

Sept. 13-15, 2008 - Lake Chautauqua & Jamestown, NY

~~Singing~~ Flying in the Rain, ~~Singing~~ Flying in the Rain,
It's a glorious feeling, and I'm happy again.

I have always enjoyed flying in the rain. With my other planes, it generally it was done while IFR (under instrument conditions)...but not always. Sometimes when a gentle rain was falling, I would go up with my plane just to listen to the sound of the drops hitting the cabin roof-top. It was a melodic staccato sound that was both relaxing and almost hypnotic. Now flying in heavy thunderstorm rain... well, that's a whole different story.

When I arrived to the Jamestown, NY area, on Friday Sept. 12th and brought the plane over to nearby Dart Field in Maysville, NY, it was raining. However, it was mostly a gentle rain...and on, Saturday afternoon I drove the motor scooter over to the field and unloaded the Highlander for a short, but enjoyable flyover of Lake Chautauqua. Because of low clouds I never did get much over 800 feet above the lake level, but that made for some scenic flying for the 30 minutes that I was aloft. It also gave me a chance to see just where that "gentle rain" was entering into the cockpit through some poorly fitting door seals. At least now I know where I have to go to correct this example of poor workmanship on my part, when I finally do get the plane back to my hanger in Tennessee.

I made one large circle of this 2 mile wide, 20 mile long lake located just south of a "real" lake...Lake Erie...and then headed back to Dart Field, a typical small town grass airstrip with two well manicured runways. Despite the all day rain, its runway was firm and drained well. It took me less than 30 minutes to put the plane back in the trailer and my Gore-Tex raingear kept me relatively dry. However, I did learn that while flying in the rain was nothing to dread, and even folding up the wings in a moderate downpour was easily accomplished, that driving the 5 miles back to the campground on a scooter was definitely uncomfortable if you do not have a full face helmet. Mine is a "fighter pilot" style, which leaves the lower 1/3 of the face out in the slipstream, and the pelting of rain drops on that exposed face does smart.

My stay at [Camp Chautauqua](#), a really nice campground located right on the Lake happened to hit on the big finale weekend for this RV resort. There were a bunch of activities scheduled, including a wine and cheese tasting in the afternoon, a pig roast in the evening, live music, a haunted house for the kids, a costume judging contest for the older teens and adults, as well as a spectacular fireworks display after dark. As luck would have it, the prediction of heavy rainfall for the entire weekend never came to be. By the time that we had finished our supper at the big covered pavilion, the rain had finally stopped and the fireworks went off in grand fashion.

In fact, when I awoke on Sunday morning, it was to bright blue skies and light winds. A good day to fly, I thought and I headed over to the airport right after church. The hour long flight was again enjoyable and I had a chance to view the local sights from just a bit over 1,200 feet this time. However, after landing I learned, from the local pilots... who were having their regular Sunday afternoon "wienie roast"... that



The East shore of Lake Chautauqua flying South



Camp Chautauqua, the campground that I stay at



Overview of "The Institution" @ Lake Chautauqua



The famous Athenaeum Hotel, seen from the air

we were going to get the remnants of Hurricane Ike during the evening hours and winds were predicted to reach some 50mph overnight. I put the plane away, and buttoned up the trailer for retrieval in the morning. Then I wandered over to the hanger where the dozen or so local pilots were doing the next best thing to flying...eating. They invited me to sample some of the "wursts" that were cooking on the grill, and I had an enjoyable hour of conversation and "hanger flying" to go along with my hot dog. Many of the planes located at Dart Field are of the tailwheel variety, and I was pleased to receive the compliment that "my cross wind landing technique" was deemed worthy by the throng of far more proficient pilots than me.

I usually spend an entire weekend here, around this time each Fall, as several of my wood industry clients have close by facilities that I inspect yearly. The nearby city of Jamestown, was the childhood home of [Lucille Ball](#) and there are several museums, her home and other attractions devoted to this famous movie and TV personality, open to the public for viewing. During my past excursions I have spent a several hours touring the replica of the Desi-Lu studio which has everything from continuous audios of her radio shows, (prior to their TV days), a bunch of the "I Love Lucy" videos, as well as the actual sets from the apartments featured on the several series that Lucy starred in. It is interesting to note that this was the first TV show shot with 3 separate cameras all recording each scene from differing angles. Skillful splicing gave an entirely different perspective from the normal one camera shot, then used on other TV shows. There is also an interactive CD presentation located on several computers located throughout the studio which takes one through the entire life of this sitcom actress icon.

I did make my annual trip over to ["The Institution"](#) in Chautauqua Village. (Whenever I hear that name, I recall a limerick from my youth.) It went something like this *"Rooty-toot-toot! Rooty-toot-toot! We are the girls of the Institute!"* Now, I don't remember the next verse, but I do believe that it was somewhat "off color". Anyway, I never quite understood what exactly this "Institution" is all about. It is supposed to be a place for deep thinkers and "professorial" types to come together each summer for "renewal", to study, to take workshops, attend symposiums, go to chamber music recitals, partake of the arts, theater and the like. There are beautiful well kept victorian homes located behind its manned security gate with high metal fences. However, things must not be all that financially stable in academia these days, since I noticed that almost 25% of these upscale homes have "for sale" signs on them.

The big hotel located right there on the grounds is [The Athenaeum](#), and it, like many of the homes in this village, it goes back to the late 1800's. It is a grand and beautiful edifice, and I am sure that their nightly rate is a whole lot more that what I was spending over at the campground. There is also a world class golf course associated with the Institution, so I guess that there is more to this life style than just study and contemplation. One of these years I have to come up during the summer season, and see for myself what really goes on here...and maybe even try to catch up with one of those "girls from the Institute".



Here I am at the Lakeside portico of the Hotel



The main entrance of this spectacular structure



One of the many "cottages" with "for sale" signs



Flying over downtown Jamestown, NY