

Feb. 6, 2013 - Placid Lakes & Bart Spadaro

One of the neat things about my flying to nearby airports is all of the interesting people that I get to meet along the way. There is hardly a trip that I take where I don't run into someone that I know, or who knows someone that I know. And, there is usually some link that brings up a connection to something, some place or someone that we have in common. Case in point:

A week ago I was doing my typical Friday flight over to nearby Fort Pierce/St. Lucie County Airport for a mid-morning breakfast. I parked right in front of the FBO's restaurant, "The Tiki" and went inside to find a window seat so that I could watch the airplanes landing and taking off on adjacent Runway 32. At the table next to mine was a older couple and the gentleman asked me what type of plane I was flying. A conversation followed and I found out that I was talking to a living legend in the Long Island, NY flying community.

The gentleman that I was conversing with was Bart Spadaro, who owns and operates one of the oldest active privately owned public use airports on Long Island, NY. Spadaro field is located on the eastern end of Long Island, right next to the affluent Hampton communities. It's paved 2400 north/south runway is nestled in and amongst a half dozen other busy airports including the Mc Arthur/Islip commercial air carrier Class C airspace and the Brookhaven National Lab facilities to the west and the Hampton airports to the East. There are also a handful of glider and parachute jumping strips located in between.

Bart got his start in aviation in 1945 when he was able to first solo at age 16, and now has over 25,000 flight hours logged as a flight instructor and commercial pilot. Bart has even flown such notables as Jimmy Buffet around in his Cessna Super Skywagon amphibian. He is a certified Airplane and Powerplant mechanic and an Aircraft Inspector as well. Now 83 and semi-retired he spends his winters at his on airport home at Placid Lakes airpark in nearby Lake Placid and summers at his Long Island airstrip. You might say the best of both worlds. What establishes a link to me and my flying is that years ago, when I lived in North Jersey and flew out of Teterboro Airport many of my weekend trips would be out to Block Island, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard or to my brother's home in Bedford, Mass., right on the L.I. Sound. These flights would take me almost directly over Bart's strip, and while I never did land there, to the best of my recollection, I probably looked down on it on more than one occasion.

I promised Bart that I would take him flying and we did so this past Wednesday when I landed at his private airport strip at Placid Lakes. I took him over to nearby Sebring for a light lunch before returning him to his daughter who is caring for him while he is down in Florida. And while over at Sebring I had a couple of gentlemen come over and ask me about my airplane. Well it turns out that they are retired missionary pilots who live at the same Sebring complex as did my fiancée's parents and were flying in Nigeria, Africa at the same time here parents were there.

Again proof of the 7 degrees of separation which has us all attached to each other one way or another.



Today's flight was mainly over orange groves



The Citrus Tower is a landmark of Lake Placid



Bart's Cessna 205 Super Skywagon on floats



We loaded up for our lunch flight to Sebring