

Oct. 2011 - Rocky Mountain High- COLORADO

A James Taylor song contains the lyrics "I've seen fire, I've seen rain", but for the 7 days that I just spent visiting in the Denver area of Colorado, all that I saw was "sunny skies that I thought would never end". It was clear and safire blue with comfortable cool temperatures each and every day that I was there.

I first met my host for this week long vacation in 2006 when I attended an EAA Pilot Workshop to learn about electrical system installation for my light sport aircraft project. Roger Stout was at the same course, being held just north of Colorado's capital city. and our paths crossed. When I found out that he was building the same brand and model airplane as mine, a Just Aircraft Co. Highlander tailwheel, we became instant friends. I have visited Roger, who is a FAA Certified Flight Instructor, in the past, for about a week during my 2008 trip around the US with my airplane, and again last year when I flew my Highlander down from my summer base in Custer, South Dakota and spent 4 days as his house guest (both visits were posted in previous blog articles). This year I made the trip via commercial airline, but since I had the opportunity to handle the controls of his Highlander on several of those flights, and even received my bi-ennuel flight review from Roger, while there, I figured that this trip would qualify for a posting in my 2011 "places that I've been" section.

We toured the mountains surrounding Denver by both ground and air and had several "Hundred Dollar Hamburger" flights. (which refers to the cost of the fuel used, not the value of the food) We went over to Leadville, CO., which has this country's highest "public use" airport (almost 10,000 feet in elevation) for a late lunch and visit to its historic downtown. We flew up to the Greeley-Weld County airport, located just north of Denver, and down to Pueblo, some 100 miles to the south where we toured through its extensive military aircraft museum. We made a trip with one of Roger's flying buddies following along in his Piper PA-18 Super Cub to a friends grass strip and drove deep into the mountains to view the colorful Aspen trees "up close and personal". I even had a chance to attend the season opening of the Lonetree Performing Arts Center for a philhmonic concert at which Roger's wife's cousin was playing first violin, for a night of "culture in the mountains". On my last evening it was over to a fine downtown Denver eatery where I met up with a nephew and niece who had recently migrated over from the Atlanta, GA. and Chattanooga, TN. areas and were now living full time in the "mile high" city.

Roger's home is at the 6,300 foot elevation in Parker, CO and he flies out of nearby Everett Airstrip. It took a few days for me to get used to the high altitude and shortness of breath that I experienced with even the mildest of activity, and I am still suffering the effects of chapped lips from the cool dry mountain weather. Daytime mid 70 degree temperatures, with evenings down into the 40's were quite a contrast of the hot and humid 90's that I left behind in south Florida. And, combined with the hospitality of the Stouts, the beauty of the Autum color change in the mountains, fine home cooking and even the chance to experience some mountain culture, it sure made this "flying" trip one of the year's highlights. I do want to do it again real soon, but hopefully the next time, in my own Highlander Light Sport aircraft.



Roger and me in his Highlander's cockpit



A "flying buddy" on one of our "day trips"



On final to Bottom Bayou airport's grass strip



Roger Stout's home built Highlander aircraft



Leadville's runway and adjoining 14 K Mtn. peaks



Me with my head thru the airport sign's cut-out



The "Baby Doe" Opera house on Main St.



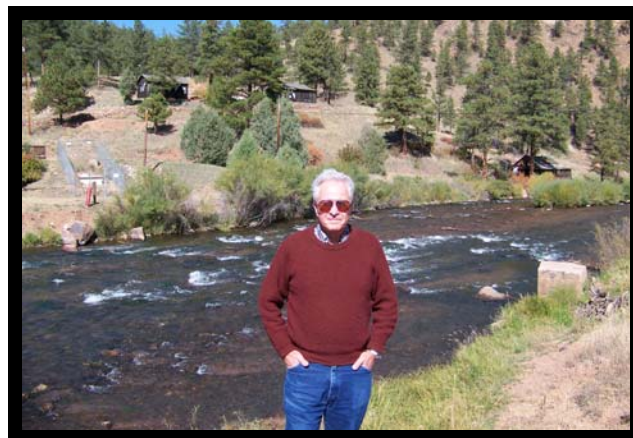
This is a view of Leadville's historic downtown



I was there during the peak fall color season



Aspen trees were showing brilliant yellow color



Mountain temps were brisk by the Platte River



One of our "\$100 hamburger" airport fly-in meals