

Oct. 4th & 5th - 72nd Mountain State Forest Festival

During the first weekend of each October, Elkin's holds its annual [Forest Festival](#) that heralds the benefits that the wood products industry has provided the Mountain State of West Virginia. Back in the 20's and 30's clear cutting of the state's forests, with no effort to replenish the harvested trees, essentially decimated the old growth hardwoods leaving the terrain to the ravages of erosion by weather. It was only after the US Forestry Services and the State's Dept. of Natural Resources combined forces to establish vast areas of state and national woodlands with strict harvesting standards and stringent replanting requirements, did the woodlands begin to come back. Today West Virginia leads the country in both the quality and quantity of its hardwood trees. Every year I come into this state for two to four weeks to help some of those wood product mills maintain their plant's electrical system integrity. This year I had the luck of seeing my schedule take me into Elkins during the height of this festival.

On Saturday I made my last flight of this trip over the city and its surrounding hills and mountain tops during absolutely gorgeous weather conditions. I took time to flit over the ridge lines, enjoying the scarlets, golds, reds, yellows, oranges and the little remaining green coloration. It was breathtaking. I finished off my 30 minute aerial sojourn with a pass over the downtown area, which hosts the myriad of event activities, parades, music venues and other entertainment which brings tens of thousands to this small city each autumn. Since I am still exercising my private pilot's ticket, I was not restricted by the prohibition against flying over open air assemblages or large groups of people that the Light Sport Pilot's licensee is subject to.

After landing I prepared to pack up the plane into the trailer. While beginning to fold up the wings, I noticed that the State's Supper Caravan had landed and taxied up to the ramp. After off loading Joe Manchin, West Virginia's Governor and his entourage, his two pilots wandered over to introduce themselves and check out the Highlander. Just as the State Police SUV was exiting the ramp, the window rolled down and the Governor asked if I was getting ready to leave. I acknowledged that I was, and thanked him for an enjoyable visit to his state. Apparently he was off to the festival's big parade, as he was their Grand Marshal. While I arrived at the parade too late to see him again, I did have the opportunity to photograph his aircraft and talk further to his two pilots. Unknown to me at the time, one of them had flown an aerobatics routine in his Super Decathlon at the Parkersburg airshow that I had attended the previous weekend. I complimented him on his first rate performance at that show.

Later in the afternoon I made the short drive into town to wander amongst some of the areas that I had previously viewed from the air. The parade was in full swing, the various carnival rides were going full tilt, and even the Tygart Flyer leaf viewing train was at the station and packed with tourists taking full advantage of the wonderful fall weather. On the next page I have a bunch of photos taken of the parade. There is something unique about small town America, its rural value system, and enjoyment of the simple things of life. To them friends, family, & community are the all important factors that makes life in these communities so meaningful. I feel privileged to have been able to participate in their world these past two weeks.



Today the visibilities seemed to go on forever



Color has come to the mountains with a vengeance



The WV Governor's Cessna Super Caravan turbo



The Tygart Flyer at the Elkins' Railway Station



The parade had High School marching bands.....with pretty girls twirling, dancing and waving flags



There was Miss Teen West Virginia.....along with her court, being pulled on a float



Toronto, Canada's precision motorcycle police performed What is a Forest Festival without a log truck



There was military equipment & weponary.....along with veterans from past and present conflicts