

May 10, 11 & 12, 2013 - Plane Fun Days - Brasstown, NC

Over the past two years I have managed to attend the weekend fly-in of Just Aircraft Company homebuilts at Billy Payne's grass strip in the North Carolina mountains, "just down the road a piece" from Murphy. Because of a prediction for poor weather this year, I had prepared myself for a 400 mile, 7 1/2 hour drive. Then, on Friday morning, I put in a phone call into Billy, who said "Come on and fly in, the weather's just fine". That was all that I needed to hear. I transferred the suitcase from the car to the plane, and three and a quarter hours later I was landing at his well manicured 2200 foot grass strip in the NC "highlands".

I was greeted by a sight of 15 parked Highlanders and (a few "un-named" aircraft) as well as 3 parked RV's, all enjoying a delightful early spring day. Over the next days there would be a myriad of flying "games" which ranged from "doing the Limbo" under a 10' high (and lower) plastic tape strung across the runway, to flying after and popping released helium balloons. Paper sacks full of flour were dropped on ground targets and pilots tried their skills at spot landings, short field take offs and landings as well as other feats of daring do.

Unfortunately bad weather to the immediate north precluded many of the Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia aircraft from being able to fly in, and a bit of the wet stuff even made it to Brasstown on Saturday afternoon. When it did, it was time to "hanger fly" and share stories with other aviators, or to chow down for some of the catered Mexican cuisine and beverages. When the rain stopped there was an interesting demonstration of short field landings with the planes slipping and sliding as they tried to touch down and come to a complete halt in the shortest distance. But the big treat of the weekend was watching the brand new Just Aircraft SuperSTOL in action. This plane will easily take off or land in well less than 100 feet, and it is setting the entire Light Sport Aircraft industry back on its heels.

We even had an impromptu flying caravan of a half dozen or so aircraft which "buzzed" a nearby dirt auto race track operated by a friend of the airstrip owner. That was an event that even I felt skilled enough to participate in, and it was a blast flying tandem through the valleys and down the center line of the raceway.

Saturday evening's steak and chicken cookout was held at a nearby Morocycle Shop, also owned by Billy Payne, and was accompanied by beer and even a bit of real mountain moonshine. The entire group enjoyed a really good Elvis impersonator, who performed much more than "The King's" music.

On Sunday morning I awoke to 46 degrees and clearing skies. A bit more time was spent at the airport saying farewells to fellow Highlander pilots before climbing into my airplane for the flight back to S.C. And, you can imagine my delight when the return trip took only 2 1/2 hours for the 380 mile straight line direct flight thanks to some very helpful tailwinds at 9,500 feet. And an even greater surprise greeted me when I climbed out of the plane, once on the ground at Hilton Head, to find that the temperature there was 87 very hot and humid degrees, almost twice what it was that morning back in the North Carolina mountains.



My en-route view of the NC mountains and lakes



This was my view while taxiing into the "ramp"



Some of the planes formed up in the semi-circle



Mine was just one of 3 nose wheel versions there



Time to go chase balloons and maybe burst a few



"Bombing" a target was much harder than it looked



Spot landings were a lot of fun, if you hit the spot



Watching SuperSTOL at work on the short runway



Doing the "Limbo Dance" under the tape



A close-up view of the SuperSTOL's rugged gear



When it rains you "hanger fly" and wait for it to stop



Saturday's entertainment "taking care of business"