

Tips, Tricks & Recommendations for FS2004

Part X

Compiled by David “Opa” Marshall

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Disclaimer: These may or may not work for you – they do work well on my FS2004 setup. All recommendations are my personal preferences – I find them to be very useful – you may disagree. This is in no way meant to be a comprehensive listing – just a few tips, tricks and recommendations that I have come across. Hopefully you will find something of use, be you a newbie or a long time simmer.

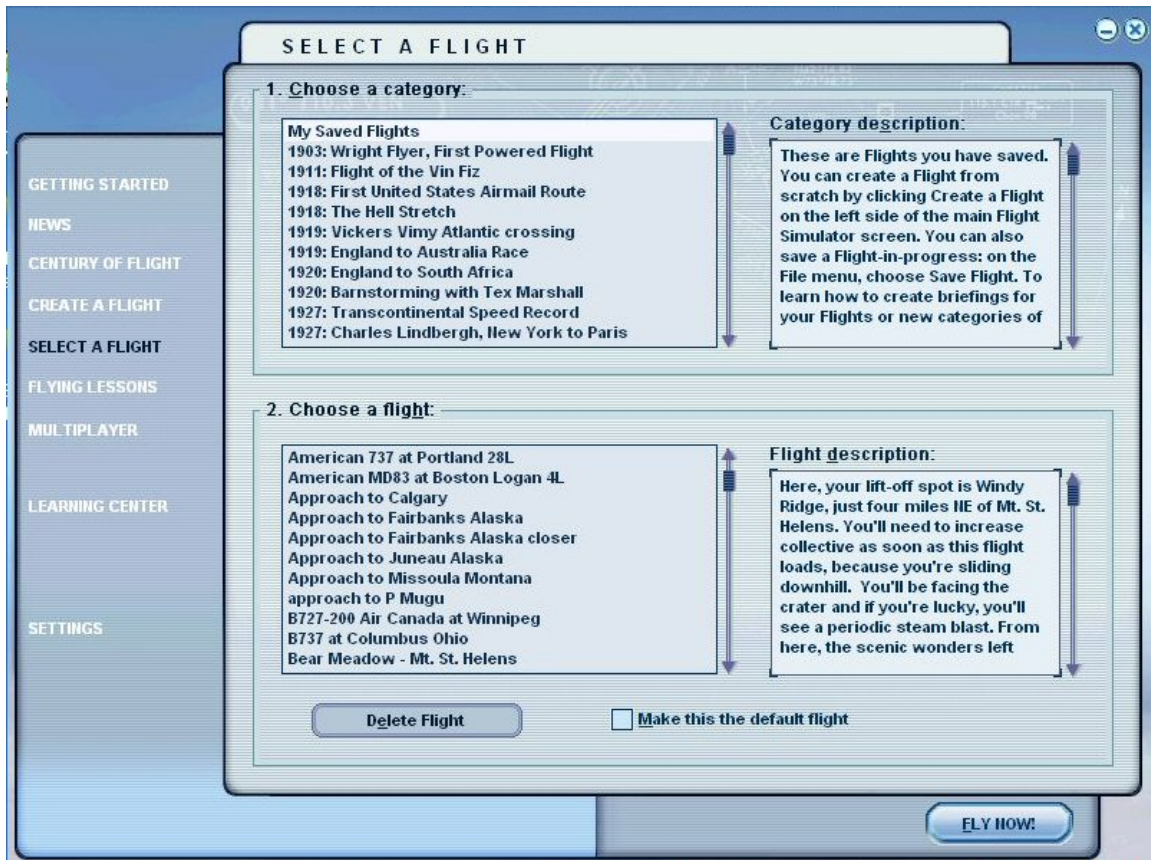
This is Part X – see “T and T info.txt” (enclosed in the zip file) for a listing of the previous files. All may be found at **Avsim.com**.

Changing the Default Startup Flight - (If TV can have re-runs so can I)

Tired of looking at a Cessna at Meigs Field in Chicago whenever you start up FS2004? In case you had forgotten (or perhaps never knew) it is very easy to change it. Just choose “select a flight” and highlight one of the flights you have saved. Then put a check mark in the little box that says “make this the default flight”. The next time you start FS2004, what you have chosen will be what you see.

Remember that when you “save” a flight, the save is made using the aircraft, location and time etc. where you are right now. FS does not save an entire flight. Saved flights may be a start at a gate, on the runway or even in mid-air somewhere. **Tip:** The semi-colon (;) is the shortcut to saving a flight.

The following screenshot shows the “Select a Flight” dialogue. Note the box in the middle of the bottom of the screen where you make the default flight choice.



Charting Your Course

Like a woodworker will tell you; “You can never have enough clamps” so it is with pilots; “You can never have enough charts”.

Here are a couple of links to charts which you may find useful.

http://www.naco.faa.gov/index.asp?xml=naco/online/d_tpp

<http://www.navdata.at/php/charts/charts.php>

These were sent to me by reader David Eugenio Gómez who lives in Monterey, Mexico.

For a complete listing of water based locations in the United States, download “**fs9_airports.zip**” from **Avsim.com**. This is an excel file of water starting places by **Winfried Orthmann** which is very handy to have!

Double your Pleasure – Double your Fun

If you read Tips and Tricks Number 9, perhaps you are thinking about adding a second monitor to your setup. The following link has a good discussion regarding dual monitors and their use in several games. The part concerning FS9 is in the latter portion of the article. Good reading if you are contemplating an upgrade.

<http://graphics.tomshardware.com/graphic/20040216/index.html>

Creating More Disk Space

As has been said many times in this series, my disk space is limited. In an effort to create more I often move aircraft and/or scenery to another location on a different drive. Then I began to wonder if FS would function properly if some or all of my setup was “compressed”; a feature available in XP.

I posed this question on one of the forums at Avsim and got many positive responses so I tried it. The bottom line is that I see **no** difference in the speed that FS loads and operates and I picked up over 5 gig of space!

You must have XP as your operating system and your hard drive must be formatted using the NTFS system. Most XP systems are setup in this manner but you can check yours by using My Computer and selecting “properties” of the drive in question.

Note: Most users do NOT compress the entire disk - just FS2004 or a portion thereof.

If you leery of compressing the entire FS2004 folder, try compressing just sections of it, such as your aircraft folder and/or just the AI aircraft folder(s).

Just select the folder you wish to compress and select properties. There is an option to compress on the dialogue you will see. You may have to select “advanced” before that option is visible.

I now have compressed my entire FS2004 folder and subfolders. This required a little over an hour to complete. Then I defragmented my C drive which took an additional 30 minutes or so.

Note: Defragging after the compression is a **vital** part of this process – I strongly recommend that you take the time to do it.

All in all I invested approximately two hours of my time but picked up over 5 gig of space with **no** noticeable degrading of performance. In my humble opinion it was well worth the time and effort. The compression process is easily reversible if you don't like the results.

A Source for How To's

This link will take you to Flightsims's **How To** section where you will find a good selection of articles and tutorials dealing with many aspects of our hobby/addiction.

[http://www.flightsim.com/cgi/kds?\\$/=main/m-howto.htm](http://www.flightsim.com/cgi/kds?$/=main/m-howto.htm)

3D Contrails

Here is a very nice addition that will make your contrails (the white “smoke” you see when your aircraft reaches a set altitude and/or temperature) look far more realistic.



The filename is “**Contrails fscontrail2004_v1.0.zip**” by **Michael Thomas** and you can find it at **Avsim.com**. Michael has thoughtfully included a backup folder with the original fx files in case you don’t agree that his are better.

For further information regarding contrails and modifying them, read this excellent post on the subject by **Scott Gridley**.

http://forums.avsim.net/dcboard.php?az=show_mesg&forum=121&topic_id=203440&mesg_id=203440&listing_type=search

Reality Check

Do you remember when -----

Memory was something you lost with age

An application was for employment

A program was a TV show

A cursor used profanity

A keyboard was a piano

A web was a spider's home

A virus was the flu

A CD was a bank account

A hard drive was a long trip on the road

A mouse pad was where a mouse lived

Adding a Tower

Here’s the scenario; your small community has just voted to upgrade the local airport and include a tower for communications (it was previously an un-controlled airfield). You have been selected as the contactor for the project but don’t know where to begin. If you promise to “share the profits” with me, I will tell you how it is done.

You must have **AFCAD** by **Lee Swordy** installed. It is available at all major sites. We will be adding a tower frequency so ATC can use it, not an actual control tower.

1. Start AFCAD.
2. Select the Open Airport window from the File menu and enter the airport you want to work on in the Airport ID box, for example CYYF.
3. Open the Comm Frequencies list window, under the Lists menu.
4. Click the Insert button on that window, a new window will open.
5. Enter the name of the airport or town in the Name box, for example "Penticton".
6. Leave the Type box set to 'Tower'. A random frequency will be assigned for you (e.g. 118.3), or you can enter your own or use the real tower frequency if your airport has one.
7. Click OK to close the window.
8. From the File menu, save the airport and exit AFCAD.

You can now run Flight Simulator and you will have full tower service at that airport.

If you want to have a more sophisticated tower emulation, you could also add an ATIS frequency and maybe a separate Ground frequency. For ATIS, use the airport ICAO identifier instead of the airport name (for example, KLAX).

This information was extracted from the official AFCAD Help file - read the entire AFCAD Help document for further information.

A New Tool for Scenery Creators

Wolfgang Schwarz has created a very useful program which captures various values such as coordinates (in several formats) from FS2004 and allows you to place them in the clipboard to be pasted into your scenery creation program. Look for “**fs-values.zip**” at **Avsim.com**. This is a “must have” tool for anyone who creates or enhances scenery.

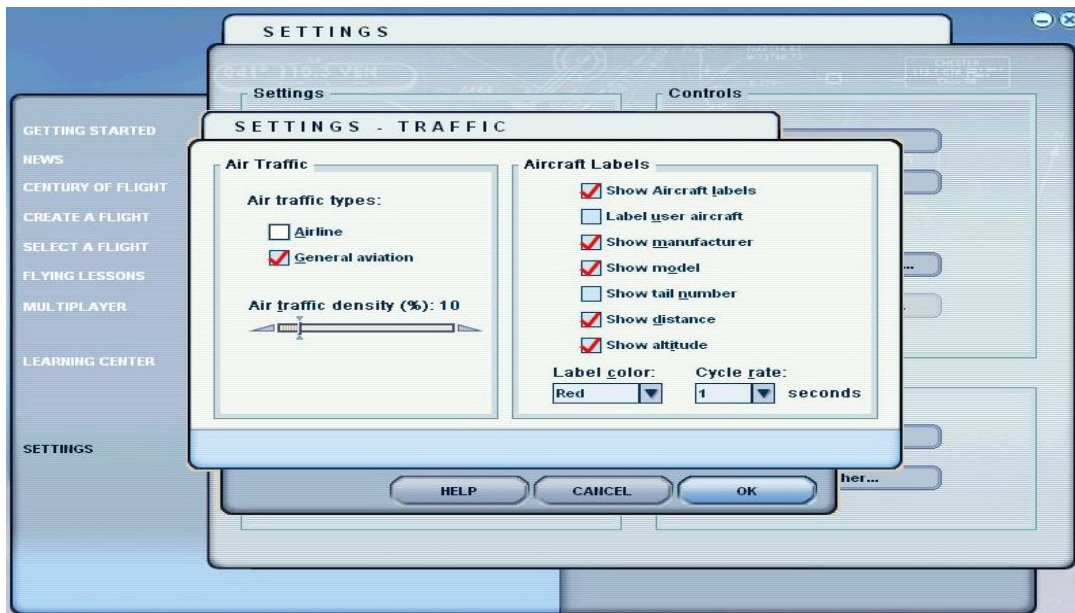
Gauge Removal Program

I recently tried a program that removes unused gauges which I feel works better than the one I recommended in one of the early Tips and Tricks issues.

It is called DR. GAUGE by **Alessandro Antonini** and you can find it by looking for “**drg32.zip**” at **Avsim.com**. The program seems to do a better job of sorting out gauges that are not required and you have the option of moving unused gauges to another folder or deleting them. I always move them to a temporary location on another drive in case I need them later.

Identifying AI Traffic

Ever wondered what AI is passing you in the sky? It is very easy to have labels show on your screen identifying AI traffic. Just go to Settings/Traffic and you will see a dialogue that looks like this:



Here you can select what information you wish to see.

You can take this a step further if you have Project AI aircraft installed on your system.

Open the Aircraft.cfg file for each of the Project AI aircraft that you have and change the default ui_manufacturer=ProjectAI line to read:

ui_manufacturer=(name of the airline or its ICAO code)

Example: ui_manufacturer=Delta

This takes a bit of time but now you will see a better description of the aircraft on the label as the AI aircraft passes you in the sky or on the ground.

Obviously the “Show manufacturer” option must be activated in the Settings/Traffic Menu.

This Project AI tip comes from reader Hans Brokke, a reader who lives in Johannesburg, South Africa. Thanks Hans!

Startup Smoke Enhancement

If you have ever attended an air show you know that older aircraft tend to belch a lot of smoke when their engines are started.

To enhance this feature on the default DC3's (and other propeller/propjet aircraft) check out “**dc3_fx.zip**” by **Jan Rosenberg** – available at **Avsim.com** and **Flightsim.com**.

There are a number of other enhancements in this package, including a set of additional contact points to make a “belly landing” look more spectacular.



Frame Rate **Blues**?

If you suffer from the **Frame Rate Blues**, here is a potential tonic for you to try. **Eddie Batista** has provided a modified autogen file that he claims will allow you to get up to 20 more frames per second with little visual loss. The file, which is available at **SurClaro.com**, is named "**FPS_Patch_FS9.zip**". I have not seen this "patch" on any other sites.

I have tried it and did not see an improvement in my frame rates. Several users who left comments at the website said it did do wonders for them so I guess it depends upon your machine.

Read the installation document carefully. You just backup your current Autogen/default.xml file and replace it with the one Eddie has created. The original is 58 KB and the replacement is 19 KB.

No guarantee but perhaps worth a try.

Tip: If you want to see the low, high and average frame rate data displayed when you press Shifted Z (twice) , open your FS9.cfg file and add the following line under the [Main] section; Ave_Frame_Rate_Display=1

It should look something like this when you are done.

```
[MAIN]
Maximized=0
Location=188,99,836,628
HideMenuNormal=0
HideMenuFullscreen=1
Ave_Frame_Rate_Display=1
```

The following screen shot shows what you will see – I have underlined the new information in yellow.



A screenshot of a flight simulator's HUD (Heads Up Display) showing various performance metrics. The text is displayed in a red, monospace font on a blue background. The metrics include: FRAMES/SEC = 024.8 (LOCKED AT 25FPS), +1.0 Gs, FUEL 100 %, [016.2 024.3 024.9], <001.0> V: 3.7%. The values 024.3 and 024.9 are underlined in yellow.

Lights – Camera – Action!

Do I have your attention? That was just a ploy to call your attention to a very nice light enhancement for the default Boeing 737-400 and Lear 45.

Ulrich Klein has created an extremely fine package which corrects many of the panel light problems in these two default aircraft. Ulrich has included replacement panel.cfg files for both aircraft along with an explanation of what each item corrects. The file name at **Flightsim.com** is “**fs9ewl.zip**”.

This addon makes a significant difference and I recommend it highly!

The package includes an auto-installer but I suggest you have it install to a temporary folder rather than directly into your aircraft folder. That way you can review the various changes that might be made and cut and paste the ones that interest you.

I use the default b737-400 panel a great deal (which I have enhanced with several additions, including some of my own creation) and therefore was reluctant to replace the entire panel.cfg file. My solution, at least for testing purposes, is illustrated below.

This is a portion of my b737-400 panel.cfg file as it now exists.

A portion of the gauge listing under [Window00]

```
gauge08=737-400!Clock, 17, 147
gauge09=737-400!RMI, 1, 211
gauge10=FSNAV.EHSI, 94, 176, 133
gauge11=737-400!ADI, 85, 39
gauge12=737-400!Gear Lever, 586, 217
```

```
// New section added - start
```

```
gauge13=EWL!B737 Gear NoseWarnLight, 594, 180
gauge14=EWL!B737 Gear LeftWarnLight, 579, 198
gauge15=EWL!B737 Gear RightWarnLight, 609, 198
gauge16=EWL!B737 Rev WarnLight Left, 354, 68
gauge17=EWL!B737 Rev WarnLight Right, 416, 68
gauge18=EWL!B737 AT LIM WarnLight, 385, 68
gauge19=EWL!B737 LOP WarnLight Left, 458, 68
gauge20=EWL!B737 LOP WarnLight Right, 519, 68
gauge21=EWL!B737 SVO WarnLight Left, 489, 68
gauge22=EWL!B737 SVO WarnLight Right, 549, 68
gauge23=EWL!B737 Flaps ExtWarnLight, 609, 115
gauge24=EWL!B737 Flaps TraWarnLight, 579, 115
```

```
// New section added - finish
```

```
// Original commented out - start
```

```
//gauge13=737-400!Nose Gear Light, 594, 180
//gauge14=737-400!Left Gear Light, 579, 198
//gauge15=737-400!Right Gear Light, 609, 198
//gauge16=737-400!Reverser Unlocked Left, 354, 68
//gauge17=737-400!Reverser Unlocked Right, 416, 68
//gauge18=737-400!AT Lim, 385, 68
```

```
//gauge19=737-400!Low Oil Left, 458, 68  
//gauge20=737-400!Low Oil Right, 519, 68  
//gauge21=737-400!Start Valve Left, 489, 68  
//gauge22=737-400!Start Valve Right, 549, 68  
//gauge23=737-400!Flaps Ext, 609, 115  
//gauge24=737-400!Flaps Transit, 579, 115
```

```
// Original commented out - finish
```

```
gauge25=737-400!Autopilot, 336, 11  
gauge26=737-400!Pitch Trim, 305, 144  
gauge27=737-400!Aileron Trim Indicator, 242, 261  
gauge28=737-400!Aileron Trim Switch, 248, 276  
gauge29=737-400!Rudder Trim Indicator, 285, 261  
gauge30=737-400!Rudder Trim Knob, 290, 276  
gauge31=FSNAV.GPS_Switch, 302, 17, 30
```

Note that I have use the two forward slash marks to “comment out” some of the original gauges and have pasted in portions of Ulrich’s gauges (those starting with EWL).

This was the easiest way for me to test his new gauge lights. Of course I made a backup of my panel.cfg file before changing anything.

Among the enhancements you will notice is the Reverser Unlock lights will now be illuminated when you activate the thrust reverser using F2 after touchdown. That enhancement alone is worth its weight in gold. You will also note incremental lights as you apply the flaps.

All in all this is a very useful addition to your 737-400 and/or Lear 45.

Question of the Day (with apologies to my female readers)

Why Do Male Pilots Prefer Airplanes to Women?

[Airplanes come with a manual to explain their operation.](#)

In Case You Missed It Department

I recently compiled a short tutorial explaining how to create a simple menu of your favorite flights that will allow you to go directly to that flight, and bypass all of the normal startup screens.

The file is called “**favorite_flights_menu.zip**” and can be downloaded from **Avsim.com**. In less than a half an hour you can create your own menu of favorites.

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How Safe is Safe?

Recently there has been some concern expressed in one of the forums regarding the possibility of a particular download containing a virus.

As it turned out, the complainers’ virus scanning program apparently was **not** up to date and reported a false positive.

While non of us can be too careful in this age of weirdo’s that get their kicks from creating viruses, I can report to you that Avsim does scan all uploads using the latest technology available and will not post an upload if there is any question regarding its integrity. I would presume all other major sites follow the same procedure although Avsim is the only one that I am aware of that actually tells you it is doing it.

That being said, it is still wise to scan anything you download with your own virus scanning program **before** you unzip it! Just be sure the definitions are up to date.

For the Birds

As I was about to complete this issue I came across an incredible bit of modeling that I want to share with you.

From the Hama website (Japanese) comes a file named “**Bird_SWAN.zip**”. It can be found near the bottom of the page at:

<http://www.bekkoame.ne.jp/i/m28hama/HammaField.htm>

I do not read Japanese but I believe the author's name is **Mitsuya Hamaguchi**.

Whoever the author is, he or she is absolutely brilliant! This file contains regular and AI flying swans. You can “fly” them yourself or watch them as AI “aircraft” float around the water and then take off for “touch and go” flights. Trust me; this is exceptional work.

The AI plans are set in Japan but you can create your own flightplans for a lake nearby your location. There are no installation instructions included in the package but the “aircraft” go in your aircraft folder, the AF2_RJC3.bgl file goes in your addon scenery/scenery folder and the Traffic_Bird.bgl file goes in your scenery/world/scenery folder.



To sit and watch the swans at the default location, select RJC3 as your airport starting location and slew back a few feet. Your GA aircraft slider must be set to 10% or higher. Even while resting the swans will rustle their feathers occasionally and will flap their wings when in flight – just like real birds do!

Note: The flyable Swans will show up under HAMA on your select aircraft menu.



Sneak Preview – and it's a Double Feature!



In the file description for this issue, I promised you an opportunity to have a sneak preview of an exciting new scenery addition. In order to view this preview you must have Windows Media Player installed and be willing to wait a couple of minutes while the buffer loads the movie. After your buffer is full the movie will play for a little over five minutes. Be sure you are in full screen viewing mode to get the best effect.

I say it is a “double feature” as you will not only see the Flying Swans mentioned above soaring over the Florida Everglades, but you will be viewing a preview of the FREEflow Ultimate Florida scenery which is expected to be released by the end of May 2005.

Just click on either link below; they lead to the same preview, and enjoy the work of the FREEflow team that is comprised of Authors **Bob Brown**, **Scott Gridley** and **Joe Watson**. Other contributors to this large project include **Toni Hiltunen** (several city sceneries) and **M. Allen Richards** (AI airboat models) with testers Dale Caruso, W. L. Marks, Don Moser and Dexter Thomas.

http://www.dartmouth.edu/~gridlock/free_flow_florida.wmv

http://cobweb.dartmouth.edu/~gridlock/free_flow_florida.wmv

Note: If one link is busy, please try the other.

The following is a brief outline of the project as provided by the FREEflow team.

FREEflow Ultimate Florida is a FREE scenery addon for Microsoft Flight Simulator: ACOF which will transform the state of Florida. This is a complete rebuild of the scenery of the entire area from the Mississippi River delta, east to Jacksonville, and south through the Keys and Dry Tortugas National Park.

All features are placed with the highest accuracy possible using GIS data from the USGS, the State of Florida, Minerals Management Services, and others!

Features include:

- * Land class scenery which places geographic features such as wetlands, forested land, and population centers.
- * Water class scenery which properly reflects the muddy inland water as well as the vibrant tropical waters of the keys.
- * Completely new coasts, bays, rivers, lakes, ponds, reservoirs, marinas and Florida's extensive canal system, and even airboat trails!
- * Detailed scenery depicting the unique ecology of the Everglades, Southern Florida's Water Management Areas and Lake Okeechobee.
- * Detailed scenery accurately placing cultivated lands (Citrus groves and Golf Courses).
- * Detailed scenery which properly places urban features such as the Port of Miami, Lakeland, and others.
- * Offshore scenery placing several drilling platforms in the Gulf of Mexico that include fully functional helipads.
- * AFCADs for the drilling platforms and many relocated and upgraded default airports.
- * An optional set of major roads and highways.
- * An optional set of major bridges.
- * AI surface traffic including custom designed airboats and container ships.

In short, the authors believe this will be the best scenery of the region available at any price - and it will be FREE!

I have had the privilege of reviewing a “beta” version of this scenery and believe this new Florida makeover will definitely be a “keeper”.

Help Wanted

According to my e-mail, many readers of this series have printed them all out and some keep in them in a notebook for future reference. Recently I have received several requests for an Index of the Tips and Tricks.

Before I embark on that type of project I would ask anyone who may have already created such an index – preferably in Excel format – to send me a copy so that I might include it as a “bonus” file in a future addition. Any assistance would be greatly appreciated by all readers of this series.

Thanks

Thanks once again to all the readers who have sent suggestions for items to be included in this series. You know who you are if I have failed to mention you by name.

That’s All Folks

That about does it for this issue. If you have a tip or trick you have found useful, or anything else you want to share, feel free to send it to me and I will be happy to consider including it in the next Tips and Tricks.

Link to My Uploads

To see a complete listing of projects I have uploaded to Avsim.com, just follow this link.

<http://library.avsim.net/eseach.php?CatID=fs2004&Name=&FileName=&Author=David+Marshall&DLID=&Sort=Added&ScanMode=0&Go=Change+View>

Final Thought:

If you find a particularly fine aircraft, airport or any other useful addition, take the time to drop the author an e-mail and let them know that you appreciate their work. Countless hours are involved in the creation of these additions and an encouraging word now and then is always welcomed.

Questions and/or Constructive Comments regarding “Tips and Tricks” may be directed to:

opaflightsimaddict@verizon.net

It's not a hobby -- it's a bloody addiction!

