

May 13-15, 2011 - Brasstown, NC Fly-In

Sometimes timing seems to work out perfectly. Such was the case when I contacted Just Aircraft, the manufacturer of my kit airplane, to alert them to the fact that I would be arriving during the week of May 16 to pick up my Highlander, which had been at the factory for some cowl modifications. "Why don't you plan on attending the "Just Fun Days" fly-in at Billy Payne's field in Brasstown, NC" Troy Woodland, of Just asked. "Well, I didn't know about it, but now that I do, I will" was my reply. Much depended on the completion of the work on my motor home, which was being carried out at my RV dealership in Knoxville, TN and which required some major reworking of the air supply system before I could leave with it. Timing was going to be tight, but at about 3 PM on Friday the 13th, I was able to get on the road for the 150 mile drive over to the small community of Brasstown, located right next to the mountain resort of Murphy, NC. Although I arrived at about dusk, after some very heavy rains had gone through the area, planes were flying out of the well manicured grass airport owned by fellow Highlander owner, and LSA instructor Billy Payne. In fact, it was Billy who gave me my FAA required bi-ennial flight review last year, and I had the opportunity to fly into his multi-runway strip at that time. This time I would be there with my motor home and Vespa scooter.

I was provided an electrical hook-up on one of his vacant hanger concrete slabs and was told to expect another RV later that evening. Sure enough at about 9PM Keevin Moore, his wife Kay and daughter Anna and her boyfriend Tyler pulled up next to me. In the morning we had an early coffee together before heading over to the covered pavilion which served as our meeting place and would later be used for our lunch and dinner meals.

During the daylight hours on Saturday a series of flying skill challenges were conducted with all seven of the Highlander and Escapade model planes in attendance. Several of the participants were flying the nose wheel conversion of the Highlander, and this was of particular interest to me as this is a modification that I am seriously considering making. The flying competitions included a power off spot landing contest, short field take off (92 feet) and shortest landing distance, from touchdown to a full stop... which was won by Troy Woodland at just 65 feet (twice the length of my motor home!!). There was a chase and pop the balloon event, and a Limbo "dance" where you had to fly under a streamer, which was continuously lowered while strung across the runway, without touching the plane's tires to the ground or breaking the streamer. This was won by one of our Highlanders at 9 feet, which is actually a foot lower than the height of that plane's tail when in a flying configuration. This requires both skill and precise timing in rotating under the streamer line.

Weather for the fly-in was a fantastic cool springtime day and the camaraderie of fellow Highlander owners, spectators and visitors made for a perfect event. Billy Payne's hospitality was above and beyond the call, and flying out of his private field was delightful. And while I did not have my own plane there, I did have the opportunity to fly "shotgun" with another Highlander owner as we tried to find and pop a pesky red balloon. Hopefully at next years event I will have my own red and white airplane present and will be able to compete as well.



My campground for the event, next to the runway



Saturday morning "breakfast with the neighbors"



Getting ready for my ride over to the pavilion



Planes gathering at the pavilion meeting place



A tough crowd of “judges” watching the events



A Highlander demonstrating landing skills



7 Just Aircraft planes participated on Saturday



The airfield was shared with other creatures



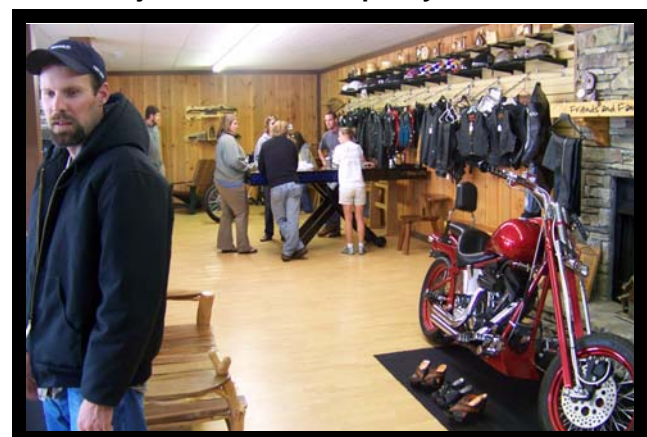
Flying in under the “Limbo” line set at 9 feet



Now just where is that pesky balloon?



Getting ready for our evening’s barbecue meal



A visit to Billy Payne’s motorcycle shop & grill