

May 18, 2014 - New Jersey: "I can see clearly now..."

Back in the 1960's, the air in and around the NYC area was REALLY dirty. I recall routinely climbing out of Totowa-Wayne airport, in northern New Jersey, through dark brown mucky air with visibilities well less than the 3 miles required for VFR flight. It wasn't until passing through 6 to 8 thousand feet that, suddenly & dramatically, I would enter clear, clean air with unlimited visibilities. Those were the days of REAL air pollution which has steadily improved and, some half century later, the New York environs' air rivals that of south Florida for cleanliness.

Such was the case on a cool, crisp mid-May weekend morning when I met Justin Dempsey, an Irishman pilot, at Old Bridge Airport in north Jersey for a short flight over to nearby Solberg Field. There we picked up Bob Greene, an instrument instructor who had given me my training some 4 decades earlier, and who was now instructing Justin in the fine points of flying under the hood. We filed IFR for Lincoln Park, with its small 3,000 foot long runway, in north Jersey, and executed a GPS approach to runway 19. This is the same area that I once flew out of with my Cessna Skyhawk, when I lived there in the '60's, but I had never before visited Lincoln Park. It has a really nice restaurant, right on the field, by the name of Sunset Bar and Grill and we were able to get an outside table with a good view of the field.

After an enjoyable lunch we reversed our course and I was back at my old grade school friend's home in Toms River, NJ by mid-afternoon. It was enjoyable, again flying over terrain that I had routinely traveled in the decade or so when I had my airplanes based in north Jersey. This also cumulated a weeks visit to my home state to help celebrate the wedding of a cousin, a trip up to see one of my old bosses, when I worked for a construction company there, and another for lunch with an old college buddy. I manage to get up to New Jersey twice each year, but almost never am I able to do any flying there, so today was quite a treat.

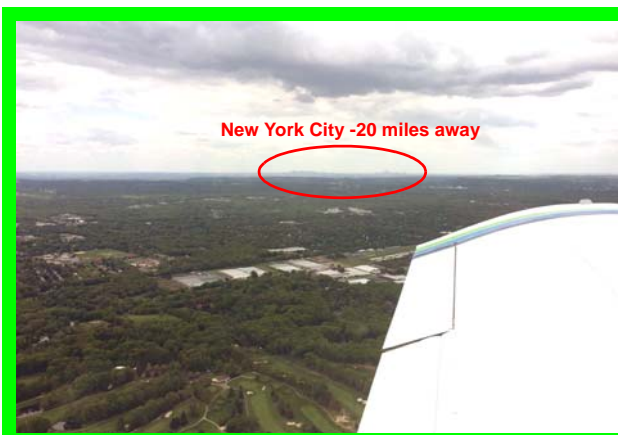
One of the things that I hear quite often these days is how we are destroying our environment by polluting both its air and water and decimating the land. I find it interesting that in the half century that I have been flying I have found that the air has become immensely cleaner and visibilities are now often 20 miles or better, which at 3,000 feet altitude, will generally will allow me to see clear to the curvature of the earth. I have my own un-scientific theory that the air has become too clean, and this is why nature, in all of its wisdom, provides for volcano eruptions, massive forrest fires and even tornados, all of which put necessary particulates back into the same atmosphere that man has scrubbed clean via the government's air regulations. I firmly believe that these particulates are needed to help filter out the sunlight and the resulting warmth, which is now getting through and helping to create the so called "global warming" effect that we find ourselves in today. I find it paradoxical to note that the coldest and most intense winters that I remember were during the early part of the last century when the air was really dirty. I believe that it was all these particulates in our atmosphere that helped deflect and absorb the sun's heat before it got to ground level. Now that we have eliminated much of them we have destined ourselves to ever warmer temperatures. But then, I am not a scientist, nor do I play one on TV, ... so what do I know?



Me, Bob Greene, Justin Dempsey & his Piper 235



Pilots eye view of our Cherokee's instrument panel



New Jersey's countryside during our hour flight



Finally, lunchtime at the Sunset Grill restaurant