

FLIGHT-WATCH

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THE DULLES DAY FESTIVAL OF 2012

I.

Not Your Regular Air Event

The Dulles Day Festival and Plane Pull is not your typical air event. Organized to raise money for the Special Olympics, the Dulles Day Festival features military and civilian aircraft on display together with a car show and live music. The overall tone of the Dulles Day Festival is a relaxed venue where spectators can interact and socialize with pilots and automobile drivers and get a close-up view of their machines.



Fed Ex Boeing 757 at the Plane Pull

The crowning event of the Dulles Day Festival is a plane pull where various teams compete to pull a FedEx Boeing 757 a fixed distance to see which team can accomplish the task in the shortest period of time. The beneficiary of the festival was the Special Olympics Virginia which has raised 1.77 million dollars since 2005. The Special Olympics use sport activities as a vehicle for social change to create opportunities for meaningful interaction for those persons suffering from disabilities.

II.

The People Who Make It Happen

As is true in most cooperative endeavors, the people who work to put on a major event like the Dulles Day Festival are generally not recognized for their efforts. As a pilot and spectator at the event, I cannot begin to report on all those who should be recognized. However, from my perspective, I can tell you about some of the people I observed working during the event.

John Kerwin of the Dulles Metropolitan Airport Authority is extremely and considerate of the persons who participate in the event. He sent any number of emails and communicated by telephone before the event to ensure that all the paperwork was in place to allow my replica Nakajima “Kate” bomber to attend the festival. His work included completing a purchasing contract, ensuring that insurance certificates were in place, obtaining a rental car, hotel reservations, and a whole host of activities associated with having my aircraft attend the event. There were numerous aircraft on the flight line in attendance. This clearly underscores my assessment that John Kerwin was placed in charge of a formidable task.

Our aircraft were serviced and hangared at Landmark Aviation which did an excellent job of meeting our needs. When I taxied into Landmark on Friday evening, the Landmark personnel were standing by to direct us to a hangar where the Kate would be housed for the evening. John Kerwin was there to meet us and ensure the handling of the Kate. Landmark ensured that the aircraft was serviced with aviation fuel and provided the appropriate quantity and type of aviation oil. Besides handling the Kate, the personnel at Landmark were attentive and efficient at providing other needs such as the rental car.

Chris Browne, a former navy pilot and the Vice President and Airport Manager, was on hand to supervise and oversee the events. In discussing his work at Dulles, Mr. Browne related that his background in the Navy in terms of air operations was an asset. While his experience with managing personnel and flight operations prepared him to run the operations at Dulles, he did note there are commercial aspects to managing an international airport that are different from operations in the military. So, his job clearly has unique challenges in that regard. During the course of the Dulles Day Festival, Chris Browne introduced me to Astronaut Joe Edwards, since Chris and Joe had flown to the Dulles Day Festival in Edwards’ T-28.



Pat Robinson Fire Guarding a B-25

Also working the flight line was Pat Robinson, a museum specialist with the Smithsonian Institution National Air and Space Museum. Pat was busy attending to the needs of aircrafts and pilots and fire guarding aircraft during the course of engine starts.

Pat possesses a wealth of knowledge about aircraft housed at the Paul E. Garber Preservation, Restoration and Storage Facility (“Garber Facility”) which restores historic aircraft and artifacts. Among those is Flak Bait, a B-26 Marauder that flew more combat missions than any other B-26 during the Second World War. While Flak Bait’s nose assembly is on display in downtown Washington in the National Air and Space Museum, the remainder of the aircraft is in storage at the Garber Facility. The Garber Facility houses a number of historic and unusual aircraft, some of which are the only remaining example of that kind of aircraft in the world. For example, included in the collection is a Sikorsky JRS-1 flying boat that not only survived the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, but was dispatched to fly north of Oahu in search of the Japanese carrier strike force, the Kido Butai. According to legend, a Japanese pilot flying a Zero on combat air patrol for the carrier Shokaku spotted the Sikorsky but did not attack it because he was convinced the Sikorsky crew had not spotted the Japanese strike force. Also, the Garber Facility houses extensive documentation, and materials associated with flight which is especially helpful to aviation authors and researchers.

Besides spending time with people at Dulles who made things happen, I got to spend time with the members of the Old Dominion Wing of the Commemorative Air Force including T. R. Proven, an FAA inspector and accomplished pilot. Any time you get an aviation lawyer an FAA inspector together, you can expect a lively conversation.

III.

Flying to and from Dulles

The weather generally cooperated for our trip to and from Dulles. I was ably assisted by my back seater, Tony Stein, a retired corporate pilot who ran the aviation department for Kimberly-Clark. Tony has extensive flying experience internationally with flights throughout Europe in a variety of aircraft. When you are negotiating with air traffic control to circumnavigate and penetrate the Washington, D.C. Special Flight Restrictions Area (SFRA), Tony is a real help.

We had to delay our departure on Friday, September 21, waiting for fog to lift. Our fuel stop was Rowan County (KRUQ) in Salisbury, North Carolina, just north of Charlotte. Fuel was under \$6.00 per gallon, and we got a quick turn on the gas. At that point, I had to file my SFRA Flight Plan for entry into SFRA at the Jansen Gate. The Jansen Gate is on the west side of the SFRA and would permit a straight course to Dulles (KIAD) without having to negotiate the Class D Airspace of Manassas Airport southwest of Dulles. Obtaining flight following upon our departure from Rowan County, our appearance near the SFRA was no surprise to Potomac Approach which vectored us into the SFRA and eventually cleared us into the Class B airspace for a left downwind pattern on runway 19C. This was a good plan, since runway 19L was the takeoff runway and our left base approaching runway 19C presented no issues for arriving traffic. Prior to every trip to Washington, I review the SFRA/Flight Restriction Zone video available from the FAA. Even though I filed an SFRA flight plan to enter the SFRA immediately west of Dulles (KIAD), Potomac Approach had other plans.

Our first communication with Potomac Approach resulted in being given a vector in a northeasterly direction followed by a direction to resume own navigation. I was curious about why we were initially vectored and then vectoring ceased. Later, we were handed off to a second controller who vectored us on a heading of 120 degrees and to maintain 2,500 feet. A quick glance at my Garmin 496 showed we were flying parallel to the southern boundary of Restricted Area R-6608, so I understood the reason for the vector. However, moments later we were assigned a heading of 360 degrees and when I questioned the controller about the heading in light of the restricted airspace, he confirmed the vector and stated that it was not a problem.

In addition to vectors, there were changes in our assigned altitude as Potomac Approach maneuvered us above and around Class D airspace and a Restricted Area. In time, Dulles Airport appeared off our left wing and the left base for Runway 19 Center was easy enough. It was clear our flight into the SFRA was requiring some planning and coordination between Potomac Approach and Dulles Tower.

The tower control and ground personnel at Dulles knew their jobs and were courteous, the ground personnel giving details for progressive taxi instructions as we made our way from the runway to Landmark Aviation.

When we departed Dulles on Sunday morning, once again, air traffic control services were very good. Although VFR, flight operations in the SFRA are handled like IFR traffic in terms of assigned headings and altitudes. After we cleared the SFRA, ATC continued to give us sight following all the way to our fuel stop which was once again at Rowan County.

While most of my flying is conducted on IFR flight plans, when flying the Kate, I typically go VFR. This means that although you are receiving flight following by ATC, one has to be mindful of the airspace limitations imposed by Class B, Class C and Class D Airspace. Flying IFR in the Bonanza does not typically require this much attention to airspace considerations. So flying the Kate across country VFR is different in that respect.



The Kate at Dulles

When flying the Kate cross country, I typically employ the KLN-90B GPS receiver in tandem with the Garmin 496 portable GPS receiver. Cross checking the two GPS devices ensures navigational accuracy and improves situational awareness. Both devices have the ability to promptly retrieve ATC frequencies, provide navigational information and airspace information. The Garmin 496 is invaluable when transitioning or avoiding Class B, C and D Airspace. The KLN-90B, being an older model GPS receiver, does not present airspace in a pictorial format and is far less user friendly in such circumstances. If an airspace warning appears, one must go to the appropriate airport page and read the text. On the other hand, the Garmin 496 depicts the airspace pictorially on the map page.

With 110 gallons of fuel being consumed at 30 gallons per hour, your fuel consumption calculations are fairly simple. For every minute you fly, the aircraft has consumed a half a gallon of gas. So if you just multiply your flying time in minutes by .5, you can calculate the amount of fuel the aircraft has burned. While flying, I am continually cross checking my flying time and my projected fuel consumption against the readings on the fuel gauges. Interestingly, the fuel gauges in the Kate are quite accurate. Even without a fuel totalizer, we generally have a very good idea about the amount of fuel consumed and remaining on a given flight in the Kate. The fuel gauges in the Kate are located on either side of the pilot's seat in the bottom of the fuselage. The readings vary as the plane flies in turbulence and as the floats in the fuel tanks bob up and down as the fuel moves about. As one ponders the simplicity of the Kate's fuel gauges, you have to remember the aircraft was built in 1943 and is sixty-nine years old. While the old girl has the benefit of two GPS navigational devices, she is at her core the product of aviation design technology from the late 1930s. She is not just an experimental warbird. The Kate is an antique with a host of idiosyncrasies that must be understood and respected by those who fly her.

The weather was spectacular, particularly on the return flight from Dulles as one could see the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west, which extended as we flew southwest toward Lynchburg. After passing Lynchburg, there was a large lake to our west which made for a very scenic setting. After refueling again in Salisbury, North Carolina, besides remaining clear of the Charlotte Class B Airspace, there were four tall towers along our route of flight that required some attention.

IV.

Conclusion

If you are in or near Washington in late September, a day spent at the Dulles Day Festival should be a pleasant affair. Although a large airport, the volume of traffic was not an impediment to a World War II replica aircraft making its way in and out of the Dulles Airport. During the course of the Festival, one would observe throughout the day aircraft landing from a number of foreign countries which underscores the international nature of the Dulles Airport. The people of the District of Columbia and Dulles International Airport are to be commended for providing to the public such an interesting and enjoyable experience with the profits from the festival benefiting the Special Olympics.

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