, the pilot, really knew what he was doing.

I carried with me a very special source of pride in being a private pilot. At the age of 46, I had realized a long-standing dream of flying my own plane. For me, this flight was a milestone of sorts. I had recently received my instrument flight certification. Now, with my new instrument rating, I was able to take the direct route through the clouds and over the mountains from Lexington,

Kentucky to our destination airport at Manassas, Virginia, near Washington D.C.

After landing in Manassas, we rented a car to finish our trip. Driving through Manassas, I reminded my passengers of the now famous Manassas couple, John and Lorena Bobitt. It was only a month before our arrival that Lorena, in a fit of anger, had severed her husband John's maleness with a kitchen carving knife. Upon rounding a corner, I jokingly pointed out a possible location where Lorena discarded the severed body part. Receiving no response other than "Oh John!," I dropped the subject. This memory of a tragic event in the life of another "John" was put away only to resurface again in subsequent days at a most inappropriate time.

My career achievements were also a source of satisfaction. Over the previous two years as a project engineer with a major U.S. corporation, I had played an important role in starting-up production of products in Mexico for export to the U.S. under the new North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) accord. This was a "first" for my company, and I felt good about playing a key role in making this happen.

Over the duration of this project, I spent many weeks in Mexico. I enjoyed immensely the time spent there learning the language, the Latin culture, and making friends. It gave me satisfaction when my Mexican friends complimented me by saying, "John, you are almost Mexican!" On the other hand, my wife Janice was somewhat perturbed with my preoccupation with Mexico. When I came home on weekends, all I wanted to do was talk about Mexico, study Spanish, and fly airplanes to hone my piloting skills. My life was busy, exciting, and satisfying. I was happy!

Today, as I write these words and look back to 1993, I realize that I was never as great as I thought I was! Now, I see how egotistical I was then. As my wife Janice will testify, I thought mostly of "John" in those days.

From the perspective that I have today, I know that my personal and vocational goals were achieved to some extent at the expense of my wife and family. I believe you will witness the unfolding of this personal revelation as you join me on *My Walkabout*.