

Oct. 18, 2015 - Into the Air Again, Into the Air Again.... I just can't wait to get into the Air Again

It has been almost 5 months since I last flew my Highlander Airplane and I have simply been bored to death. At the end of March our little Yorkie, Ms. Scarlet Doolittle, died just weeks before her 14th birthday due to a serious breathing difficulty... we think because of possible lung cancer. Then two months later my plane's engine likewise died, due to the loss of one of its cylinder's, because of valve lifter wear of the camshaft resulting in metal contamination of the oil and eventual crackshaft bearing damage. Both of these losses created a lot of free time on my hands, spent mostly on "make work" projects and a lot of computer surfing. Finally my new engine arrived from Australia and thus began the process of installing the liquid cooled heads and their ancillary components, the various engine monitoring sensors and an electronic ignition module and then mounting all into the cowling. Next came the test flights, which immediately produced an coolant overheating situation that eventually turned out to be a failure of the water pumps digital controller. A replacement was ordered, again from the engine's Australian manufacturer, which resulted in another 3 week wait for its delivery. After installation a couple of other minor problems manifested and further tinkering was necessary. Now with all in a seemingly functional operational condition I began the 10 hours of engine break in flying which is conducted under high power settings so as to generate enough pressure forces to seat the cylinder rings and valves. This involves very high RPM and, with it, high fuel consumption. Instead of my usual conservative 5 gallon per hour fuel burn, the 2850-2900 RPM required for engine break in is producing over 8 GPH on my fuel flow gauge. Oh, well, this is only for 10 hours, and then I can get back to a more economical burn rate. Meanwhile my first 3 flights were confined to circling my home field at 3,000 feet altitude for an hour at a time. Today I finally decided that there was

Ms. Scarlet Doolittle just a few weeks before she left us for "doggie heaven"



probably enough reliability demonstrated with the new engine to range out a bit further. After a very thorough pre-flight inspection. I opted for a flight over to nearby Okeechobee airport for an early morning breakfast at their on field restaurant's outdoor patio.

While there I ran across an old acquaintance that I have not seen for almost two years. I met Robb Tiller when I first brought my home built Highlander down to Florida. In fact it was he who suggested that I base out of the Indiantown Airport since it was far less expensive than the nearer North County Airport and it provided a friendlier group of plane owners and pilots. Robb has quite a flying history and Goggling his name will bring up some very interesting information about this unique "character" and his colorful past. He joined me at the outside table for a few minutes as we caught up. All in all it was a good day... but then any day that I get to fly has to be a good day.

