

Sept. 13, 2013 - It's Page Field, Ft. Myers - Oh, Hot Dog!

Flying in South Florida during the summertime is always an "iffy" proposition. Generally, sometime during the day, there will be rain showers or even thunderstorms. So, some planning has to go into deciding just where to fly, and at what time of day. Often the rain comes in the morning while at other times afternoon thundershowers are the norm. And, occasionally it will rain during both morning and evening. Well today it looked like it was going to be one of those rare instances when it would remain clear for much of the day. I decided that a lunchtime \$100 "hot dog" flight might be in order. On a previous trip over to Ft. Myers, I had learned that Base Ops, the FBO on the field hosted a "customer appreciation day" each and every Friday. They provided grilled hot dogs, along with chips, soft drinks, coffee and cookies, all complimentary. My only cost would be the fuel involved for the two and a half hour round trip (12 gallons @ \$4.80 per, or \$57 total... just about half of that "\$100 meal flight" namesake)

Because I don't have a high degree of confidence in overwater flying in my light-sport home built, I elected to travel around Lake Okechobee instead of traversing the 30 miles across its middle. This resulted in adding 8 miles to the trip, but eliminated the "pucker factor" that an over water flight would entail. While I have, often in the past, flown above cloud decks, today was somewhat unusual in that the cloud tops only went up to about a thousand feet... probably left over from dissipating morning fog. So, as I skimmed gracefully over them at 1,500, I had a really nice view of the passing terrain below, along with white fluffy cotton puff clouds in what was very smooth air.

Today I also had a passenger aboard. I had decided to bring Ms. Scarlet Doolittle, our 12 year old Yorkie, along since she also enjoys having a hot dog every now and then. You may recall previous blog entries in which I have had photos of our Yorkshire Terriers featured. Sadly our little 3 1/2 year old, 4 pound Lexee died suddenly last April, from a burst spinal disk which immediately destroyed her spinal cord. Not a day goes by that we don't miss that little bundle of fluff, as does her big sister. On today's trip I had also planned on seeing a really old acquaintance from my flying days back in New Jersey when I was a member of a pilot's group known as MAPA (Mid Atlantic Pilots Assoc.). I had not seen John De Nicola for well over 40 years and only recently came across his name associated with an article about one of the north Jersey airfields that I used to fly out of, and which is now an industrial park. I managed to track John down and discovered that he currently lives in Fort Myers, my destination for today. Unfortunately John had a medical errand to run for his brother and didn't make it over to the airport before my 1 PM deadline, when I had to head back to West Palm for some chores that I, myself, had to do. Perhaps we will yet get together on a future visit to the Gulf Coast side of the state.

Meanwhile I enjoyed the day's activities along with a chance to meet and talk to some of the other attendees who came for the free wienies. And, of course, Ms. Scarlet always enjoys flying as well, since she then gets a chance to sample the local cuisine herself. She is an excellent traveler, in both car and plane, as she tends to nap until our destination, and food time, arrives.



Flying over the low cloud deck en route



Entering the traffic pattern at Page Field



In front of the Base Ops Service Center



Scarlet pays close attention to my Hot Dog