

July 1, 2008 - Practice, Practice, Practice

As a kid I remember hearing about the tourist who goes up to a native New Yorker and asks for directions. "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?". The New Yorker replies, "Practice, practice, practice". Meant as a "joke", there is a lot of truth in this statement. Earlier this week when Troy Wodland of **Just Aircraft** flew my now 99% completed Highlander up to my new airstrip at Seymour Airpark, in East Tennessee ([click for arrival movie](#)) he suggested that I spend 20 to 30 minutes each morning and each evening just doing touch and go landings to better perfect my tail wheel techniques. He commented, as I flew him the 100 miles back to SC, that at 100 hours a pilot will become "at one" with each of the airplanes that they fly. It takes that long, he told me, to feel totally at ease and comfortable with the flying characteristics, handling techniques and control responsiveness from one's plane. That means that I still have some 60 hours to go before I will achieve that level.

I have been trying to put his suggestion into practice (there's that word again), each morning. I get up before 6 AM and make the 30 minute drive down to the strip, preflight the airplane, drag it out of the hanger, perform the run up, and do 6 circuits around the pattern. Then I drive it back into the hanger, and button it up until that evening when I duplicate that entire regimen. It would be far easier if I still had the motor home parked there in the hanger, since that would entail just a 6 step walk from the RV door to the plane door. But since some maintenance issues have come up that need to be addressed before I head out on my journey around the US, I have had to bring my motor home back to the local dealer in Knoxville. It will be another week before all of the new parts and ordered hardware arrives and gets installed. Until then I will have to contend with burning \$10 dollars in diesel fuel for my VW Jetta to make the twice daily round trip, and another \$30 in aviation gas for my hours worth of flight time. No one said that this fantasy was going to be cheap; but when I planned this trip 2 years ago the cost of "liquid energy" was 1/2 of what it is today. However, I know that if I don't take on my journey this year, it is probably that it will never come to pass.



View of my home field with the Smokies beyond

Meanwhile, all of my flying this week has not been of the practice "take-off and landing" variety. In addition to the round trip over the Smoky Mountains to return Troy to his home base, I have also managed to get in a short cross country flight to see an old client friend from the Morristown TN Utility System. It happened to coincide with a Civil Air Patrol event at the Morristown, TN airport, which gave me a chance to see something related to flying other than the 2300 feet of sod runway at my home base.



Tennessee is a State of lakes & mountains. This is Lake Cherokee, which I flew alongside on my way to the Morristown Airport



Photo of me and Mike DeBord, Power Ops Coordinator for the Morristown Utility System, taken at the Morristown Airport.