

August 23, 2013 - New Jersey & the dreaded BFR

Some pilots have come to fear the bi-ennial flight review (BFR) which they must take every other year to prove to the FAA that they are still competent to exercise their airman privileges. This is not a “graded” test, but rather a “pass or fail” exercise that can be taken again and again until you get it right. The review is conducted by a FAA certified flight instructor, and it must be taken pretty much by all pilots, no matter their logbook hours or flight experience. Mine was coming due in another month, so I decided to contact my old friend and former instrument flight instructor, Robert Greene, to see if he could accommodate this mandate while I was up visiting in New Jersey. He said that he could and we arranged to meet at the Solberg-Hunterdon Airport, which is located in the northern part of the state.

When I lived in NJ, over a quarter century ago, I would fly into many of the local airstrips, the same as I now do in Florida. I remembered a small airport called Sky Manor, which was just to the west of Solberg, that we would often fly my Cessna 172 Skyhawk into for lunch at their excellent on field restaurant. This sounded like the ideal place to schedule a meal after we did our obligatory hour long flight review. Now Bob has been a close friend for almost 40 years, so you would think that he would “cut me a break” on this review. Well, not so. Being the consummate flight instructor Bob had me work and sweat during the requisite maneuvers of slow flight, climbing turns, both power on and power off stalls, including the dreaded “departure stall”, which is conducted at a very steep 60 degrees bank angle. Good thing I did that prior to, and not after, eating lunch. After a couple of landings, on that 2600 foot strip, in the Cessna 152 trainer that I had rented, (and which type I had never before flown), we sat down to a delicious meal in the terminal restaurant. After the return to Solberg, where Bob still conducts flight instruction, he had me sit down at an outside picnic table, with an airship in the background, to take the required written exam. While there were a few questions that I did not know the answer to, such as... “what does a flashing green and red light from the tower signify?” (I guess my answer that it meant that we were “getting close to Christmas” was not correct.) None-the-less, I managed to pass that portion of the review as well. I am now legal to fly for another two years, and then I will have to take the test yet again.

My week long trip to NJ, which was provided via Spirit Airlines for a remarkable \$166 round trip airfare including baggage on their West Palm to Atlantic City non stop, was primarily to visit old friends and long time acquaintances. This included two people that I had originally hired while at the construction company that I worked for at back in the ‘60’s and ‘70’s. One was a Tom Mallaney, who has gone on to be a successful commercial real-estate broker for a major national company, and the other was a sweet young high school work-study student who we hired as a receptionist and clerical assistant. She went on to marry one of the construction company principals and is still the same stunning and beautiful woman that she was when I hired her at age 17. Being able to visit places and see people that I knew decades ago is one of the current joys of my life. It is one of the main reasons that I so value my retirement lifestyle where I am able to even incorporate some private flying into that marvelous experience. All that I can say is “Life is Good”... very GOOD!



Fueling the rental Cessna 152 for our training flight



Bob Greene and I having lunch at Sky Manor



Taking my written test over at the Solberg airport



Me and the still beautiful Cathy Albergese at lunch