

ONCE MORE, INTO THE AIR IN A P-51 MAY 2018



This year I will have turned 80, an age when most are sitting in their rocking chairs. I have just joined the UFO-United Flying Octogenarians. It is a group of pilots all over the age of 80! I have already piloted 2 other World War 2 planes- a B-25 and an SNJ trainer, as well as a Korean War MiG-15 and a Czech L-29 jet trainer. The P-51 is the most famous fighter of the European Theatre in World War 2.

A local group, the Commemorative Air Force has a P- 51 that offered flights, but their P-51 did not have dual controls. In other words, I would just be a passenger.

However, I found the Collings Foundation will be at an airport 10 miles from my house in May. They were here a couple of years ago when Jim and I got to fly in their B-25. I will try to see if I can do a low pass past my local airport and my house. I have already done that with the B-25 and the T-6!

Here is a link to a video of a P-51 flight: <http://www.collingsfoundation.org/flight-experiences/>

Needless to say, that is only a short video of the flight.

I bought a P-51 flight experience certificate from their website, and called the scheduling phone number to set up my flight.

I just put the check in the mail, and I am awaiting my certificate. Because of the time constraint, I just got an e-mail from the Collings Group stating they would FedEx the certificate to me!

The Fedex envelope with a beautiful folder with my certificate just arrived!



I will be going there with my copilot Jim for him to take some pictures of me in the plane. Hopefully, my wife can get a picture of us as I fly past the house.

I picked up Jim, and strangely enough, he was also wearing his B-25 t-shirt just like the one I was wearing! We drove to the airport, and checked in with the group. The person ahead of me was booked for an hour, so we waited in their tent, chatting with the other Foundation members. The plane returned, and they helped me get in and buckle up. As with the MiG-15, there were all kinds of straps and buckles.



Prior to taking off, I took a picture of the control panel, which was similar to the ones I was used to. I requested we do a low pass over my home airport and house, which he did. The picture below shows our mobile home park, with my airport at the top. I had called the airport to notify we were coming, and they all waited outside to see us make a low pass at 500 feet!



We then climbed to 6000 feet, and he let me fly the plane. It was very responsive, and I started by making gentle turns to get the feel of the plane. As soon as I felt comfortable, I started making steeper turns up to 45 degrees. It was a real rush! The pilot took the controls and proceeded to an aileron roll, which rolls the plane 360 degrees along the longitudinal axis. He then did a half roll to show me what it felt to be inverted. I was not to thrilled about that!





I flew down our valley to head back to the airport, taking another shot of our park



. The experience was fantastic, and I was grinning as they helped me out of the plane. I thoroughly enjoyed flying the P-51. I was told that next year they would have a P-40 of Flying Tiger fame to fly. Well, we will see, as it will cost as much as the P-51 to fly!

© Steve Goch