Tips and Tricks for FS2004
Part XIX
Compiled by David "Opa" Marshall
February 2006

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 XIX (19) – 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** and **Flightsim.com**.

The Next Version of FS

Most of you probably already are aware of the recent announcement by Microsoft regarding the release of the next version of Flight Simulator.

For those who have not heard the news, the next version will be named FSX – the X meaning 10.

For the latest information log unto:

This site has some great pictures of FSX and a thoughtful commentary about what we can expect. Few details are available but it seems evident this new version will require a powerful system if one is to take advantage of all it has to offer. The new version is not slated to be released until December of 2006 (that is the tentative goal) so you will have some time to save your pennies for a more powerful system. MS has indicated the new version will be on a DVD (instead of multiple disks) so you will need to have a DVD player installed if you do not have one already.

Personally I think MS is coming out with FSX because they want me to think up a new name for this series! Just kidding.

Dead Battery?

A reader wrote me recently requesting help in solving a problem he was experiencing with a dead battery. In an automobile, a dead battery is just an annoyance. When flying, the results can be a bit more devastating.

Basically he stated that about five minutes into a flight, he would lose all electricity with ----- well I think you can guess the outcome.

He further stated that he knew it was a battery problem because he did not switch on the battery before takeoff and the instruments only worked until the battery charge was exhausted. He asked if there was any way to have the battery on – by default – as many turboprop and jet panels do not have a battery switch.

After a good deal of experimenting with one of the aircraft he was using, I finally discovered the problem and it's cure.

If you remember our discussion in Tips and Tricks number 17, regarding the fact that various settings that are saved with your default flight are then automatically applied to whatever aircraft you select; one of those settings is the state of the battery (on or off).

Apparently my correspondent was using a flight he had saved that had the battery in the off position – as his default flight. Thus the battery was off in any aircraft he then selected – even though there was no battery switch on the panel.

The solution was to resave a flight – with the engines off – but with the battery switch on – and use it as the default. Then any aircraft that is selected will always have the battery on, even if the engines are not – at startup.

How can you check the status of your default flight? It is fairly easy to do.

First, using Notepad, open your FS9.cfg file. Scroll down to the entry which is named SITUATION=. The data on this line should tell you the complete path to and the name of your default flight. Make of a note of the name.

Then locate that flight by navigating to C:\Documents and Settings\Your UserName\My Documents\Flight Simulator Files. It will have a .FLT extension.

Using Notepad, Open it and scroll down to the heading named [Systems.0]. The state of the battery is the first entry.

Example:

[Systems.0]
BatterySwitch=True
AvionicsSwitch=True
StructuralDeiceSwitch=False
PropDeiceSwitch=False
Autobrakes=Off
StandbyVacuum=False
PropSync=False
FlightDirector=False

There are only two possible choices: True or False.

If yours says False, change it to True and Save your work.

Now your battery will always be on unless you have set up an electrical failure to occur during your flight. Creating such failure situations is done from your "Failures" dialogue. This is accessed from the task bar at the top of your screen when in windowed mode. Look under Aircraft.

Just so there is no misunderstanding, the term "default flight" refers to the flight (aircraft, location, weather and time) that is presented to you on the Create A Flight screen which is the usual startup menu. For further information on this subject, please refer to Tips and Tricks Number 17.

Words to Ponder

YESTERDAY IS HISTORY, TOMORROW A MYSTERY

and TODAY IS A GIFT ...

and that is why it is called the **PRESENT**.

submitted by Captain Richard L. Corbett R.C.N. (ret'd)

Kneeboard Enhancement

Recently I collaborated with **Loyd Livaudais** of Memphis, Tennessee, on a little kneeboard enhancement project named **Omni Notes**.

Omni Notes allows you to display virtually any text on your kneeboard as well as pictures in many standard graphic formats including animated gifs. All of this is done without losing any function of the default kneeboard.

I find it useful to display information regarding airports such as the radio frequencies needed to open animated hanger doors. I also have a page which quickly reminds me of any special key assignments I have made (wing fold, tail hook, water rudder and so on). Because it can be used on **any** aircraft, at **any** time (without pausing the flight), we called it Omni Notes.

In case you missed it, the package is named "**omni_notes.zip**" at **Avsim.com** and "**omninote.zip**" at **Flightsim.com**.

The detailed instructions offer sample setups illustrating the versatility of this idea as well as a very basic introduction to the creation of HTM files which can be easily used with Omni Notes.

Check it out. I think you will find it can enhance your flying experience.

From the E-Mailbag Department

I selected my aircraft and my airport and 12 noon as the time of day and after it had loaded, I saved it and made it my default flight. It is offered as the default flight when I startup FS2004 but the time is **not** 12 noon! If I start FS2004 at 10 PM, that is what time the default flight shows. What happened to my 12 noon setup?

That was the question I recently received. The answer is relatively simple. I told the writer to check his Settings/General dialogue and see whether he was using System Time or Flight Time.

As it turned out, his 12 noon time had been saved correctly but he was using System Time, so the default flight showed the current time of day rather than the time he had saved.

This is one of those settings that you should experiment with to see which one works best for you,

Another reader wrote to ask if there was anyway to make ATC revise the assigned runway for landing and takeoff. He said it was a special problem for him at Los Angles (KLAX) where ATC directed him to runway 6 or 7 but in the real world these runways are rarely used. He wanted to be directed to runway 25 or 24 which are the ones most often in service.

I suggested he might try using the AFCAD program by Lee Swordy - available at all the main download sites - and open KLAX and select the runway(s) (one at a time) he wanted to alter. This is done from the Lists menu. Then look at Properties. There is an option to have either end of the runway "closed for takeoff" etc that you can check. You can also specify the approach pattern direction too. Save it when you are finished making any changes.

ATC "should" now see that the runway(s) in question are closed for takeoffs and/or landings. To be very honest, ATC, for some reason, does **not** always do what it is told but this little adjustment works most of the time.

He wrote back to let me know the suggested adjustments worked just fine.

2006 Desktop Calendars

It's not too late to get your set of 2006 Desktop Calendars as created by **Capt. Wes Archibald**. Wes, a real world pilot, is a regular source of information for Tips and Tricks. These desktop calendars feature beautiful screenshots taken during flying sessions on FS2004. The file name is "**2006cals.zip**" at **Avsim.com**.

My only problem with them was that I had to clean off some of the old, unused shortcuts that had accumulated on my desktop so I could fully enjoy the pictures and see the monthly calendar! Thanks Wes.

Rush Hour

Nobody likes to deal with rush hour traffic in real life but to make your evening flights look more realistic, try installing the new Night Roads offering by **Joni Koljonen**.

It will make a <u>dramatic</u> difference in the way roadways are displayed during the evening hours.

Look for "**night_roads_v1.0.zip**" at **Avsim.com**.

Did You Notice?

In order to make the download size smaller, Tips and Tricks is now offered in PDF format only. Likewise, the updated index is PDF format only. Past issues were in both DOC and PDF formats and the Index was in XLS and PDF formats.

Using only one format makes the resulting zip file considerably smaller which should be helpful to those who still access the Internet by way of a dialup account. The index can still be searched (Control F) for specific items or for "keywords".

The free Adobe Acrobat reader which is needed to view any PDF file can always be downloaded from:

http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html

Several readers wrote to suggest this change and I am happy to oblige.

Employment Opportunity

The U.S. Marines have used the slogan "Looking For a Few Good Men" for a number of years. To paraphrase that slogan;

Tips and Tricks Wants a Few Good Men <u>and</u> Women!

We are looking for anyone who wants to fly an exclusive aircraft.

<u>Here are the basic requirements</u>: You must be….

Any age
Male or Female
Hooked on FS2004 (aren't we all)

<u>Hours:</u>

Anytime the mood strikes you.

<u>Financial details:</u>

Salary – twice what it paid last year (2 x $0.00 = $0.00)

<u>Benefits:</u>

None – except a "warm, fuzzy" feeling.

<u>Perks:</u>

Only one; you get to fly the Tips and Tricks "corporate" aircraft anytime you wish, for as long as you want - with an unlimited expense account for fuel!

Yes, Tips and Tricks now has it's own aircraft – we spare no expense here – that you can fly anywhere in the World.

This is a repaint, provided by **Dave Armour** (a reader who lives near Courtenay, British Columbia, Canada), of the Socata Trinidad as modeled by the great folks at **Premier Aircraft Design**. Tips and Tricks Number 18 carried a brief review of this wonderful little plane.

This repaint is being distributed exclusively as a part of this issue – it will **not** be uploaded to any of the regular sites.

A folder named **TandT Repaint**, which is a part of this package, contains the required texture folder and complete installation instructions.

Of course you will need the original Socata aircraft installed first. It can be found at **Flightsim.com** as "**tb21n725.zip**".

A very sincere "thank you" to **Dave Armour** for his painting skills and to **Barry Blaisdell** of **Premier Aircraft Design** for granting us permission to create this special repaint of the Socata.

I hope you enjoy flying the T and T version of the Socata wherever you go.

Oh by the way, if you install this repaint…. you **are** hired!

All kidding aside, I hope you will feel free to send along some screenshots so I can see what exotic places this little bird has visited. It may be possible to publish a few of them in a future issue.

As the television infomercials are prone to say --- but wait, there is more!

Dave has also created a very nice splash screen showing the Tips and Tricks Socata passing the Space Needle in Seattle, Washington at dusk.

You will find it in the bonus files folder which a part of this package. Make a backup of your present dlgsplash.bmp in the Flight Simulator 9\Uires folder and copy and paste the new one to replace it.

Helicopter Heads Up

If you are just learning to fly helicopters you might want to grab a copy of the recommended Hardware (joystick) settings as compiled by **Steve Hanley**. The recommendations might surprise you.

Go to http://hovercontrol.com/ and click on the Config & Hardware option on the left side of the page. Then select Realism and Control Sensitivity Settings for Helicopters. A printer friendly page is available. HoverControl is a site dedicated to all facets of Helicopter flying and design – a must visit site if you are serious about flying these machines.

The Land of VOZ

It has a landmass so large it is called a Continent. It's topography covers the entire spectrum from dry, arid deserts to lush green forests. It's seasons are generally the opposite of the rest of the World. It offers some of the most intriguing places to fly that can be found anywhere. What is it?

It is Australia, the "land down under" of course.

Unfortunately MS really did not do justice to this section of the World when they created FS2004. The landscape and textures look pretty much as they do anywhere else and this is hardly the case in real life.

This dilemma has been addressed by some very talented folks from Australia in a very unique manner.

They have created **Vista Australia** or as it has become known; The **VOZ Project**.

They have divided Australia into four distinct regions - three of which are virtually complete. When you install the program a "menu" is made available on your desktop. Before you start FS, you select the region in which you want to fly. The program then makes a backup of the FS default textures and other critical files for that region and installs the appropriate new ones.

After this has been completed, start FS and fly in the region you selected. The difference is quite remarkable. When you end your session you can either select another available region or select the "UnVoz" option to restore everything as it originally was.

VOZ is a work in progress that will bear watching – it looks good now and I assume it will become even better as additional airport enhancements and other items are added.

This is a very large country and the download is equally large - 62,712 KB – so be sure you have plenty of disk space available and a high speed Internet connection before auditioning this project.

The filename at **Avsim.com** is "**voz099.zip**".

Be sure to read the extensive documentation that comes with the program and follow the installation instructions very carefully. It takes a few minutes to properly install everything but I believe you will agree that it was time well spent.   The end result might well be described as an "Extreme Makeover".

For full details visit http://vistaoz.org/

Congratulations to the VOZ Project team for such an innovative solution which overcomes the MS "one size fits all" approach..

Aircraft Bone Yard

Have you ever wondered what happens to old "War Birds" when they are no longer needed for immediate defense and/or are considered obsolete?

This screenshot shows just one small section of the vast storage area adjacent to Davis- Monthan Air Force Base near Tucson, Arizona.

The facility is known as AMARC, or the Aerospace Maintenance And Regeneration Center, and is a joint service facility managed by the US Air Force Material Command.

Often referred to as 'The Boneyard', AMARC is an aerospace storage and maintenance facility adjoining Davis-Monthan Air Force Base which provides a service to all branches of the US military (Air Force, Navy, Marines and Army), as well as the Coast Guard and other national agencies.

Currently controlling over 4,200 aircraft as well as many other types of military equipment, AMARC works very hard in promoting itself as not just a 'Boneyard' and takes every opportunity in explaining how it operates it's cost effective, tax saving operations. Many of the stored aircraft can be returned to an operational status in a short period of time and there is a continual process of anti-corrosion and re-preservation work which keeps the aircraft in a stable condition during their stay.

The following link will take you to the AMARC website – a fascinating and informative site to explore with lots of great pictures.

http://www.amarcexperience.com/AMARCDescription.asp

Aerobatics Guide

In Tips and Tricks Number 18 I mentioned how much fun I was having flying an aircraft specifically designed to perform aerobatic maneuvers. As I have now discovered, I was doing it all wrong!

Bernardo Srulzon has released an excellent illustrated guide that shows precisely how to make such maneuvers properly. The file is named "**aerobatics.zip**" at **Avsim.com.** I highly recommend it to anyone who wants a change of pace**.**

If you learn to perform acrobatic maneuvers correctly, that knowledge may well come in handy when flying conventional aircraft also.

A Second Chance

Not all aircraft are destined to spend their "retirement" in a boneyard somewhere. Some find their way into flight museums and a lucky few get refurbished to perform other important duties.

The Martin Mars pictured below is a great example.

The prototype was built by Martin Industries, USA, in June 1942 and delivered to the US Navy in November 1943. Only six were built. They were used for long range transportation to the Pacific theatre during the Second World War.

In 1959, Forest Industries Flying Tankers of British Columbia bought four Martin Mars aircraft from the Mars Metal Company. These were modified for water bombing at Pat Bay on Vancouver Island by Fairey Aviation. They moved to Sprout Lake, just west of Port Alberni in central Vancouver Island.

The Mars picks up its load of water by traveling across the water. Two probes extend just below the surface of the water and can fill the two tanks with 6000 gallons of water in 25 seconds when the aircraft is traveling on its step. Usually chemicals are added to the load of water for better fire suppression.

The following sites provide more details which may be of interest.

http://www.gotofino.com/sproatlakemarsbombers.html

http://www.bcam.net/engines/wcyclone18.htm

Important Reminder

February 14th is St. Valentines Day – what better time to be <u>extra</u> nice to the one who puts up with you sitting in front of your computer for hours on end, indulging your passion for flying.

FS2004 and Laptops

Several folks have inquired about using FS2004 on a laptop computer. I don't have a laptop so am seeking input from any of our readers who might be using one to run FS2004.

I would like to be able to pass on some basic information such as how you fly your aircraft – i.e. can you add a joystick to a laptop? And since laptops apparently do not have a numeric keypad, is there one which can be added or what "work around" do you use?

Any information you can share will be of interest to others I am sure.

Beam Me Up

Here is a clever little gauge you may wish to add to the panel of your favorite aircraft. With the click of the mouse this gauge will raise your viewpoint – i.e. raise your seat – to give you a better view out the cockpit window. Another click will restore the view back to normal.

I find this **much** more convenient than using the default keyboard command (Shift/Enter). It is especially useful when taxiing up to a jetway and you need a better view of the ground just in front of the nose wheel.

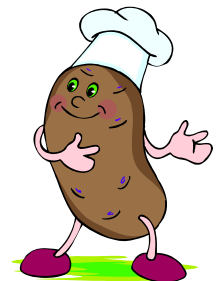The gauge was created by **Glen Copeland** and is named "**pwrseat1.zip**" **Avsim.com.**

You have the choice of a tan or gray gauge which can easily be added to virtually any panel.

Give it a try – I think you will be thanking Glen also.

Pass the Potatoes, Please

To those of us who live in the United States, the mention of the State of Idaho conjures up visions of beautiful scenery, great hunting and fishing plus world famous potatoes.

Boise is the Capital of Idaho and the busy, expanding airport is currently served by 11 scheduled carriers and several charter and commuter services. For those of us who enjoy flying in that area, we have been disappointed to find this Idaho airport was virtually ignored by Microsoft in FS2004.

Happily, **Gary Widup** has solved this problem with his recently released enhancement of the Boise Airport named "**boi2005.zip**" at **Avsim.com**.

Along with being very frame rate friendly, Gary's usual fine attention to details is evident everywhere. It is a fine piece of work and a "keeper" in my humble opinion.

To see more of Gary's work go to:
http://www.avsim.com/hangar/utils/gwidup/

To learn more about the airport and the airlines which serve it, log unto:
http://www.cityofboise.org/transportation/airport/

Waves Gone Bye-Bye?

You may remember the picture in Tips and Tricks Number 14 which showed white rectangles instead of waves breaking on a shoreline.

That phenomenon showed up recently on my machine. As it turned out, three of the four default files that are commonly used to create that effect had somehow disappeared from my effects folder.

The required files are:

fx_falls.bmp
fx_swoosh.bmp   ← These three should be in your Effects/Texture folder
fx_swoosh2.bmp
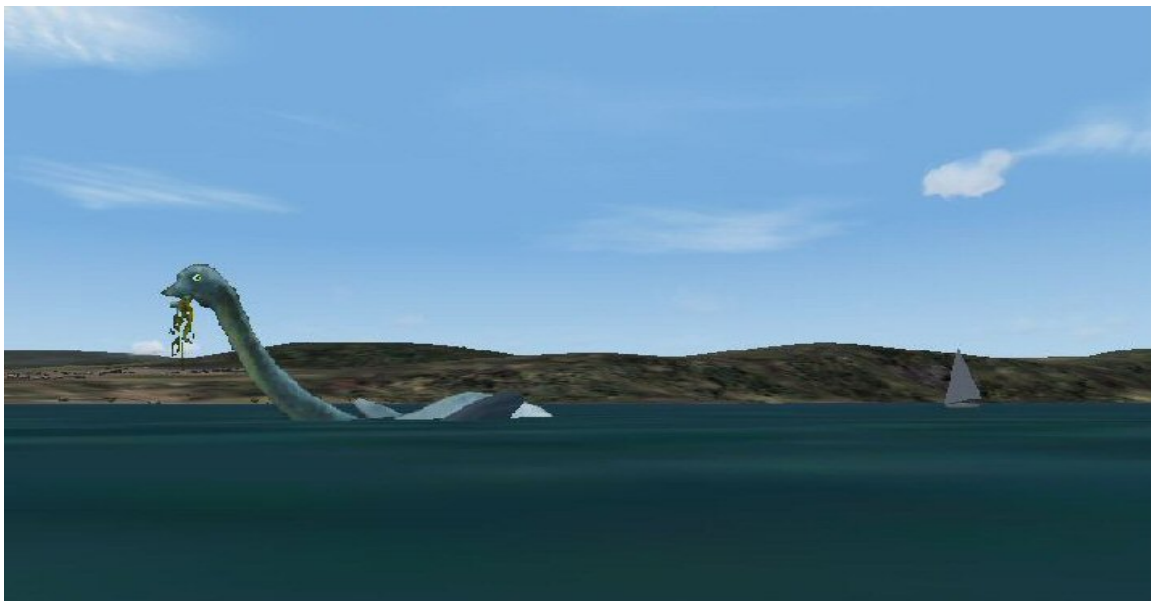
and

fx_waves.fx   ← This should be in the main Effects folder.

If any or all of these are missing, they can be found and restored from:

Disk 1\MSGAME1.CAB\Effects

I have no idea how or why my files went bye-bye, but as soon as I restored the missing ones, my waves were back to normal.

Do You See What I See?

Yes, it's true – Ogopogo, the "Sea Monster" that has long been rumored to inhabit Lake Okanagan near Penticton, British Columbia, Canada, has been spotted again!

You can join the tourists as they flock to the area to get a glimpse of Ogopogo if you download and install "**ogopogo.zip**" by yours truly. You can find it at **Avsim.com**.

This is an enhancement that I have wanted to create for a long time but it was not until **Ron Jeffers** made a suitable animated sea monster available in a library that this little project could become a reality. Thank Ron!

P.S. Don't forget to bring along your camera!

To learn more about this famous creature, log unto:

http://www.tourcanada.com/ogopogo.htm

The Doctor Is In

One of the most useful (and educational) diagnostic tools I have come across is a program called **Filemon**. This program can track and display everything your Windows system is doing – and I mean <u>everything</u>!

If, for instance, you are running FS2004, it will show exactly what files are being accessed and whether or not they were found! Those last few words are extremely important as it seems that FS will continue to look for a requested file (could be a texture or something like that which it thinks it needs) even if the file does not exist. FS will seek whatever file(s) are requested by a scenery addon for example.

This continual "searching" uses resources and can often be the root cause of stuttering on your display. By having a record of this, you can often determine what is missing (like the textures I was missing in the wave story) and find a way to restore them.

This truly remarkable tool can be downloaded from:
http://www.sysinternals.com/Utilities/Filemon.html

Be sure to get the version that will work with your operating system. As I run XP, the file which I downloaded was named "**FilemonNt.zip**".

Here is what I did as I made my first test using Filemon. I wanted to see what is actually happening as FS2004 is being loaded.

Start Filemon. Go to the Volumes option and uncheck everything except the drive where you have FS2004 installed (usually C). Then in the Options menu, turn off Auto Scroll. Then under Edit, select Clear Display.

Minimize Filemon and click your shortcut to start FS2004. Immediately restore Filemon and take a look at all the various items that are being queried during the loading process.

Is it any wonder it takes so long for the Create a Flight screen to appear? You will note that if a particular file is not located where it was expected to be, FS continues to search for it until found and the label "success" is displayed.

You will also note that **each** aircraft and **each** scenery addon you have installed is also checked. It quickly became apparent that the less add-on aircraft and scenery I had, the quicker my FS2004 would load. Perhaps it is time for some serious "spring cleaning" !

I found this to be a most enlightening peek inside the "workings" of my computer as it loaded FS2004. Highly recommended!

Tip: Clear the display and then fly a short flight. Then go back to Filemon and see what your system had to process to display that flight. Simply amazing.

As the log which is created can be printed, this makes diagnosing problems with **any** program – not just FS2004 – considerably easier.

How to Lose Weight

Facing soaring fuel prices and slow ticket sales, Air Canada will try to reduce costs by removing the paint from its planes.

The airline released a statement recently saying that it will be taking the paint, and underlying primer, off a Boeing 767 jet, which will then be polished to give the aluminum frame a shiny look.

Air Canada's theory is that removing the paint will reduce the airplane's weight by as much as 360 pounds, which will make taking off easier and reduce expenses by an estimated $24,000 per airplane, every year.

The jet will be tested over the next few weeks and if the results are positive the airline could take the paint off the rest of its fleet. Air Canada will retain its logo and tail design, but the changes could make its jets look very different from the rest.

A number of ideas have been tried by Air Canada to reduce weight. Recently it imposed new restrictions on luggage and removed pillows and blankets from its jets.

Compiler's comment: I guess this is easier than going to Weight Watchers!

One has to wonder, however, if the Right hand knows what the Left hand is doing at Air Canada. This recent promotional picture touts a proposed new paint scheme for AC.

E-Mail Tip

While this tip is not directly related to FS2004, we simmers do exchange a vast number of e-mails on a daily or weekly basis.

With spammers always seeking new e-mail addresses to "harvest", here is one excellent way to thwart their plans.

When it is desirable to include your e-mail address in **any** e-mail, instead of using your normal one, consider converting it to an image (graphic). Spammers cannot access these.

Here is a sample of the one I have begun to use.

This was created automatically for me at the following site:

http://services.nexodyne.com/email/index.php

You just type in your e-mail address (the name) and then select the provider (in my case it was Verizon) and then hit the "generate" button. It will create and then display the signature graphic which you can download and insert as your address in messages. Most of the popular e-mail services are included in the provider list. The entire process took less than 3 minutes but if it saves me from getting even one spam message, it will have been worth it!

Do It Yourself!

I was very intrigued by the "Fly Baby" aircraft package by **Ron Wanttaja** which I recently auditioned. This aircraft is one you build yourself but it is not a kit – you carve and shape every bit of wood and metal that is required.

The FS version – "**fb_8jan.zip**" at **Flightsim.com** – contains five very different examples of this clever little airplane.

The following screenshot shows the "Canadian" version with a canopy for winter flying.. This example was built by Tom Staples of British Columbia, and he's been flying it (in real life) for thirty years.

So if you need something to occupy your time this summer – other than sitting in front of your computer, pretending to fly – consider building one of these little gems that you actually can pilot! You can do this for as little as $6,000 plus engine.

The Bowers website has all the details and some great pictures.

http://www.bowersflybaby.com

Artwork by Jean Pierre Nugyen

What's Wrong Here?

I guess some passengers just can't wait until the aircraft gets to the gate!

You Can Be Different

Are you aware that you do not have to be reminded that FS2004 by Microsoft is in the process of loading? I am speaking of the splash screen you see every time you start FS2004.

You can have **any** picture you like display on the screen as the program loads – it does **not** have to include the MS logo. Just go to your FS **Uires** subfolder and make a backup of the file named dlgsplash.bmp. Then copy your favorite picture – recommended minimum size and proportions are 800 x 600 pixels – in bmp format –- into this folder and rename it dlgsplash.bmp.

It's as simple as that!

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, please 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/esearch.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

opaflightsimaddict@verizon.net

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

Flightsim Award Winner