

## CPLT Ferry Story by Mike 'Boggy' Smith, NAV 12 OPCON



I was fortunate to jag a couple of cold proof load-test (CPLT) ferry 'jollies' during F-111 postings at Amberley; guess I was in the right place at the right time ...

My first CPLT deployment in Feb 1983 ferried A8-125 to SM-ALC with WGCDR Bob Montgomery and returned A8-145 to Amberley during my HQAMB EWO tour (1982-83). Thankfully, I was maintaining F-111 flying currency with 1SQN and had about 600 hours on type; Monty was HQAMB WGCDROPS at the time and he 'white-anted' a 1SQN crew for the task.

I knew very little about CPLT back then; only that all our jets had to undergo a destructive test of the wings at McClellan AFB, Sacramento, California, engineers would place our jet on jacks in a special hanger, freeze to -40C, then 'bend' the wings up/down (wings flexed at least 6') under +7.3 g to -3.0 g; and if the wings didn't break, the jet was good to go for another 2,000 hours !

The CPLT ferry across and back was incident free. We flew six F-111 sorties across the pond, via Kwajalein and Hickam, Hawaii, and one test flight out of Sacramento; total flight time 32 hours, not bad flying for a HQ-puke.

19-Feb-83	A8-125	ABAM - PKWA (2,341 nm)	5.2
20-Feb-83	A8-125	PKWA - PHIK (2,125 nm)	4.9
21-Feb-83	A8-125	PHIK - KMCC (2,147 nm)	4.0
3-Mar-83	A8-145	AIRTEST KMCC Post CPLT	1.7
7-Mar-83	A8-145	KMCC - PHIK 2 x Ferry Tanks	5.8
8-Mar-83	A8-145	PHIK - PKWA	5.0
10-Mar-83	A8-145	PKWA - ABAM	5.4

*Strong headwinds between Hawaii & USA required the fitment of 2 x 600-gallon external fuel tanks for the return ferry of A8-145*



*CPLT Ferry #1 Route - Amberley to McClellan AFB via Kwaj & Hickam*

Life was tough during the 10-day waiting period for A8-145 to complete its CPLT. Turned out Monty was an accomplished snow skier, so he checked us out of the Holiday Inn over a long weekend when the snow conditions were perfect, and we moved up to [Heavenly Ski Resort](#) in Lake Tahoe. There I took some group ski lessons for three days and finally mastered snow-plough turns without crashing into other skiers on the intermediate slopes; no photos back then, but trust me it looked like this ... 😊







*On return to Sacramento we linked up with Wardo & C-S and skied @ Boreal*



My second CPLT deployment occurred 11 years later when I ferried A8-112 from McClellan AFB to Amberley in June 1994 with WCGDR Mal Hurman. Mal was CO 1SQN at the time and his original plan was to pick up A8-112 on return from his UK deployment. I was the OPSO/PLANSO at 82WG in 1993/94.

Fatefully, I just so happened to be in McClellan AFB attending an F-111 Flight Manuals Conference representing 82WG, and became aware of the CPLT delay. Invoking previous lessons from Monty and proving that timing is everything, I managed to convince OC 82WG to mail my flying gear over to the US and crew A8-112's return CPLT ferry with Mal, thanks D-squared !

The CPLT ferry back wasn't incident free. Our HF radio failed during the leg to Hickam, our only means of communication with air traffic controllers trans-pacific. We had numerous fuel pressure light indications during our night arrival into Pago with minimum fuel, then the slats malfunctioned on arrival at Amberley, nothing that an approach-end cable engagement didn't fix ! In the end, we flew three F-111 sorties across the pond via Hickam and Pago, Pago; total flight time 15.9 hours

21-Jun-94	A8-112	KMCC - PHIK (2,147 nm)	5.3
24-Jun-94	A8-112	PHIK - NSTU (2,259 nm)	5.3
24-Jun-94	A8-112	NSTU - ABAM (2,192 nm)	5.3



*CPLT Ferry #2 Route - McClellan AFB to Amberley to via Hickam and Pago, Pago*