

Sept. 4, 2010 - Spearfish, SD EAA Fly In and Breakfast

As I have told you, in previous articles, pilots really don't have to have much of a reason to fly. Today I used the excuse of a EAA fly-in breakfast for an early morning lift off from Custer County airport for the 55 mile flight to nearby Spearfish, located just above South Dakota's Black Hills. When I awoke at 6 AM morning temperatures were in the upper 30's and I needed to break out my sweater, jacket and gloves, and even applied cabin heat during the 45 minute flight north. Along the way I was passed on the left by a faster cabin class twin engined airplane. I had my camera right there on my seat for a photo as he pulled away from me at a 150 MPH or so quicker speed. That afternoon, when I returned to Custer, temperatures were in the mid 80's.)



A pilots view of the Black Hills from 8,500 feet

Along the way I flew over the small mining community of Lead (pronounced Leed) which has a open pit gold mine that must be at least 500 feet deep. I understand that after they hit the bottom of this pit they continued on with a vertical shaft that goes down for another mile. One of these days I would like to make the hour drive up to Lead to go through their gold mine museum and learn more about the history of this interesting community. And, just next to Lead is the City of Deadwood which is the epitome of an early Wild West town. I had already visited this interesting place a few weeks previously and did a web blog article about its legends and notable citizens, including Wild Bill Hickock and Calamity Jane. Today it is primarily a "casino town" where gambling is king and the \$7 casino steak dinner is queen.

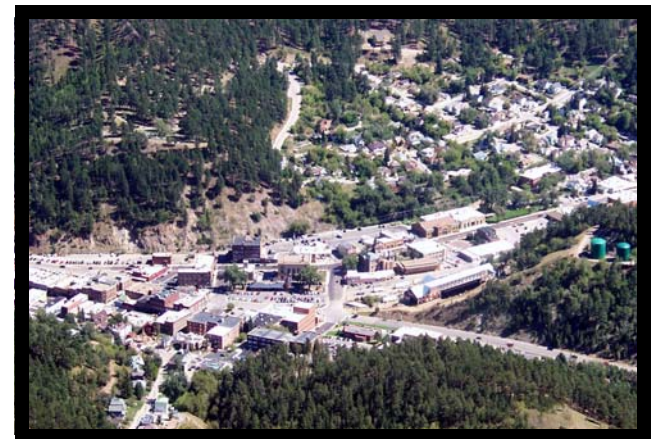


I am being passed on the left by a quicker plane

Once I arrived at the Spearfish Clyde Ice field, I joined the dozen and a half other fly-in aircraft that arrived for this event and tied down on the ramp immediately in front of the large EAA hanger where our breakfast and seminars were to be held. I, and at least 3 dozen other guests, who had either flown or driven in, enjoyed an eggs and pancake breakfast before being treated to the several slide and power-point presentations that recounted South Dakota's involvement in the early days of aviation. And quite a history it is. One of the presenters, aviatrix Norma Kraemer has written a comprehensive photo journal outlining the state's journey from the airships of the late 1800's through the early demonstration flights by Wright Bros. type airplanes in 1911, and the barnstormers of the 1920's and '30's. It was amazing to learn of the involvement that this small (less than 1 million people even today) state has had in aviation. Charles Lindbergh visited in 1927, the Inman Bros. Flying Circus gave \$1 rides in their Ford Tri-motor in 1937 and early high altitude balloon ascensions, proceeding space exploration, were conducted in the 50's when a helium filled balloon finally attained an altitude of 81,000 feet. S.D. was also instrumental during WWII with several flight training bases located around the state. The old municipal airport in Rapid City was turned into the Ellsworth Air Force Base for B-36 and later B-52 airplanes, and even today operates B-1B Lancer bombers out of its large facility. I have also written a previous article about my visit to its fascinating museum. It was here where the US Forest Service first experimented with Smoke Jumpers (who actually jumped out helicopters from 10 feet and into "soft bushes" to help fight forest fires in the 60's, (but they abandoned that technique in 1969, after too many injuries.)

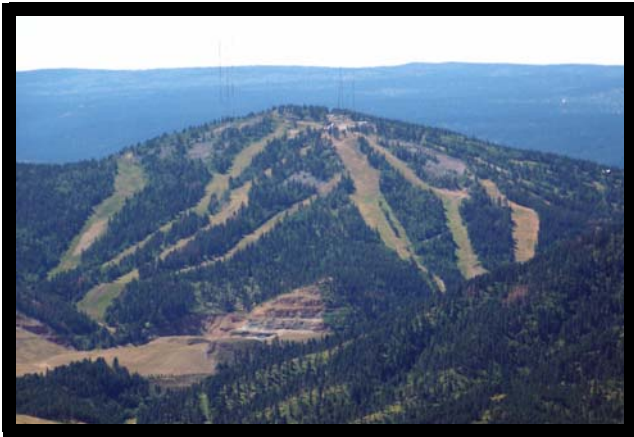


The town of Lead with its deep open pit gold mine



The Wild West town of Deadwood with it casinos

It was a wonderful day to fly, eat and learn!



This many trailed ski-slope is located just to the west of Lead and Deadwood



The Black Hills soon ran into rolling plains, just before reaching my destination of Spearfish



Overhead Spearfish's Clyde Ice Airport where the fly-in breakfast and seminar was being held



Many of the airplanes here today were tail wheel types such as mine. Notice the hills just beyond



Here a business jet from Minnesota passes in front of another experimental 2 seater visitor



I had the privilege of having breakfast with so many interesting aviation types. Notice our coats.



Aviatrix Norma Kraemer gave a presentation, and here a just a few of the memorable photos from her book

