

August 11 & 12, Santa Rosa & Santa Fe, NM

Well, on Sunday, Aug. 10th, the high winds finally subsided in Amarillo and I did get another chance to fly out for a last view of Palo Duro canyon. When I returned to the airport to fold up the plane, I had a steady stream of visitors stop by to look over the Highlander. While I never mind speaking to other pilots and interested passer-by's it does slow down my progress and it took almost 2 hours before I got everything packed away. However, I did meet a bunch of interesting airport characters, but unfortunately did not get or cannot remember their names. One was a gentleman of 74 who told me that he has owned a total of 54 airplanes and has not had to pay but for the first one, and that cost him less than \$800. He currently owns a late 60's Cessna 182 which is in pristine condition. Apparently his secret is not to fall in love with your aircraft. Always look for a bargain and be prepared to sell yours for a good profit should the opportunity present itself. By "flipping" planes, you can continuously trade up, he told me. I wonder if that is still true in today's economy?

Then I met another pilot who spent more than a little time with me as I put the Highlander in my trailer. He possesses a '50s era Cessna 170, which is the tail dragger version of the 172 Skyhawk that I once owned. I would guess that he was about my age, and filled me in on some worthwhile ideas as to where to go when I get to New Mexico. I am going to investigate his suggestions and may make the trip up to Taos, which is at 7,000 feet elevation and just before a 13,000 foot mountain range. Finally I met another person who works for a company that installs large utility windmill generators. He is going to be in the area for 6 months, and was actually staying at the same campground that I based out of. Apparently windmills are the new oil derricks here in Texas and Oklahoma. They are springing up everywhere and are clustered in "farms". He told me that a windmill will produce somewhere between 1.5 and 2.5 megawatts of power and that each of their blades (there are 3 on a windmill) can reach 125 feet in length. They can go to 250 or 300 feet in height.

I got on the road early on Monday, 8/11 and when I reached the New Mexico Welcome Center on I-40, I stopped in for some literature. When I told the welcome lady that I had a plane in my trailer, she mentioned that I might want to stop in [Santa Rosa](#), which was half-way between the state line and my overnight stay in Santa Fe. She told me that the old runway at the Santa Rosa municipal airport was actually the pre-1937 Route 66. While the remainder of the roadway had long ago given itself back to the land, this small portion was kept intact for airplanes visiting that small community. She also told me that the big attraction there was the ["Blue Hole"](#), which is a deep artesian spring fed "lake" which is so clear that you can distinguish between a bottle cap and a nickel when viewing down to its sandy bottom, from the surface. She said that it is used as a SCUBA training center since it is about 200 feet wide and 80 feet deep.

As I was passing by the community on I-40, I had a sudden epiphany. Wouldn't it be great to make a take-off and landing on that old portion of Route 66? But first, a word about Route 66. My first contact with this historic roadway was back in 1962. A good friend from grade school and I entered the military at the same time. After college I joined the Army and spent some of my training days learning how to drive and shoot from a tank (the M-49 Pershing medium tank), while Steve went off to do his required service in the Air Force. We both got out at about the same time, and I decided that before I was going to



These windmills have replaced the oil wells and derricks all over Oklahoma, Texas & New Mexico



My airplane sits firmly on what was pre-1937 Route 66 on Santa Rosa, NM's Runway 8-26



In this aerial view of runway 8-26, you can see the faint markings of that original old national road as shown by red arrows extending beyond



This is "downtown" Santa Rosa, NM. I believe that is the "Blue Hole", seen in the foreground

settle down with my first “real job”, that I would see a bit of this country. I asked Steve if he was interested in accompanying me in my brand new 1963 VW Karman Ghia, for a trip around the US. He was, and I drove out to pick him up in Denver, where he was being discharged at the Lowrey Air Force base. We spent about a month touring around and our travels took us along Route 66 in the Southwest for a considerable amount of its length. Those were the days before many Intestates were complete, and travel was slow and scenic. I don't remember if we stopped over in Santa Rosa, but I do recall our stay at a motel outside of Santa Fe. Steve, to this day, insists that it was a “migrant worker camp, with dirt floors”. Since we were on a very limited budget, basically our muster out pay, I do know that we were watching our spending. My recollection was that it was a “quaint adobe type motel with earth colored floor tile”. In any case, it was an interesting trip that eventually took us all the way up to Seattle and the Worlds Fair, before our money began to run out and we had to return to our homes in New Jersey. To this day I am still friends with Steve, and it is he, in fact, the person who set up this web site blog for me and does all of the technical posting of my articles.

I turned off at the Santa Rosa airport exit. Although they have a brand new 5,000 foot asphalt runway to compliment the old Route 66 Runway 8-26, absolutely no one was at that airport. No planes, no hangars, no employees. It was completely deserted. After I unloaded the Highlander, and I began to swing out its wings, the local public safety person drove up in a police vehicle. He was there to repair the electric gate, and we talked for a few minutes. He watched as I set the locking pins into the wings and then went off to do his gate maintenance. I made a 15 minute flight around this very small town, took a couple of photos and then packed everything back into the trailer, to resume my journey to Santa Fe for an overnight stop and a day of sightseeing. However, it was good to get to feel Route 66 under my tires again, and see what little remained of this old road from above.

I decided that I would not attempt to do any flying around [Santa Fe](#) due to the fact that their single airport is a busy commercial field, since this is their State Capital. I did not want to hassle with air traffic control and felt that I would be greatly limited in what I would be able to photograph outside of the Class C airspace that surrounds this city anyway. I instead did my one day of sightseeing via the Vespa and got a good feel for the old downtown historic section of this small city. There are museums, art galleries, parks, upscale hotels, shops, restaurants and more than enough things to peak anyone's interest. I spent about an hour in the plaza area, taking in the scenery and walking the winding streets. The weather was fantastic, with visibilities that seemed to go on forever, and temperatures staying in the upper 70's, with almost no humidity. When I was here 46 years ago, I don't remember it being so commercialized, and I am sure that it was a whole lot more laid back then. I did take in a couple of museums and wandered into a church or two. While on a “rest break” at one of the park benches, I met a gentleman who was waiting for his wife to complete her shopping. We talked a bit, and he gave me a few interesting points to visit and recommended a couple of good restaurants for tonight's meal. In the morning I will break camp early and make the drive along the mountain road into Taos. I will spend a couple of days in that city and its environs and expect to have a chance to take the plane out for an aerial tour or two of what is supposed to be some spectacular mountain scenery.



Santa Fe is a city of museums & art galleries. This is the New Mexico Museum of Fine Arts



The Palace of the Governors is where the Native Americans can sell their arts & crafts



Parks and green areas abound in this city



Even the private homes are in the adobe construction motif and while all are not this grandiose, they are all pleasing to see.