

Dec. 12, 2012 - KOBE - You just never know who's gonna drop in

I guess that I have finally arrived at the point in my avocation that I tend to favor the proverbial "milk run" flights. These are fairly routine trips to airports that I am well familiar with and which pose no real challenge to complete. They are common to both newbie low time pilots who do not yet have the confidence or self assurance to "reach out" and for older seniors who have begun to "lose their edge". But that is not always the case. I used to have a friend who was a Captain with American Airlines who flew the same Boeing 727 model roundtrip from BWI (Baltimore/Washington International) to Saint Thomas,USVI or San Juan Puerto Rico almost daily. He loved the absence of complexity that these routine flights presented and the fact that he was generally back at his own home and in his own bed every night.

My most common "milk run" flight is over to nearby Okeechobee County Airport with its terminal restaurant **The Landing Strip Cafe**. This is a 45 minute round trip alongside "The Big Lake" of that same name. It is perfect for those days where weather is unpredictable as, under the worst of circumstances, I am within a 1 hour pick-up drive by Miriam from our home should I not be able to complete the return flight. It is also handy for those days where I cannot spare but a few hours due to other personal commitments... many of which are the "things to do" lists promulgated by that same aforementioned Miriam. Today's trip was over to KOBE airport.

Upon landing I parked right across from the normally based Gulfstream IV jets, one of which is owned by the nearby **Outlaws Restaurant**. Now Okeechobee County Airport is not a large commercial airport. It is more of a Flight Training School destination where student pilots and their instructors can practice take off and landings without the pressure of high levels of aircraft traffic.

Oh, sometimes there can be a half dozen or so single engine aircraft vying for position in the pattern but generally everyone is of the same speed as to pose no real complexity. However today was definitely different. Immediately upon landing a fairly large executive biz-jet touched down and parked next to my Highlander and two men exited.



A quick check of my phone's FAA airplane registry app determined that it was a 2004 Gulfstream 100 owned by **The Crimson Tide Foundation** of the Athletic Dept. Univ. of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. So, why was it here? To recruit a future quarterback? For a pilot lunch stop? Or to pick up an important member of the school's management who was visiting in South Florida? Who knows, but the hourly operating cost of this jet is in the \$2,000 range so it was probably not for the pilot's "milk run" lunch break. **Roll Tide!!**

And, no sooner than I had snapped the photo of this U. of A. Gulfstream yet another jet taxis into the ramp and just behind my plane. It turns out to be a 1996 Cessna Citation 650 owned by ProAir Aviation of Paducah Ky. This is a charter company which provides speedy private flights to those who can afford such luxuries. So who was it bringing to Okeechobee, and from where? Well, that we will never know. After all this is the world of *private* aviation.



And, as I turned toward the restaurant I noticed still another large biz-jet parked just off my left wing. It was a Cessna Citation 2000 owned by the Textron Corporation & based in Wichita Ks. Textron is a aerospace, defense and industrial conglomerate & actually owns Cessna Aircraft. So, why was it here at OBE? A defense secret? Who knows!

Then in comes another Textron jet, this one a 2005 Cessna Citation, and it parks almost alongside the aforementioned Textron Cessna. The mystery deepens! Now Textron is a \$15 Billion corporation made up of dozens of subsidiaries who generate over 3/4 of a Billion \$ in revenue each year, but I could find none with the designation of initials of UP. Finding two high end business jets together at a small town airport leads one to imagine all sorts of scenarios. Perhaps they are here to gobble up still another company to add to their trophies. Ah, but which one. Maybe the local Dollar Store??



Then, I noticed across the way from where I was parked still another private executive aircraft. This was 2006 French Dessault Breguet Mystere Falcon 200 which was owned by CM Aircraft. This is another private aviation charter company based in Wilmington, Delaware which, obviously, had delivered a top end executive to Okeechobee for another high level meeting. A Falcon Mystere on the ramp with all those other jets. Ah, the intrigue, the *mystery*...perhaps a conspiracy with the Textron people?? Why so many high end aircraft here in southern Florida during the winter?



Florida in the winter, hmm..? Why, after all, the answer is relatively simple. It is **warm here in Florida** during the winter.



And, finally, a photo of the type of aircraft more generally found parked on the KOBE ramp. It is a 1940 Stearman Model 75 Bi-plane once used for military pilot training during WWII, and parked just behind the Textron **UP** jet. What a contrast of flying machines! I just love my "milk run" flights.