From the Right Seat

Peter Rafle CFII, ATP

 (continued)

 Tuesday, I called my office to let them know I was not going to be at my desk as scheduled, but that I could make phone calls as required. I also began to think that my airplane, a Citabria 7ECA, was NOT IFR equipped, and I was in a bind if this weather continued for very long. At noon, I called Burlington again to get a briefing. “5148 Tango, how are you doing?”, the briefer asked. That king of familiarity is unusual, so I responded, “ Hoping to return home soon?” He answered with a description of low ceilings, rain, mountain obscuration and an invitation to call back the next day.

 On Wednesday, I called again for a briefing and the same briefer responded, “ 48 Tango, I sorry to say this, but you and that little airplane are stuck for another day. I see no relief for about forty-eight hours.” At breakfast, my father-in-law told me that they were planning to leave after lunch and that they could drop me off at the Saranac Hotel. I called the office again to give them the news that they may see me on Friday. We discussed rental cars, but I would have to return to get the airplane later.

That afternoon I was delivered to the curb in front of the hotel and a moment later my in-laws were speeding south down Main Street.

The next day, the briefer asked how I was doing and that he though I could get a chance to leave at around 10 am the next morning. I spent the day making business calls and sending emails. I called the airport to have the airplane refueled and to give them an update on my departure plans. Thankfully, the FBO had put the airplane in the hangar before the rain had begun.

At 6am, I looked out the window to see a broken ceiling of grey clouds that could improve. I had breakfast and checked out. A cab took me to the airport for my reunion with N5148T. The FBO manager, Art Leavitt greeted me, offered a cup of coffee and the opined that “ I think we may see a “sucker hole develop within the hour, and you may just get home before the first snow!” I told him that sucker holes were not in my plans, but I’ll hope for the ceiling to get better. Well, in about an hour the ceiling was approaching five thousand feet and yes, an opening was beginning right over the field. We waited another 45 minutes and that first hole had been joined by others and we had a scattered layer that was a good to go! I got in the Citabria and climbed over the field and when I reached the top

of the layer at 6500 feet, I bid Art farewell, and headed south with Mt. Marcy well off my left wing and clear sky over head.

Plan well, expect surprises, make safe choices, have a plan B or C.