

Feb. 10, 2013 - Amelia's Restaurant at Lakeland Airport

Over the past few years I have been over to Lakeland's Regional Airport only for the annual EAA Sun n' Fun event when the place is covered up with general aviation, military, and even commercial aircraft. During that week there is hardly any room to fit in another airplane. Well, this certainly wasn't the case today.



In many respects I even wonder why there is a full time active control tower on the field now that their only commercial airline company, DirectAir has gone defunct... just about a year now. On the strength of very limited service being provided by this small regional carrier a beautiful, and I am sure very expensive, terminal building was built, complete with baggage carousel, ticket counters, Hertz rental car kiosk and, of course, all the TSA and airport security offices. When I strolled through this completely empty building, on my way to Amelia's Restaurant, located on the second floor and overlooking the field, it was like walking through a ghost town. I know little about DirectAir, but since Lakeland is midway between Tampa and Orlando, (both less than a two hour drive away) which have extensive airline service to locations throughout the US and beyond, I am not surprised that a small time regional carrier could not make good.

It is but a short walk from the FBO where I parked my little Highlander, in and amongst the half dozen or so private jet aircraft, over to the terminal building. Amelia's is certainly an "upscale" airport restaurant and is well appointed with bright, airy furnishing and is clean and well cared after. Unfortunately it does not appear to have much of a clientele now that the terminal is essentially inactive. When I arrived at 1 PM on a very pleasant Monday there were only a three tables occupied and probably had more staffing than customers. I was immediately seated at one of the many window seats which overlook the field. Despite the nice weather, there was very little aircraft activity taking place. A couple of light airplanes practicing take-off and landings and one corporate jet departure during my entire hour stay. One of the interesting features of each of the window booths is the presence of aviation headsets which allow one to listen into the conversations between tower and the airplanes in the traffic pattern. Perhaps on a weekend there would be enough activity to warrant these listening devices, but not so much today. My meal was excellent. A nice sized portion of a blackened prime rib accompanied by sweet potato fries and a salad, and finished off with excellent NY style cheesecake, all for under \$20 bucks. Well worth the hour and a half flight each way and, I will be back. I only hope that Amelia's will still be there when I do.



The now almost deserted new terminal building



The bright aircraft themed interior of Amelia's



My window seat gave me a nice view of the tower



However there was very little aircraft activity today