

August 8, 2014 - Flying... Boring?... Never!

A non pilot friend of mine recently inquired if I ever get bored flying to the same places over and over. This is like asking the Nascar driver if he gets bored running the very same Daytona 500 circuit for over 200 laps each race. Or the pro golfer if he gets bored hitting that little white ball over the exact same course for each of the 4 days it takes to play the Masters. Or the Big Bass Bash Tournament fisherman if he gets bored casting his line into that same Ozark lake over and over. No, in flying, as with each of these other events, no two similar seeming actions are ever exactly the same.

Each time I take my airplane up I am facing a multitude of actions, decisions, calculations, physical demands and mental evaluations which may be completely different that those from a previous flight. Wind direction and speed, on the ground, will determine just how many degree of flaps I will use and the amount of aileron deflection that I feed in as I attain lift off. While in flight I have to constantly be on the lookout for potential obstacles, be they other aircraft, TV towers (many of which reach up to 2,000 above the terrain level), or those ever present circling vultures which dominate the South Florida landscape (most of which have wingspans wider than my plane's cabin. I have to constantly adjust my flight path to compensate for wind drift, so as to stay on my predetermined route. I have to pay attention to my stabilizer trim setting so as not to gain or lose altitude. I have to monitor the frequencies of the various airports along my route that I overfly, in order to remain cognizant of their traffic patterns and approaching or departing aircraft. Once I arrive at my destination airport I have to make myself aware of their active runway, the wind direction and speed and all the other aircraft that may be arriving, landing, or leaving their airspace. I have to fit myself in amongst their traffic and decide on just how wide a pattern I will use and just when to turn base and then onto final. And, once on final I have to judge my vertical and horizontal differential so as to arrive at my predetermined landing point at exactly the right moment. When I reach that point, I then have to level the plane off so as to achieve ground effect, about 3 feet above the runway, to allow my speed to bleed off so as to come into contact with the pavement exactly when lift leaves the wings. And, these are just the mechanical functions that go into each flight; just like the mechanical functions that race drivers, golfers and fisherman have to make in order to excel at their sport. More important is the pure joy that comes from gliding over the earth surface from 500 to 5,000 feet above ground level, taking in the scenic beauty below and the blue sky and puffy clouds above. While it is true that flying a small light sport aircraft, such as the one that I now own, is nowhere as speedy or as efficient a transportation tool as was the twin or high performance single Piper Comanches that I have owned in the past, this current machine allows me to attain such a special mental place, that it is almost spiritual.

Today's flight was an hour long practice session of a dozen low passes, trying to stay about 1 foot above runway touchdown while maintaining a minimum flying speed of 40 MPH, in order to enhance my landing skills. Only the Daytona race driver who is able to achieve an under 48 second lap time, or the Masters golfer that shoots a 10 under par, or the fisherman who manages to land an 8 pound bass will know exactly what I mean.



The Pilot constantly evaluates and re-evaluates



My Panel - Shows me everything I need to know



The EFIS - Electronic Flight Information System



AvMap - Moving GPS map showing where I am, where I am going, how fast & when I will get there