

9/22/2009

It's 5 down and 1 to go. We set our sights on 6 airshows for this year and so far (knock on wood) we're right on schedule. Our remaining airshow is Culpeper, Virginia on the 10th of October.



Our fifth show of the season, Winston-Salem, NC, went exactly as planned. Despite bad weather leaving St. Mary's County airport, the cross country flight went well. Both airplanes flew for the crowd and the SHAR actually flew twice per day – once with Joe Anderson at the controls and once with yours truly. For your information, Joe prefers to do his hover turns to the right and I prefer turning to the left. That's one way to distinguish between who's flying the airplane.



Winston-Salem gave us the opportunity for Joe to get some more flight time with someone else paying the fuel bill. Joe already has over 2,500 hours in type, but we try to spread the flight time to keep both of us current and refreshed, so we divide the Harrier flying, if possible. At nearly \$4,000 per fuel load, it's an expensive airplane and we have to make every minute of flight time count. That's well over \$100 per minute for flight time, just for the fuel.

The jet is performing well and nothing major has broken. We noticed that the brakes were acting a bit touchy. Upon further inspection, we discovered another broken brake cable. As you might recall, we had this problem nearly a year ago and remedied it by manufacturing our own cable and ends. The broken cable is the *original* cable, not the one we manufactured. This not only gives us confidence that our solution worked, but we know how to proceed to fix the broken cable. It should be a simple fix and the parts are on order. You might also recall that we also had the brake cables adjusted just a wee bit too tightly and ended with a brake fire, nearly destroying the aircraft. We'll do a couple of extra checks to ensure we have pressure when we need it and zero when we don't before we taxi. We have no desire to repeat that episode.



We also now have refined our logistics train. Our 24-foot support trailer is working superbly and carries most of what we need or could need for an airshow. We also use it as a ready room on wheels. It keeps us out of the hot sun. We've added an awning to the trailer for more shade and it's almost like home. Perhaps a few throw pillows, a ceiling fan, and a fireplace...

Once again, we flew two bottles of Scotch whisky in the aft baggage compartment. After landing, we shared one bottle with our good friends, the Trojan Horsemen, along with Paul and Terese Stender of Jet School Bus fame. One of more enjoyable parts of the airshow business is to relax, tell dirty jokes and lies (I mean share aviation stories) with friends after the work is done over a good drink or two. The remaining bottle is escrowed for another "special occasion."

Last year for our debut, we filled Culpeper to capacity. The State Police actually closed the main road hours before the Harrier was to fly. There simply were no more places to park cars. This year, the airshow producers have planned for a larger crowd and hopefully, everyone who has traveled to see the SHAR will get to see it up close and personal. I personally met people who traveled from as far away as Florida and New Jersey to see the SHAR last year.

For this show, we're planning to have a special logo on the vertical fin. It will sport "Bill the Goat," the official mascot of the U.S. Naval Academy. Both Joe and I are graduates



of the Naval Academy and we're hoping to get enough video footage to produce an inspirational video to be shown at this year's Army/Navy football game. If it all works to our plan, you should see the SHAR on national TV during the game. Any and all Navy Football supporters are welcome to be part of this. Just show up at the airshow and wear your Blue and Gold.

We'll take the next few weeks to go back over the airplane, give both the planes a good bath, and then it's a quick hop, skip, and jump over to Culpeper, Virginia for the final show of this season.

See you there! And Go Navy – Beat Army!

Art Nalls