

“Voyager- A flight around the world” - A00128

Section	Pages
Full Document	2 - 5
Student “Fill in” document	6 - 9

Text word count: 845

Graded reading level 4.8

(Based on MS-Word: Flesch-Kincaid)

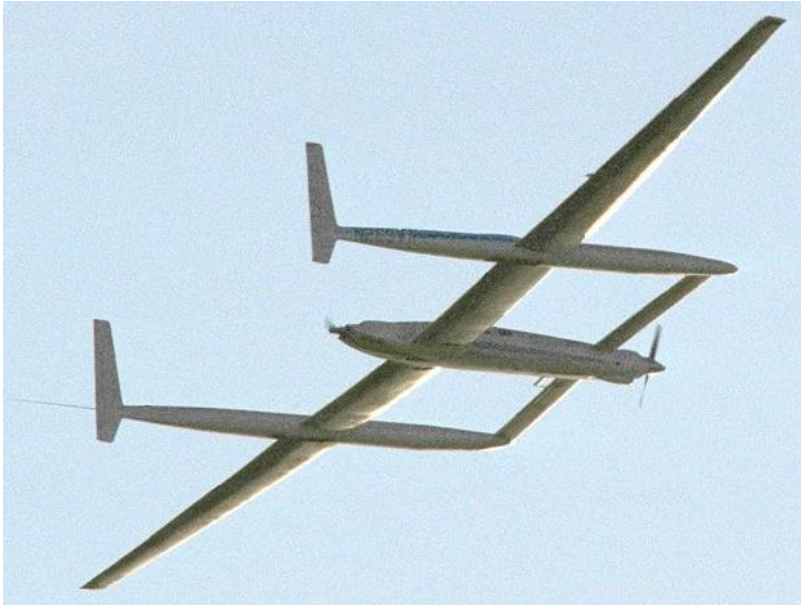
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Voyager: The Extraordinary Story of a Flight Around the World

Explorations -- a program in Special English by the Voice of America.

It was called the last great goal in flying. It would be a flight around the world without stopping or adding more fuel. Today, Frank Oliver and Doug Johnson tell



about a special plane called Voyager and the effort to set a difficult world record.

Voyager began as a quick drawing on a small piece of paper. Six years later the drawing was a plane that made history.

Many people gave their time, energy and money to help make the flight happen. But three people had lead parts in the event. Dick Rutan. Burt Rutan. And Jeana Yeager.

Dick Rutan was an experienced flier. Burt Rutan was well-known as a designer of experimental planes. And Jeana Yeager held nine world flight records as a pilot.

One day in early 1981, Dick, Burt and Jeana were eating in a restaurant in Mojave, California. Burt turned to his brother and asked a wild question: "How would you like to be the first person to fly around the world without stopping to re-fuel?"

The three considered the idea. A non-stop flight around the world without re-fueling was the last flight record to be set. The flight always had been considered impossible. No plane could carry enough fuel to fly that far.

But now there were new materials for planes. Burt thought he could build a plane that could make the voyage. Dick and Jeana thought they could fly it.

No one could think of a good reason not to try.

Burt picked up a small piece of paper. He drew an airplane that looked like a giant wing, and not much more. That was the beginning.

Some people thought their Voyager project was both impossible and foolish. Everyone knew it would be dangerous.

Burt Rutan had built light-weight planes before. He knew a normal plane made of aluminum metal could not make a trip around the world without adding fuel. So his solution was to build Voyager almost completely out of new materials. The materials were very light, but very strong. This meant Voyager could lift and carry many times its weight in fuel.

The finished plane weighed about the weight of a small car. It weighed 2,000 pounds, which is one ton. The full load of fuel weighed three times that much. Voyager was not built to be a fast plane. It flew about one hundred seventy-five kilometers an hour. That is 110 miles per hour. One engine at each end of the body of the plane provided power.

The area for the two pilots was unbelievably small. The person flying the plane sat in the pilot's seat. The other person had to lie down at all times.

After many test flights, the Voyager was finally ready in December, 1986. On December fourteenth, Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager walked around the plane one more time. It looked like a giant white flying insect. They were going to be trusting their lives to this strange plane for the next nine days.

Dick climbed into the only seat. Jeana lay on the floor. They were ready to go. The long, thin wings of the plane were so loaded with fuel that they almost touched the ground. Voyager began to move down the runway, slowly. Voyager was getting dangerously close to the end of the runway. It appeared about to crash. Finally, just in time, the long wings swept up. The plane leaped into

the air. Dick turned the plane, then he aimed Voyager out over the Pacific Ocean.

Weight was the main consideration in designing the experimental plane. Not safety. Not comfort. Space for the pilots was so tight they had great difficulty changing places.

Voyager's long wings moved up and down as the winds changed. It seemed to sail on waves of air, just like a sailboat on ocean waves. It was not an enjoyable trip. Dick and Jeana were always tense.

Over Africa, the two pilots struggled with continuous stormy weather. Dick had flown almost all of the first sixty hours of the flight. Then he changed places with Jeana for short periods. Both were extremely tired.

Once past the violent weather, Dick and Jeana began planning the way home. But as they flew up the coast of Mexico, the engine on the back of the plane failed. Fuel had stopped flowing to it.

The more powerful front engine already had been shut down earlier to save fuel. With neither engine working, Voyager quickly began to lose speed and height. The plane fell for five minutes. Dick finally got the front engine started again. Then fuel started flowing to the back engine, and it began to work again, too.

Nine days after take-off, Voyager landed smoothly in California. It had completed a flight around the world. It had not stopped. And it had not re-fueled. Burt Rutan's design had worked. And Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager had joined the list of the world's greatest fliers.

Check your understanding

True or False?

1	“Voyager” is the name of a restaurant in Mojave, California.	T / F
2	Burt Rutan is an airplane designer.	T / F
3	During its flight, Voyager landed in Mexico.	T / F
4	The plane had two engines.	T / F
5	The plane weighed about one ton.	T / F
6	Safety was the most important consideration in the design of Voyager.	T / F
7	The plane carried three people- Dick Rutan, Burt Rutan, and Jeana Yeager.	T / F
8	The plane was fast. Its speed was one hundred seventy-five miles an hour.	T / F
9	Voyager had to make stops for fuel four times.	T / F
10	The trip around the world took nine days.	T / F

What do you think?

1. What is the longest flight you have taken? Where did it go?

2. Do you enjoy air travel? Why or why not?

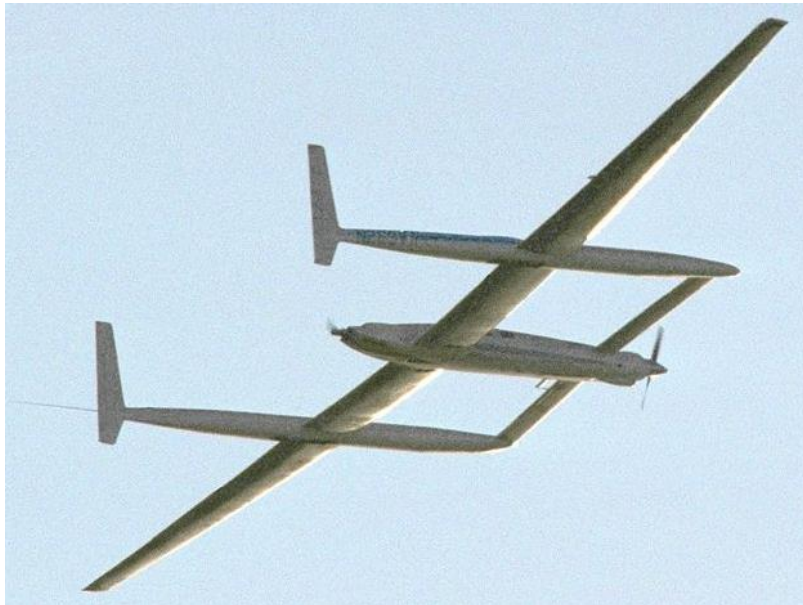
3. Why do people try to set records?



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