

April 17, 2019 - Saint Petersburg, FL ...a '78 Caddy and breakfast with an old friend

It has been exactly one month since I did my ADS-B "out" performance fly-off of my brand new \$2,500 FAA mandated hardware install which will allow me to continue to utilize controlled airspace beyond the end of this year. Although I technically "failed" that test, which would provide for a \$500 rebate from the FAA, upon further analysis it appears that in a one hour flight (3,600 seconds) my aircraft's track was lost for only 15 seconds, in a landing configuration and while very close to the ground. This was within the agency's tolerance level and my rebate has been approved. I decided to use that rebate, along with a few extra hundred \$, and add the companion ADS-B "in" hardware (mainly a Apple I-pad mini with an I-phone size receiver) that would allow me to see just what the FAA controllers are seeing on their screens. Today's flight was to be my initial test of this new equipment by taking a 300 mile round trip over to St. Petersburg, on the western Gulf Coast side of the state. While the photo to the right, captured off that I-pad screen, had to be majorly cropped in order to eliminate reflection and glare, you can see my "blue" plane at the lower portion along with its course (magenta line) and my actual track over the ground (green line). Out in front of me are two potential traffic "hazards" About five miles ahead is N316BP, (blue arrow-head) which is traveling in the same direction but some 800 feet below me and offset slightly to my right. Some four miles in front of him is another plane, which is 700 feet below me, and which appears to be on final for runway 05 at Okeechobee County Airport. What is **not** shown, due to the cropping, is the portion of the screen which encapsulates all my airplane's information, such as its speed, direction, altitude, time to next waypoint and the final destination, as well as a



myriad of other instructive data. Flying today has gotten to be a whole lot more complicated than it was when I first got involved, over 6 decades ago. There are more aircraft, more special use and restricted air space to keep track of, and a whole lot of new regulations and rules to be aware of. While I could certainly have continued to fly without the help of ADS-B "in", knowing where other nearby airplanes are in relationship to my Highlander and the direction and altitude that they are flying is really valuable. On this particular flight alone I had two instances in which airplanes were converging on me at exactly the same altitude but, due to their position and my high wing configuration, I may not have been aware of until too late to see and avoid them. In these cases I was able to make precautionary turns ahead of the potential conflict. The only downside is that I found myself paying way too much attention to the screen and not enough to what was going on outside of my airplane. But, perhaps, this is because the presentation is still new.

Today's flight was to visit with Barbara Bohlen, a past neighbor from Hilton Head and a now retired College Professor from the University of Illinois, who still has a home up in Champaign, Il. but now lives in Gulfport, a small quaint and historic community located near Saint Petersburg. The hour and a half flight would take me over Tampa Bay for some 10 miles whilst on the approach to Albert Whitted Airport, who's two runways abut that scenic waterway. While I no longer enjoy making over water flights, especially in an airplane that I myself built, on today's journey its 120 HP engine just kept on a-ticking. Whitted is, perhaps, one of the most beautiful general aviation airports that I have landed at and this photo shows my Highlander along with a handful of other small airplanes. Just beyond is the blue waters of Tampa Bay on what was a truly marvelous early spring day in South Florida.





The field's FBO (Fixed Base Operator) **Sheltair** is a modern and upscale facility with its own 2nd floor restaurant, *The Hangar*, at where we decided to have breakfast. The outside balcony, from which the preceding photo of my parked airplane was taken, offered a fresh sea breeze along with a wonderful view and a chance for Barbara and I to catch up. I had flown into this airfield once before, 3 years ago, to help celebrate her grand-daughter's High School graduation prior to her going off to the very same University at which her grand-mother was its Museum Director. Even though we now live in the same state, I used to see Barbara more often when she was up in Illinois as I would have a convention in the Chicago area each year and I would take that opportunity to make the two hour drive south to her home in Champaign. One of the special delights that I had on those trips was the opportunity to drive Barbara's antique 1978 Cadillac Eldorado convertible, some 18+ feet of pure luxury, that provided ride comfort somewhere between the Disney's **Small World** attraction and an upholstered rocking chair. It was not only an pleasurable automobile, but it

kinda reminded me of my own white 1960 Ford Thunderbird convertible which I had purchased, after myself graduating College in 1961. There are some things, in life, that are worthy of keeping, and one's first cars probably fall in that category. Barbara had her Caddy shipped down from Champaign, and is now working on restoring it back to its original splendor so that she can sell it and donate the proceeds to her favorite charity, the World Wildlife Fund. However, before she did, I wanted to again see that behemoth beauty and in the below photo-shopped composite image are the two of us with that marvelous car.



And, before you knew it, it was 4 o'clock and time for our drive to the Whitted Airport and my departure back to the east side of the State. My return flight would take a bit longer, both due to headwinds and a fuel stop at Avon Park where Avgas pricing was attractive. Owning an airplane, available for days like today, is something that I have enjoyed for most of my life. The freedom to make such a trip on a whim and the ability to cut its normal drive time in half certainly has a lot to offer and I am thankful for that day back in the summer of 1957 when I just happened upon a small grass airstrip a short drive from my parent's house in N.J. and had the opportunity to take my very first airplane ride. Look how far it has brought me!

