

**Weather flight©**

A month after this flight I had a long discussion with my student during which I emphasized the great weakness of the following flight experience. To 'get away' with this flight set a poor example for the student. I had insight from having visited the FSS in Reno 30 minutes previously. I had viewed the satellite pictures and had gleamed that the flight would be marginal but possible. From Truckee itself such a considered decision was not possible.

**FSS transcription**

**56K** - Reno Radio Cherokee 9556k listening 122.5  
**Reno Radio** - Cherokee 9556K Reno Radio go ahead  
**56K** - Cherokee 9556k VFR Truckee to Concord Would like to Open flight plan off at :55  
**Reno Radio** - Cherokee 9556K we have your flight plan for :55 past the hour. Do you have the AIRMET for turbulence conditions and mountain obscuration relating to this?  
**56k**: Negative

**Reno Radio** - Cherokee 56K the Airmet is across Central and Southern California Airmet for likely light to moderate turbulence to one four thousand also across route of flight also along route of flight airmet for light rime icing in clouds and precipitation from 8000 to one-eight thousand and developing into the Bay Area to the possibility(?) for occasional mountain obscurement.

At this time at Concord they are reporting Cirrus at one-eight thousand broken visibility two zero, wind 230 at 13. Truckee altimeter 3008.

**56K** - 3008 Thank you  
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**What follows is cockpit conversation:**

**Whitt** - is there anything here as a warning?  
**Student** - Yeah, there's moderate icing at cloud and IFR altitudes.  
**Whitt** - What do we have here?  
**Student** - Yeah.  
**Whitt** - Do we have clouds up ahead?  
**Student** - Yeah  
**Whitt** - We might not get through if we fly high. We might not go up this high (10,500 is the altitude that I normally cross the Donner summit)  
**Whitt** - We don't want to get up into this stuff.

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**Reno Radio** - Calling on 122.5, this is Reno Radio, go ahead. Calling on 122.5 this is Reno Radio, say call sign, go ahead, over...  
**Whitt** - This is 56K we have heavy mist up in the summit area. We still have four to five mile visibility here at Donner Lake. Do you have any PIREPS for this route  
**Reno Radio** - 56K do you mean going over Interstate 80.  
**Whitt** - That's affirmative.  
**Reno Radio** - 56K I have only one PIREP and that doesn't really apply to the Donner Area. Sacramento to Hangtown VOR and that was about twenty minutes ago where a C-182 at 7500 was incurring occasional snow showers at their cruising altitude. Now we do have a bit of a disturbance northwest of us. Along the southern branch ?? of it at this time and we are seeing some mid-level clouds ?? and the radar does show some

precipitation falling generally up by Red Bluff and Redding area. (100 miles away) It looks like what you are encountering is a bit of an upslope and some showers forming in that upslope to the westward flow over the region. It looks like the air mass has modified a little bit more humidity associated with it. So as the airmass goes up the Sierras they start to get those clouds forming and the showers developing out of it at this time. Over

**Whitt** - We're at 9000 now we still have 3 or 4 mile visibility and it looks we can get through the summit and if we don't we'll cut back to Truckee.

**Reno Radio** - And 56K you had the airmet for icing and turbulence as well as some coastal mountain obscurement heading for the bay area?

**Whitt** - Coastal mountain obscurement doesn't bother me. The icing does and we will watch for it very carefully. (We will land 40 miles from the coast)

**Reno Radio**; November 56K roger, sir. It looks like from what I can see ?? involved deviating toward the south will get you away from that area. (...and 40 miles from any landing area)

**Whitt** - 56K thank you much.

**Reno Radio** - ...and November 56K, Blue Canyon altimeter reported as 3011 3011.

**Whitt** - 3011 for Blue Canyon and we're 16 miles out of Blue Canyon (airport) now. (GPS)

**Reno Radio** - 56K copy on that and again if you run into any problem weather wise just give us a call and we'll see if we can help out and in regard to what you run into we always appreciate PIREPs. Oakland Flight Watch on 122.0

**Whitt** - 56K understand 122.0. How low will you be able to carry us out here?

**Reno Radio** - 56K we can probably can get you into the western (side) of the Sierra Nevada's ??then when you get in towards the Sacramento Valley Rancho Muretta FSS on 122.4. You should be able to get in touch with them at that point. Over

**Whitt** - 56K visibility is kind of variable but we have 4 to 5 miles now but there is/are some lower clouds and mist in the area.

**Reno Radio** - November 56K Copy on that. Hopefully we'll have a better idea of what's going on. ?? Hopefully it won't get any worse in this time frame but even if it does deviating toward the south would get you out of there. Hopefully the (stepped on)

**Whitt** - 56 K It looks better to the South. We could cut away from the highway 80 if it gets any worse.

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### Cockpit between Whitt and student...

**Whitt** - Now The options are ...if we could we go right straight to Concord. That's the way to Concord (pointing,...leave the highway and fly in region with no available landing spots) (Initiating a descent at 200' per minute by student. to avoid hazy mist at 9200')

**Whitt** - See, it opened up we can see the freeway (10 miles ahead) See the freeway up there

**Student** - Yeah

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**Whitt** - On 122.5 you hear me, 56K?

**Reno Radio** - November 56K this is Reno Radio I hear you loud and clear.

**Whitt** - Just a momentary visibility down to four miles and now we have twenty miles on the other side and we are 11 out of Blue Canyon...beautiful now

**Reno Radio** - N56K Glad to hear that. Would appreciate any information. It's just in that localized area in the Blue Canyon, Donner area, right?  
**Whitt** - Negative, just in the Donner area. Blue Canyon looks great.

Reno Radio; I appreciate that. Understand, Just the Donner Area at this time.(stepped on) Appreciate the PIREP, sir.

**Whitt** - You're welcome...  
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**Cockpit conversation....**

**Whitt**- How about that, sometimes you're lucky sometimes you're not. We told them where we were. The only time you get icing is in a cloud or rain or snow . We're getting through at a lower altitude now...we should pick up airspeed now...we're getting a 111 knots. We're going to be going down hill from Blue Canyon on.

**Student** - Shall we go with Oakland Center?

**Whitt** - Nah, let's stay with him, he knows we're here. Don't lose altitude yet. I want you to pick up Blue Canyon. (Instructor has airport but student needs to develop talents.)

**Student** - We have that lake over there

**Whitt** - Sacramento VOR is 115.2

**Student** - 115.2

**Whitt** - Now You can get through here at nine something and are we at a legal altitude?

**Student** - Yes, because we are less than 3000' above the terrain below.

**Whitt** - Right. See that canyon there, that's Blue Canyon, the haze, year around, makes it look Blue. The airport looks like a sloppy 7 and you might not see it from this low.

**Student** - Oh. Not yet, Gene.

**Whitt** - The runway is at right angles to the Freeway. Look at the GPS. How far away is it?

**Student** - 5.7. I see where the road/freeway bends I see something off to the left.

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**Whitt** - Reno Radio, 56K how do you hear?

**Reno radio** - November 56k Reno Radio, go ahead.

**Whitt** - O.k. We're coming up on Blue Canyon. The bases of this whole affair (weather system)in all directions is at about nine thousand, niner thousand. There is some virga falling due west to 240 out of Blue Canyon. When we turn south, why, it looks like we're going to have nice weather.

**Reno Radio** - November 56K copy on the clouds with virga falling. Have you encountered any difficulties with visibilities or with turbulence?

**Whitt** - No turbulence, perfectly smooth. To the South we probably got 20 and the west down to 6 or 8 although I do see some hills all the way across the Sacramento Valley a little break but fifteen to twenty mile visibility all the way around.

**Reno Radio** - November 56K I appreciate that information I'll pass on the PIREP to let them know. Would you say what type aircraft you are.

**Whitt** - PA-28 181

**Reno Radio** - Cherokee 56K copy on that appreciate the pilot report. If you're heading west bound well I guess your next reporting point will be in the Sacramento area. They are currently reporting an altimeter setting of 3008 Hopefully you're out of the worst of it now and towards the southwest. Conditions continuing to improve along the entire route going on towards Sacramento, over.

**Whitt** - 56K Concur, I agree with you and it was just momentarily bad there. Might have been a momentary problem there.

**Reno Radio** - November 56K copy on that and I appreciate the information and is there anything else I can help you with at this time.

**Whitt** - No, just tell me how to win when I come back next time.

**Reno Radio** - We'll try to get you back up here as fast as we can.

**Cockpit thirty minutes later:**

**Whitt** - I want you to call Rancho Radio and ask if they have any PIREPS about the Sacramento Truckee route. We will get rid of Sac Approach and this will give you a little more time to hear what a PIREP sounds like and see if they got it straight.

**Student** - Sacramento Approach Cherokee 56K request frequency change.

**SAC Appch** - 56K you want to terminate, you say?

**Student** - Affirmative

**SAC Appch** - Stand by one, please. Cherokee 56K squawk 1200, radar service terminated, frequency change approved.

**Student** - 56K g'day.

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**56K** - Rancho Radio, Cherokee 9556K listening 122.4, change to 122.3.

Rancho Radio Cherokee 9556K listening 122.3.

**Rancho Radio** - Aircraft calling Rancho Radio, say again call-sign, go ahead

**56K** - Rancho Radio, Cherokee 9556K listening 122.3

**Rancho Radio** - 9556K Rancho Radio.

**56K** - Do you have any PIREPS Truckee to Sacramento?

**Rancho Radio** - At present time I do see a couple of PIREPS. Here's one over Sacramento a Cessna 340 at 7000 reporting negative turbulence and we had a PIREP over Tahoe a pilot of a Bonanza at 10,500 reported bases of broken clouds at 10,500. ***We had one up North over Blue Canyon where a Cherokee reported bases of broken clouds at 9,000 with flight visibilities to 20 and West and North 6 to 8 miles with rain showers aloft.*** Say destination 56K.

**56K** - Destination is Concord.

**Rancho Radio** - Sacramento altimeter 3008

**56K** - 3008 56K