

7-18-2018

An Air Tour to remember!

Today was a beautiful day! Over the past few years, I have been working as a wrangler and trail guide at Alaska Horsemen Trail Adventures, a great place for tourists to get saddled up and ride the trails, here in Cooper Landing during the busy months of May through September. My name is Carson.

During the long, cold winters I live in Talkeetna but when Spring breaks, I hop in my own little 1954 DHC-2 MK-1 and head for Quartz Creek for another fine summer in the beautiful Western Chugach.

Getting back to the start of my story, today was a beautiful summer day! The boys at Chugach Electric needed an aerial survey of greater Cooper Landing and a buddy of mine got me the gig!

Early this morning, I drove the jeep over to JLA and got the "ole" piston powered amphib ready to go. Sure enough, my buddy, Jake (who really doesn't like flying) and a photographer named Giles showed up right on time. Don't know how a Giles fits in out here in the "last frontier" but Giles handed me a map and said, "This is the route we need to fly." Well, I could see right away that this was going to be a blast because we literally were going to try to cover every square inch of this area.

I told him that he was probably looking at 2 hours plus and he gave me a thumbs up and a smile. So, we piled into "the beast" and I started her up. The winds were light and the weather forecast couldn't be better for taking some beautiful pictures.

I didn't have to wait for any traffic (almost never do) and taxied into position to depart runway 22 and we were off. Lift off was smooth as I dipped the wing and turned to the right heading for the Kenai Lake bridge. I thought I caught a glimpse of Alaska Horsemen which is practically right next to JLA. The guy with the camera said, "Let's keep it around 1200 AGL if possible and an airspeed of 75 to 80 knots would be perfect." Jake looked a little concerned and said, "Isn't that too low, Carson?" "Not if we are talking AGL and I stay in the valleys most of the time," I said. I glanced at Jake and said, "Don't worry, this baby can climb when she needs to." And sure enough, Jake's color was a little less green.

Up ahead I could see Snug Harbor, where some of the local residents live, on the left and on the right we passed the Sunrise Inn and the point where Sterling Highway makes a hard right heading toward Cooper Landing. The visibility was outstanding and I could clearly see the reddish Princess in the distance overlooking her fast-moving Kenai River.

As we passed Kenai Lake Lodge on the right and Snug Harbor on the left, Jake asked if that was a helipad behind the building on the right. I turned to Jake and said, "That's Wildman's which is

right next to the clinic and it does have a helipad behind it for a quick trip to Seward if needed."

By that time we were getting pretty close to the bridge, I could see the school off to the right and the CLES buildings on the left. CLES stands for Cooper Landing Emergency Services and I could see some emergency equipment out on their tarmac.

I could hear "ole" Giles snapping away so I guess I was doing OK. We flew just to the right of the Cooper Boat Launch and I could see that it was going to be a busy day for places like the Fish Camp with drift boats loading up and the parking lot filling up.

As we started to pass the buildings on the left which is the "densest" part of Cooper Landing, I could see along the river, that the various lodges, places like Eagles Landing and the Russian River house, were teeming with tourists getting ready to try and land "the big one"! Along the Sterling Highway which was weaving through town just south of some of the lodges, I could see the local grocery store as well as the Alpine Motel. Just to my right we passed the Library and Community Hall which is pretty nice for a town with only 300 residents.

Before long I could see the light rapids of Fishermen's Bend and then we were passing Hamilton's Place and Alaska Troutfitters which is a pretty great place to get some good fishing equipment and a few tips on some little known but productive fishing spots.

"The Princess does look beautiful today," Jake said as we approached the best lodge in town. Giles quickly said, "I've stayed there and it's very nice. You need to ask for one of the newer cabin/rooms."

I inched the throttle forward as I started my right turn to go up Juneau Creek and head for the Falls which should look quite nice even though the trees and location make it just a fairly quick glance. I turned to Jake and said, "Now we Climb!"

I thought to myself, wait till we leave Swan Lake, turn right at Devils Pass Cabin and head through Devils Pass on our way back down to where Devils Creek joins Quartz Creek. We will see what color Jake's face is then.

#### **....To Be Continued**

The experience detailed above is just the beginning. With the TWC-2 Air Tour Map you can take over where Carson left off and fly the rest of the tour! It is a great experience!