

August 24, 2016 -

 The Jersey Boys 

I make it a point to get up to New Jersey at least once a year. I still have several family members who live there along with some long time friends who I always enjoy seeing. One of those friends is Robert Greene, who was my flight instructor back in the mid '70's when I was training for my instrument rating. Bob is now a partner in a '60's era Cessna Skylane, and I arranged to meet him at his home air field, for a lunch flight up to Orange County Airport in Montgomery, NY. Spirit Airlines will take me, nonstop, from Florida, up to the Atlantic City Airport for less than \$100 each way... far less! Another old friend, Steve Demarest, will pick me up and I will generally stay at his place in nearby Toms River, for a week or so. I have known Steve since we were both in the same grade school in the early 1950's.



It was a beautiful, albeit a bit warm, summer day when I drove up to Somerset Airport to see Bob's new mode of transportation. Bob has been flying almost as long as I have and, as a flight instructor, is a far better pilot than I will ever be. We both have been presented with the FAA's Wilber and Orville **Wright** Master Pilot Award



certificate for 50 years of safe flying, so we must be doing something **right** (no pun intended.) His Cessna 182 is a bit larger and a faster airplane than the 172 model that I used to own. It is both slightly higher and wider and, with a 280 HP Lycoming IO-540 engine, it has twice the power as did my old Skyhawk. However its cruise speed of 155 MPH is only about 30 MPH faster... and with a 50% more fuel burn rate. But it certainly is a very nice airplane, and it will haul a lot of stuff. However on this particular outing there was only the two of us, along with Bob's 25 pound flight bag, to be concerned with.

Our direct route of travel was only to be 75 miles and would have us skirt the western boundary of the large block of Class "B" controlled airspace that encompasses the New York City and adjoining northern New Jersey geography. It tends to handle some very busy air traffic with a half dozen major commercial and business jet airports, including White Plains, Teterboro, Newark, LaGuardia and JFK, all of which are located inside a 25 mile circle. The requirements for traversing this congested area of skies require specific equipment on board the aircraft, including a transponder with altitude reporting capabilities. This means that even though you might not be talking to air traffic control, they are fully aware of your presence within their boundary area, including your speed and height above the ground. And there are also restrictions with regard to the altitudes at which you are allowed to fly while within this Class B territory, requiring some very strict adherence to, lest you violate the myriad of FAA regulations that govern traveling through their highly monitored air space. In the past I have had my own difficulty with regard to such violations and, believe me, this is something that a pilot does not want to deal with more than once in a lifetime.



We flight planned for a 2,500 foot altitude, which would give a nice view of the surrounding terrain. This part of New Jersey is made up of low rolling hills, many lakes & huge expensive mansions. While we were outside the outer ring of the Class B airspace, we were still under its veil which required the use of the mode "C" transponder. The GPS moving map in Bob's plane has a beneficial function which shows all nearby aircraft which are transmitting via their own transponders. Individual planes will show up as a blip on his display screen along with a number and a "+" or "-", which indicates how many feet higher or lower they are than us. In the NYC area this is highly desirable and we were able to monitor many close by aircraft on the instrument well before we were able to see them visually. It was interesting to watch as the indicated jet traffic to the three metropolitan airports passed 500 to 1,000 ft. overhead. It's hard to fathom that I used to routinely fly in this highly congested airspace without giving it a second thought & with none of today's sophisticated electronics.



Compared to the rather sparse panel on my Highlander, the Cessna had a lot of stuff to keep track of. However when I was flying the twin-Comanche there was a whole lot more instrumentation to look over, and once you get used to the layout of the panel you develop an automatic scan pattern and combine it with a lot of "out of the window" glances for traffic.



On this page are photos of some of the passing scenery as viewed from the pilots seat as well as a shot of the panel from my seat, and, of course, the obligatory "selfie".



We soon arrived at the Orange County Airport & it was time to set up for a landing to runway 21. Bob established himself on a right hand downwind entry which gave me a great view of an airport that I probably had not visited for more than 40 years. It is nestled in the outlying rolling hills that begin the Appalachian Mountains. Montgomery NY's airfield lies less than 8 miles to the west of Stewart Field, another small commercial jet aviation served airport.



I was able to capture this photo of our landing just as we neared the runway approach end. On this particular day there were only two other airplanes in the traffic pattern, and you can see one on the ground holding just short of the active. Once on the runway, it was a short taxi over to the terminal building, which housed a really nice upscale eatery called *Culinary Creations* that featured gourmet quality fare and excellent homemade desserts.



After having our fill of a delicious lunch it was time to head back to the plane for a 30 minute return to Somerset airport followed by a short visit over to Bob's home.

It was good to again fly to some of the same places that I had gotten to know so well, four decades ago, when I lived in North Jersey. And I thoroughly enjoy these yearly trips up to a state that I once occupied for more than half of my lifetime.