

April 1, 2019 -



"much too close, too close for comfort ... now"

Whenever I go to an air show which will feature close precision formation flying, such as performed by the **Navy's Blue Angels**, (*as seen in this photo that I took at last year's Vero Beach Air Show*) or the **US Air Force Thunderbirds** or the **Canadian Snow Birds**, I always feel a bit anxious. While I do enjoy the fantastic flying exhibited by these extraordinary pilots with their graceful maneuvers, often performed at hundreds of miles per hour, I am, likewise, fearful that something tragic might happen. It is for this reason that I have never liked doing formation flying with other general aviation aircraft. Believe it or not, this type of flying is not all that uncommon for a lot of pilots, who look upon it as a test of their skill and command of their machines. It is kind of paradoxical that my driving on an interstate at 70 or 80 miles per hour with a spread of 5 or 6 feet from an adjacent car traveling in the same direction, or even having an opposing closing speed of better than 120 MPH with oncoming traffic on a two lane highway, is of little or no concern.

However this is **not** to say that I have never experienced a bit of formation flying myself. A few years ago, while on a fly-in to a fellow Highlander's private airstrip, I managed be in a four plane flight in which one of the aircraft had a photographer on board, and who captured this photo. The secret here is that mine was the plane on which the two other Highlanders formed up. This meant that all I had to do was to maintain a constant altitude, airspeed and direction. The hard work was up to the other two more experienced pilots who, luckily, were able to do their job with finesse and skill.

The other day I took off from Indiantown Airport for one of my local lunch flights. I had just reached my en-route altitude of 1,500 feet when I heard a familiar voice call my name. It was Ed Foy, a neighbor hangar tenant. Ed has been rebuilding a Cessna 180 tail dragger airplane and today was to be his first test flight since the engine and avionics install. "Hey, Ed" I responded. "Where are you?" "Look out your right side" he responded. I did, and there was Ed. Well, I guess that I was in for another formation flight, ready or not.



This incident brought back memories of a photo flight that I made with my own Cessna way back in the 1960's. While on a fly-out to a restaurant with a bunch of fellow pilots from New Jersey's Mid-Atlantic Pilots Assoc. my Skyhawk was captured from a distance of about 50 feet. In this picture you can see my head, peeking from around the window corner post while eyeballing the photo plane. The only regret was that my plane was not all that clean and polished for this particular aerial photo. I believe that flying right seat was my future partner in a single Comanche, Gus Cremonni, with his wife and my, then, wife Patricia in the back seats. I am sure that they were as surprised, as was I at this unexpected close formation event. And, if I am ever able to find it, on one of my old Apple computers, I have an aerial photo of that 1960 PA-24 Comanche single, which is being flown by Gus, with me in the "chase plane" doing the photography.

However this particular story is more about Eddie Foy and his beautifully restored Cessna C-180 Skywagon. As mentioned I have been watching Ed, over the past year, remove almost every piece and part from his 1969 airplane, eliminate almost 200 pounds of useless or obsolete hardware, and painstakingly reinstall cleaned or renewed pieces. He has upgraded most of the instrument panel, much with state of the art electronics, and has had the 230 HP Continental engine totally over-hauled, just like new. He, and his Border Collie dog, Jake, are at the Indiantown field for up to 3 or more days each week and he has worked tirelessly to reach today's goal of getting his airplane back in the air again. However Ed is no newcomer to aviation. He obtained his pilot rating courtesy of the US Air Force where he served for 23 years, 14 of them under active duty status, flying both the Warthog A-10 and the Corsair A-7D combat fighter jets during the Viet Nam war era and also acting as a forward air controller. After his military service he

went to work for American Airlines flying throughout the US, Europe and South America and from whom he retired as Captain on the Airbus A-300 after 21 years with the airline. Ed has now transitioned to the roll of a General Aviation pilot and has hopes of taking his restored Cessna on a lengthy cross country trip, which might reach well into Alaska, in the not too distant future.

