

July 15, 2014 - Got Milk, er, Gas?
Clewiston & Belle Glade, FL

In most of my articles I am traveling for either breakfast or lunch at a nearby airport. Of course the main thrust of the trip is the flying and the destination is only secondary. However, there are occasions when the destination is just as important. It is when I am flying to purchase fuel. Here in south Florida the price of 100LL, the aviation fuel that goes into my airplane, can vary as much as \$2 or more per gallon. I will often go onto the AirNav website to search out the best place to obtain my gas. Today I would need about 30 gallons, and I found that nearby Airglades Airport, in Clewiston, located at the lower end of Lake Okeechobee was offering avgas for \$4.86 per gallon, some 90 cents cheaper than back at my home field. Why that \$27 in savings would more than pay for a good lunch at the Black Gold Steakhouse, located in Belle Glade, which was right along my return route to Indiantown airport.

My departure was delayed by a couple of hours, due to some chores that I needed to accomplish at home, so I did not get airborne until noon. This can be iffy this time of year since summer is our rainy season. This usually means afternoon thunderstorms. However today's forecast put most of them along the coastline and Lake Okeechobee is right in the middle of the state. Still, I would have to remain vigilant. My I-phone has an app which shows real-time weather, so I can constantly stay informed as to these potential storms and both their movement and intensity. As I traveled south, along the east side of the big lake, I could see those intense downpours, accompanied by frequent lightening, off in the distance.

Airglades replaced the previous Clewiston Airport, which was conveniently located right in the middle of this medium sized Florida city, whose main employer is a large sugar refinery. In a previous blog entry I had a view of that facility taken from about 600 feet. The new airport is located almost 10 miles out of town, so it is not very practical for easy access into the city. However that new airport is more modern with a longer runway and upgraded facilities. It is county owned and features a sky diving school. While I was fueling their dive plane took off and shortly after about a half dozen parachutists were floating back down to earth. I was able to capture the adjacent photo with my I-phone.

After fueling was completed, I continued my journey back to my base field, via that lunch stop at Belle Glade. Now the town of Belle Glade is a typical inland Florida community of working class inhabitants, most of them servicing the surrounding sugar cane fields. The airport is a "working field" that does not attract much in the way of general aviation as there are 3 crop dusting businesses located there with about a dozen Ag spray planes. They constantly come and go and the pattern can become quite hectic with one needing to keep vigilant as these pilots will often take shortcuts when landing and taking off. They are good, but not always aware that there might be non-professional pilots arriving. After finding a place to park on their crowded ramp I was set for the short 8 minute walk into town and the Black Gold Steakhouse. Their lunch special today was barbecued beef ribs with two sides and I enjoyed a generous helping before heading back to my plane for the 20 minute return flight home.



Afternoon Thunderstorm visible in distance



Parachutists landing at Airglades Airport



Highlander & Ag planes at the Belle Glade Airport



My Beef Rib lunch at the Black Gold Steakhouse