

## March 17, 2018 - It's *DejaVu...* all over again!

Although I first started my flying in 1957, after graduating from High School, it was not until 1963, after getting married, that I purchased my first airplane, a used 1946 Ercoupe 415C that cost me \$2,250. I kept this airplane for a little over one year, while I worked on attaining my private certificate, after which I traded it in for an brand new \$10,900 1964 Cessna Model 172E. The Skyhawk was a 4 place while the Ercoupe had only 2 seats, and almost no luggage space. The Cessna had



Me, on the ground in my 1946 Ercoupe

room enough to accommodate all of our luggage and travel stuff as well as a small Honda 50cc motor scooter to boot. The Ercoupe would barely maintain a 90 MPH cruise speed while the Skyhawk could exceed 125 MPH. But the Ercoupe was a good and inexpensive training aircraft and it had "clamshell" type windows which would slide down into the cockpit frame, essentially making the airplane a convertible. It truly was **a lot of fun to fly.**



My 1964 Cessna Skyhawk, in flight

The other day I had the opportunity to again pilot a 1946 Ercoupe. This came about when my Highlander was down due to a bad starter motor. My old flight instructor was coming into town and had offered to give me my FAA required bi-annual flight review while here. My on field maintenance shop has a 415C available and I considered using it for this exam. Since it had been some 60 years since I last flew this type of airplane, which uses an integrated rudder/nose steering configuration, I decided that a dual flight with one of the shop's mechanics would be a wise move. While it felt, at first, strange not having rudder pedals to manipulate while taxiing and flying, I quickly adapted. However I was shocked at the lack of power offered with this 85 HP engine, despite our being well below gross aircraft weight. Climb-out barely saw a 200 foot per minute rate even with full throttle. I kept trying to push the control in further, to no avail. Despite maintaining the best rate of climb speed of 70 MPH it stayed between 200 and 250 fpm. We eventually attained the 1,500 feet of altitude that I wanted for my air work and was able to achieve my desired attitude and altitude while in turns, despite having no onboard instrumentation to assist me in these maneuvers. Further complicating matters was the absence of any onboard radio or headset, making communicating to each other an exercise in shouting. I did two landings to my home field, one



a "missed approach" order to get a feel for what the airplane would provide, should I have to demonstrate one to the examiner during my flight test. While approaching the 60 MPH speed at which a landing flare would begin, I applied full power and began a gradual climb-out. And gradual it was. Seeing only a 100 fpm climb rate I watched as the end of the runway came closer and closer. With no trees obstructing that end and only cattle grazing terrain beyond, there really was no worry, but I soon came to the conclusion that this was probably not the best machine in which to show off my piloting skills during a flight review. I decided to, instead, wait until later in the year when I expect to be back up in NJ, where my instructor lives, and then take my examination in a rental airplane. But I do have to admit the Ercoupe is still a **lot of fun to fly!**

