



## Trip Report

### A Charleston Christmas

**Don and Anna Miller**  
N125S, Cessna C172

We had hoped to join Carl, his wife and, long time Charleston residents, parents-in-law for Christmas this year. The weather had been generally favorable but the final decision to fly was made only hours before departure on December 23, 2005. We took off from DKX about 3:30 PM into clear skies and a light southwest wind. Two other aircraft were in the pattern at departure, but no traffic was observed en route. Owing to the prevailing wind, we climbed to 9500 feet for the trip SE. Ground speed was 120 to 125 kts for most of the trip. Flying VFR direct to JZI, Charleston Executive Airport, we immediately noticed some remaining snow on the Smokies, especially on the east side.



Our arrival at JZI was at the end of a smooth 45 mile glide to 1000 feet agl. An interesting phenomenon, I had observed before, was very apparent on this final to runway 22. The O-320 seems ultra quiet and smooth at 2000 rpm in smooth air, and having no VASI lights and low intensity runway lights, and no other visual clues near the airport I sensed that the airspeed was lower than indicated. Although the indication was 80 mph (iron age air speed indicator) it felt like 50 mph! Using my trusty IFR training, I resisted the urge to speed up. The landing was ultra smooth, Good! Next challenge was the driving part. Runway 22 is long enough to leave 2000 feet of it left plus a half mile of taxiway after slowing to taxi speed. After what seemed like a half hour we reached the Mercury Aviation. An interesting collection of singles, jets, and twins were parked nearby. Sticker shock on gas, but great service.

Our son was on the ramp to greet us and soon we were on the road to his home on James Island. Although the weather today, Christmas, is rainy, Christmas eve was warm and sunny. In the morning we took a nice low level flight up the Ashley River, across the old Navy Facility, down the Cooper river, over the Moultrie and Sumter Forts, and up the coast to Bulls Island, a nature preserve. We walked to the top of the new Arthur Ravenel bridge over the Cooper River in the afternoon.

Today we will have dinner with a flock of relatives and play with everyone's Christmas presents. Attached are photos from the flight.

The forecast for Monday seems to suggest the long route home to avoid the moisture over the Smokies.



Patriots Point

Interesting end to our trip. We left Charleston's JZI (John's Island) airport on Monday about 10 AM with a VFR flight plan to Asheville. Our thought was to rest and refuel before attempting the mountain crossing, knowing the forecast was for strong headwinds and mountain obscuration until after lunch. Upon reaching 1500 feet elevation, we found the ground speed was 80 kts. So the decision was to enjoy the bumps and heading twitches as far as possible before climbing into the stronger headwinds aloft. Asheville had been our target for lunch knowing that the German Restaurant there was highly rated. By the time we reached Spartanburg, we found the turbulence was stronger than earlier in the trip and clouds above the mountains were unbroken. A call to flight service revealed that the wind at Asheville was 25 kts, gusting to 40 kts. The Greenville--Spartanburg airport (GSP) suddenly looked good for lunch. As it turned out it was outstanding!



The Stevens Aviation FBO staff were friendly and helpful. They suggested eating at the GSP airline terminal restaurant, and volunteered to take us there. We were most pleased with the facility, service and menu. Since it was only a 1/4 mile walk to the FBO, we elected to walk rather than request a return ride. The restaurant is a beautiful design with a fountain/pond and cast figures just outside the glass wall of the restaurant. Refreshed, we climbed in and took off for Knoxville. As we climbed, it became apparent that the clouds had dissipated somewhat but the wind had not. My requested altitude of 8500 feet was bumpy and ground speed was 40 kts! We decided to hunker down and live with it for a while, but it was soon obvious that the mountain wave brought 2 to 3 thousand foot changes in elevation which were beyond the O-320's capabilities to correct.

The next sound you would hear was my call to Atlanta Center requesting a block altitude of 6500 to 10500. It was quickly approved and we pressed on. Fortunately, the mountain wave effect was much less after crossing the first chain of mountains and the remaining 40 miles were made with less than 500 foot uncontrolled elevation changes. I failed to catch a photo of the GPS, but the ground speed was as low as 35 kts at one point in the flight. Another aviation first for our trusty C172M! Photos attached are: Patriot Point in Charleston Harbor, mountain rising above the clouds near Gatlinburg, and view of downtown Charleston from the Holiday Inn Riverfront restaurant.