

Sept. 6, 2013 - "Rockin' 'round the Clock" at Mel's Diner - Fort Myers, FL

It has been said that the 1940's produced "Our Greatest Generation" with young men willingly going off to war to serve and protect their fellow man from oppression, no matter their homeland. I have to agree that those courageous teenagers, who were completely selfless and willing to die for their beliefs, were indeed great. However, many of my peers feel that the 1950's probably produced the best era in which to be a teenager, ever enjoyed by any generation. Today's youth will never again have the opportunity to experience truly carefree days when rock and roll lyrics such as Bill Haley's & the Comets' "Rock around the Clock" or Elvis's "Jail House Rock" could actually be understood, and bullying was little more than an occasional wedgy or "knuckle sandwich". It was truly an "Ozzie and Harriet", "Wonder Years" and a "Laverne & Shirley" world rolled into one glorious decade. For many, the "drug of choice" was little more than the nicotine from a store bought cigarette combined with caffeine from too many coca-colas. Sex was safe because there was so little of it available, and there was no date rape, child molesters, gangs, drug dealers or random violence to contend with. Those were truly "Happy Days", and, of course, who could forget Mel's Drive-In from Ron Howard's film, "American Graffiti".

Well, I was intrigued to see that there is a "Mel's Diner" located just across the street from the FBO (Fixed Base Operation) at Page Field, located in downtown Fort Myers, Florida. That tower controlled airport is located within the Class "C" airspace reserved for Southwest Florida's International Airport, which provides the air carrier operations for the Ft. Myers and Naples communities. What this means to general aviation pilots, such as myself, flying into the smaller Page Airport, is that in order to traverse that controlled airspace you will need either a clearance from ATC (air traffic control), to allow you to enter into their airspace, or that you must stay outside the limits of their controlled area. The latter I was able to easily accomplish on my approach to Page's Runway 23 by staying at 1,100 feet, once under their Class "C" zone, until I was cleared to land.

Once on the ground I taxied over to "Base Ops", the big FBO located on the west side of the field. There is no landing, parking or ramp fee for short term transients and they have some of the cheapest aviation fuel in all of south Florida (well under \$5 per gallon). They even provide a complimentary Hertz rental car for up to two hours. And this is what I used for my one road mile drive over to Mel's. However I discovered that it is an easy 10 minute walk once outside of the FBO building, by going directly across a shopping plaza to the restaurant, and I will use this method of transportation on future trips. Mel's is patterned after a typical 1950's diner with period furnishings, pictures, photos, and other such memorabilia mounted on the walls and shelves located throughout the restaurant. Background music is also reminiscent of the period and the only thing missing from the waitress attire is the "poodle skirt". The menu is quite extensive, but since I was there for breakfast, I opted for the 3-9's combo, which consisted of 3 eggs, any style, 3 strips of bacon and 3 pancakes, all for \$3.99, as long as you order an accompanying beverage. For me it was coffee, and it turned out to be a good meal for a great price. I will be back... again and again!



Flying @ 1,000 feet en-route to Fort Myers, FL.



View of the 'burbs and the bridges to the Beach



In front of Mel's Diner, across from the airport



My \$3.99 breakfast of eggs, bacon & pancakes