

May 14 & 15, 2013 - Conway & Myrtle Beach, SC trip

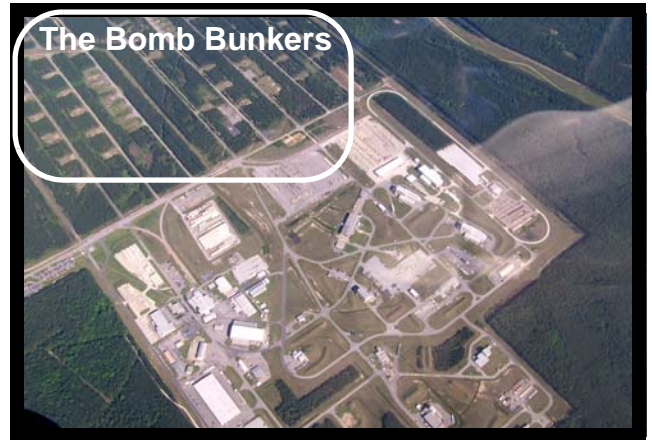
I understood, when I returned to flying in 2008 after an absence of a dozen years, that the experimental Light Sport Aircraft that I had just built was never going to be a true replacement for the two Piper Comanches that I had been flying for the preceding quarter century. A plane that travels half as fast and half as high as those high performance retractable geared aircraft, I felt, would only be good for very local trips, but would, at least, allow me to continue to enjoy the experience of flight. Well, I am beginning to think that I may have been wrong in that premise.

Oh, sure, I would never use the Highlander to travel down into Mexico, or to overfly Cuba on my way to the Cayman Islands, or to make a transcontinental trip, like I did with the Comanches, but I am finding that the Highlander does fill the bill on some of the journeys that I would otherwise have to make by car. My recent flight to the North Carolina mountains was accomplished in 1/3 the time that it would have taken to drive, and this current trip cut my travel by more than half.

I have an old acquaintance from my New Jersey days who also flew and whom I have stayed in contact with since he and his wife retired to the Myrtle Beach, SC area. I try to get to see Moir once a year. When I used to work in my thermal imaging consulting business one of my electric utility clients was based in the small coastal town of Conway, SC and I would base my motor home out of their service center for a few days each year while I was inspecting their electric sub-stations. I always made it a point to visit with my old friend then, and even after I retired, I have made several trips up to see him... most with my car.

Since I had been spending a couple of weeks at my condo in Hilton Head, and I had my little plane with me, I decided that on the next set of really nice days I would make the 140 direct air mile flight to do this year's visit, instead of the 4 hour 220 road mile drive. Unfortunately the winds turned out to be on my nose both going and returning, but the round trip flight of 3 3/4 hours certainly beat having to be on the road 8 hours fighting traffic. One of the interesting sights that I saw while en-route over Charleston was its bomb storage complex. This city had a major military presence just a few years ago, with both a Naval Base and a Air Force facility. As such they maintained a very large munition and bomb storage depot just outside of the city limits. With its dozens of underground concrete and steel reinforced bunkers, it was also said to have nuclear ordinance present. I flew directly over that complex while en-route, albeit at a one mile altitude.

Myrtle Beach also had its own military air base, which flew the A-10 "Warthog" tank busters made famous in the Iraq conflict. Moir and I toured the outside military aircraft museum paying homage to the various fighters flying out of there, starting with the F-86 Saberjet from the Korean conflict. As a point of general information, years ago, I believe in 1993 or so, I had the privilege of having been one of the first general aviation airplanes to have flown into the Myrtle Beach Air Base on the day that it transitioned over to civilian usage. Now, some two decades later, I was again in what had turned into a very modern and busy commercial airline terminal complex where the old PX might have sat. All in all, it was a pleasant and enjoyable trip via my LSA.



Charleston's Bomb Storage depot @ 5,500'



Inside the Myrtle Beach Airport Terminal



Moir & Me in front of an A-10 Warthog



It was a great beach day to be on the Myrtle Beach boardwalk