

Nov. 2, 2012 - Ft. Lauderdale's Executive Airport

A week ago I made the short flight to Fort Lauderdale Exec., some 60 miles from my home field, in order to enjoy breakfast at the Jet Runway Cafe, located next to the Banyan Jet Center. Unfortunately it was a Sunday, and the restaurant was closed. So, today, a Friday, I tried again. It was a beautiful cool fall day with morning temperatures in the low 60's, Visibility was unlimited and the skies were a cloudless deep blue. My flight south took me close to the Atlantic coastline, but far enough away from the controlled airspace located around West Palm Beach, Boca Raton and Pompano Beach (which is the winter home of the Goodyear Blimp). While I could have flown south, directly over the shoreline, it would have involved a lot of radio communication and channel switching in order to stay in contact with those 3 airport towers. Since the winds were out of the west, it would also have had me uncomfortable close to the landing approaches for those fields. Staying a few miles away from those airports lowered my pucker factor considerably.

Runway 26 at KFEX (the FAA designation for this airport) has 6000 feet of asphalt runway, 100 feet wide. This is more than adequate for the assortment of business aircraft that utilize this alternate facility to Lauderdale International. However my little light sport airplane needs just a fraction of that, so I was able to easily make the turn-off at the first taxiway, just 600 feet down from the approach end touchdown point. I made the short taxi over to Banyan and parked among the myriad of biz-jets on the main ramp. I had previously mentioned that the owner and CEO of Banyan, a Donny Champion, once was a classmate of my fiancée when she was a child growing up in Nigeria Africa with her missionary parents and her 3 sisters. I had met Donny once before, but like my last visit, he was not available this day as well. I did get to spend a few minutes in the FBO lobby, which can only be compared to a first class luxury hotel with its majestic vaulted ceiling, well lit interior, large tropical fish aquarium, palm trees and original air work. It would be just the place for a flight crew to relax after a long inter-continental or even international trip. However my 45 minute flight needed no such R&R, so I immediately headed over to the Jet Runway Cafe.

When my server asked if I knew what I wanted, I immediately replied "the almond waffle with bacon, please". She apologetically informed me that breakfast ended 10 minutes ago and handed me the lunch menu. My decision was a roast beef hoagie, au jus and sweet potato fries, but I was really looking forward to the waffle. Oh, well, I guess that another trip will be in order, at a future date. Meanwhile while I ate I had a wonderful view of the adjoining runway 31, which I also would be using on my departure in about an hour. While most of its traffic was singles and light twins, there was one Learjet that did take off and my photo caught it on climb out as I focused on the Goodyear Blimp in the background, and which was flying over nearby Pompano Beach airport some 5 miles to the north.

Someone recently asked me if I didn't get tired of making the same trips over and over again. I looked him straight in the eye and asked right back, "Well, do you ever get tired of sex with the same woman each night, over and over?" I knew right away that I had made a big mistake. Hell, unlike sex, each flight is a brand new adventure. You might even say that I am a "flying virgin".



My flight south, along the Atlantic coastline



Banyan's Lobby is like that of a fine luxury hotel



My window view table at the Jet Runway Cafe



Here I could see business jets taking off along with the Goodyear Blimp flying nearby