

March 2, 2019 - Aero Acres *"Howdy neighbor. We're glad that you could drop in for lunch"*

My home airport, at Indiantown, is not the closest to where I actually live. Less than 8 miles to the northwest of my house is the fly-in community of Aero Acres with its 3,000+ foot long east-west runway. Normally it is closed to visitors unless they are invited in by a presiding resident, but with one notable exception. Once each year, usually during the winter months, it hosts an "open house lunch event" for all that wish to attend. I will normally fly directly over this airpark on my way up to Vero Beach and I have always wanted to make a visit. Today was to be the day.

However I wanted to first say good-bye to an old friend who was down, for his yearly two month visit, from Newfoundland, Canada. I first ran unto Frank O'Connor about four years ago when he happened to drive onto the Indiantown airport, more out of curiosity, and stopped in front of my hangar. We got to talking and I offered to take him along on one of my breakfast flights. Since then we try to get together once or twice on each of his subsequent snow-bird visits, and take a flight to somewhere. He has a 36 foot sailboat which he stores at the close-by Indiantown Marina, that he charts out to Canadian visitors



who wish to experience the Bahaman Islands instead of their normal wintertime ice, snow and cold. However this time was to be slightly different in that his visitors this year were going to be just his children and grandchildren, each coming for their own one week cruise, during the month of March. As it turned out he was just about ready to cast off and after our good-bye's he sailed out on the St. Lucie Canal towards the Stuart Inlet, some 30 miles to the east, and then into the Atlantic Ocean. I was able to capture a photo of his sailboat, the ***Morning Watch*** as it navigated this scenic 200 foot wide waterway.

It would take Frank over 5 hours to make his trip to the Inlet but less than 15 minutes for me to reach Aero Acres, the same distance away, and which already had a long



line of airplanes streaming down the grass tie-down paralleling the single paved runway. I anticipated a lengthy delay in the queue line for the food. However, that wait was somewhat mitigated by a talented guitarist/singer who had positioned himself adjacent to the hangar dispensing the grub and whose style featured Jimmy Buffet and Island type music. In addition, while on the food line, we also had a chance to view the various incoming airplanes, including a flight of 3 WW-2 war-birds, one of which was emitting a smoke contrail. Now it was time to see if the meal would be worth the wait.



For a \$15 contribution (much of which profit would go to help maintain the airfield) one received a large plate of chicken and/or pulled pork bar-b-que as well as slices of beef brisket, along with several sides. I chose baked beans, potato soufflé, a deviled egg, pasta salad and coleslaw, and all were tasty. A canned soda came with the meal and coffee and pastry deserts followed. During my arrival time, shortly after noon, there had to be well over a hundred people occupying the picnic benches and tables, most under canopy cover in case of rain or hot sun. However the day was perfect with pleasant upper 70 degree temperatures and puffy cumulous clouds. The music continued throughout the lunch period and it was enjoyable chatting with several of the pilots who were sitting at my table. One couple had previously lived at a home on the airport and owned several airplanes while there. They now are back close to their kids in the central Pennsylvania area but enjoy spending time in Florida during the winters.



After the meal it was time to wander the flight line to look at the variety of aircraft that were in attendance. There were, of course, standard category airplanes such as Cessnas, Pipers, Beech's, both single and twins, along with many home built experimentals and also light sports, like mine. They were several military and a number of bi-planes as well as an occasional auto-gyro and amphibian sea-plane. Aircraft numbered in the multi-dozens and there were several that were entered in a "people's choice" vote ballot. I checked off a 1959 Piper PA-23 Apache twin which was actually the forerunner to the Twin Comanche PA-24 that I once owned. While a physically larger and heavier airplane, it shared the same two Lycoming 160 HP engines that powered my red and white Comanche. The old fashioned interior panel was very similar as well and the red leather interior was almost identical to mine. It brought back fond memories.



It is occasions, such as this lunch fly-in, that makes owning and flying a private aircraft in South Florida during the winter such an enjoyable experience. The pleasant commederie of fellow pilots, a beautiful winter day and a good noon time meal. What more could one ask for?