

CarolAnn's

Global Quest

Thursday November 3rd, 2011, started like any other day in Cairo; people going about their business and maybe preparing for the upcoming feast, but out in the desert at October Airport a small white airplane with a blue tail and silver wings touched down after a flight from Aqaba in Jordan. Maybe not an unusual occurrence at this small light aircraft aerodrome, but this arrival was definitely far from your average training flight circuits. What made the arrival of Mooney M20J, N220FC, so special was because of the pilot, CarolAnn Garratt and because this was part of her third circumnavigation of the globe in the same aircraft!



Arrived at 6th of October Airport

Who is CarolAnn Garratt?

CarolAnn, born in the UK but now a US citizen, is a former manager with a Fortune 500 company.

She earned her private pilot licence in 1978 and her instrument rating in 1980. In 1996 she completed her commercial licence and bought a Mooney M20J in 2000.

After her mother suffered and died from ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or Motor Neurone Disease as it is known in Europe), CarolAnn flew around the world in 2003 to raise



General Badran and CarolAnn

awareness and funds for ALS research. To date, her speaking engagements and book about the flight 'Upon Silver Wings' have raised over \$300,000 for ALS research.

Not content to just fly, CarolAnn built her first plane in 2006. Today she owns and flies three different aircraft. She flies over 400 hours a year including flying students with the EAA Young Eagles programme, the sick and needy with Angel Flights and instructing cadets with the Civil Air Patrol. In 2008 she set out to fly around the world a second time and set a new world record by completing the flight in eight days 12 hours.

What is ALS?

Lou Gehrig's disease, or ALS, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or Motor Neurone Disease (MND in Europe) is a progressive, fatal neurodegenerative disease that attacks the motor neurons in the brain and spinal cord. With over 350,000 people worldwide afflicted with ALS, the cause of the disease is still unknown. Ninety percent of patients diagnosed with ALS die within five years since there is currently no cure. The disease itself has no prejudice – attacking anyone despite age, ethnicity or gender.

You can find more about ALS at www.alsa.org

Why Cairo?

During CarolAnn's first world flight

in 2003, which was flown east to west, she was forced to land at Luxor by an overzealous controller and then made to stay there two nights while they sorted new permits for her. The treatment she received was very bad and she was charged very exorbitant fees for every service the handlers could throw at her, services she really didn't need. The overcharging and bureaucracy left a sour taste in her



Edward, Ahmed and CarolAnn

mouth and during her second world flight she decided to leave North Africa out of the equation completely.

But that was 2003 and although little has changed for private pilots visiting Egypt, two things had occurred that made CarolAnn think again about adding this wonderful country to her list of destinations.

Firstly, we had gone through a revolution, which hopefully meant that there would be a lot less corruption or bureaucratic nightmares and secondly, G.A.S.E. had arrived on the scene.

G.A.S.E. or General Aviation Support Egypt is a support group founded by aviation enthusiasts in Cairo who saw

the need to assist private pilots when visiting or transiting Egypt. CarolAnn's support team came across the G.A.S.E. website and realised that a return visit to Egypt may not be such a bad idea after all. More about G.A.S.E. later.

So with a big smile on her face, CarolAnn stepped down off the wing of her small aircraft to be greeted by Eddie Gould and Ahmed Hassan from G.A.S.E. at the start of her six-day stay in Cairo. From the start it was obvious that this woman was special and over the coming days everyone who met her came to the same conclusion. Quiet, slight of build, kind and generous, CarolAnn is a true testimony to the human spirit and what can be achieved. Humble in her past glories, she is eager to talk to anyone who wants to listen and at the same time listens to and answers all questions posed to her.

One of the events G.A.S.E. had arranged for CarolAnn was a presentation and talk about her previous flights and her fundraising activities. Held on Saturday November 6th at the Fairmont Towers, a decent crowd turned up to spend a couple of hours being entertained and informed by a hugely entertaining aviator.

Another part of G.A.S.E.'s services is a full hosting package, which CarolAnn was pleased to take advantage of. This included staying with Eddie and his partner Anthea at their apartment as well as a full range of sightseeing activities that saw CarolAnn visit Saqqara, the Giza Pyramids, The Antiquities Museum, Tahrir Square, Old Cairo and of course, the Khan El Khalili. She feasted every day on middle eastern/Egyptian food, the cuisine of her choice and was really impressed with the use of Otlob as a way to order food and of course the generous portions!

The most memorable statement that CarolAnn spoke was that she was eternally glad that she didn't listen to all the well-intentioned friends and supporters who had suggested that it was too dangerous to visit Egypt at this time. Her experiences in Tahrir and the rest of Cairo showed her that with the right assistance it is a great and safe place to visit.

So it was, with a heavy heart, that Eddie, Anthea and Ahmed stood alone on the apron at October Airport on the

morning of Tuesday November 8th as CarolAnn gracefully lifted off the tarmac in her Mooney and set off on the next leg of the journey that would eventually end in Florida where she had departed from back in April. The next stop was Luxor before flying down to Djibouti, Kenya and Madagascar where she is delivering supplies to an orphanage before returning north to Oman to continue the easterly route around the world.

The guys from G.A.S.E. returned home to start preparing for the next visiting pilots as well as liaising with CarolAnn on her southward journey, all sad to see her go but proud and happy to have met such a brave and inspirational woman.

CarolAnn wishes to thank all the new friends she made in Egypt and especially Eddie and Ahmed from G.A.S.E., Anthea Samman, Hamada the driver, General Badran and everyone at the Aeroclub for their support and assistance, the staff at the Fairmont Towers for a wonderful presentation venue and the officials at October airport who made her entry and departure such a joy compared to her last visit to Egypt.

Her story can be read and her present flight followed on her website <http://www.alsworldflight.com/>

Who Are General Aviation Support Egypt - G.A.S.E.?

G.A.S.E. started about 2 years ago when 2 friends, Egyptian, Ahmed Hassan Mohamed and Ex-pat Brit, Eddie Gould, both aviation enthusiasts, were contacted by a friend in the UK asking if they could assist in Egypt, Norman Surplus who was also circumnavigating the globe but in an Autogyro. They eagerly accepted the task but were soon to find out



At Khan El Khalili



Sphinx and Pyramids in the background

that any private pilot flying a small plane to Egypt would be met with horrendous charges and very restrictive bureaucratic practices. From this experience the two guys decided to dedicate their time to making it easier and a whole lot cheaper for private pilots to visit or pass through Egypt. Thus G.A.S.E. was born. The umbrella term under which this type of flying is categorized is called 'General Aviation' hence the GA in the title.

Since those early days G.A.S.E. has grown into a respected organization throughout the aviation world and has been helping many pilots ever since. They are now recognised by many top ranking officials and agencies in Egypt and plan to offer their services, all voluntary, to many more visiting pilots as well as campaigning to allow more aviation hobbies be accepted in Egypt.

You can find out more about G.A.S.E. via their website:
www.gasupportegypt.com



At the presentation