

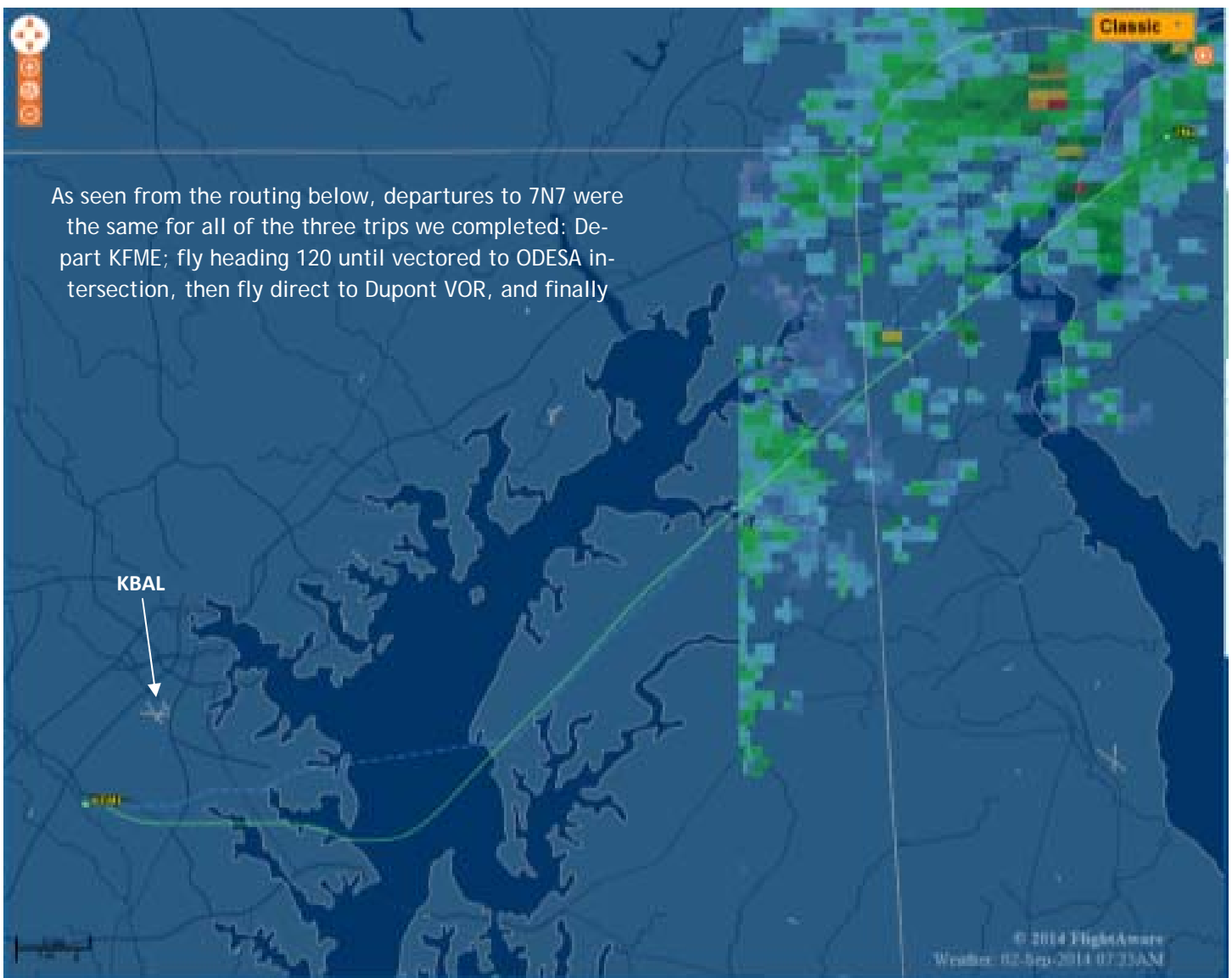
Washington D. C. for a Month (Flights within the DC SFRA and Surrounding Vicinities)

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As a continuation of a month-long visit to the Washington D.C. area, I would like to present my experiences to Chapter 595. My wife and I were able to fly every weekend while we were there. We made three trips to see close friends of ours who live in Southern New Jersey. I would like to highlight our flights within the Washington, Baltimore and Philadelphia areas.

Growing up in Michigan and moving to Texas, my flying experience covered larger state land masses. I was used to flying for at least an hour remaining within the same state. This trip changed that for me, within a 40 to 45 minute flight, we would transverse through three different states. Although no one would know if they are not paying close attention, most of the time they can't decipher the difference from one state to another from the air (without looking at a map) and ATC does not indicate state passage.

Having flown into Class B airspace numerous times, I am no stranger to these flying conditions. Venturing into Detroit's airspace to Detroit City airport, Ypsilanti, Pontiac, Oakland-Troy, flying across Lake Michigan to Michigan's Upper Peninsula, once visiting DuPage airport-6 nm from Chicago O'Hare, I was used to the fast paced environment of ATC balancing airline traffic, military operations and general aviation. I would like to point out to all of my flying colleagues of Chapter 595 that Washington D.C. is no different.



The majority of the time spent flying from Fort Meade (KFME) to Spitfire (7N7) was navigating around Baltimore's airspace. As usual I preferred an IFR clearance and flying by instruments over filing a SFRA flight plan, which was a good thing as clouds were regular hurdles of our short trips especially during the morning departures. Every trip to 7N7 I was given the following clearance: depart KFME and enter controlled airspace heading 120, expect vectors to ODESA intersection, direct Dupont VOR, direct 7N7. Every trip before reaching ODESA intersection, my routing was changed to fly direct destination. Flying IFR cannot get much simpler than that!

Spitfire's runway was not terribly short nor was it overly generous for length, extending 2,419 feet. Considering this I paid close attention to my airspeed, an indicated 70 to 75 mph over the numbers allowed for plenty of runway left for our landing rollout. However, a complacent Mooney pilot can quickly eat up that amount of runway if approaching too fast on short final especially in summer months when a quick gust of wind can reactivate the wing and cause floating and ballooning.

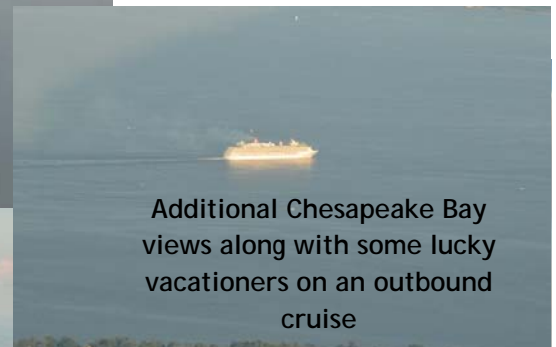
Returning to KFME was always easy and straight forward. Before handing us off to the local Unicom frequency, Philadelphia approach instructed us to file IFR in the air after a VFR departure from 7N7. I did as instructed and we were greeted by a friendly ATC staff. The process was quick and easy, and we were set up for our entry into the Washington SFRA. The next two times I chose to file on the ground and picked up my IFR clearance in the air. Again, the process was simple and straight forward.

The routing was different for each trip. The first trip ATC vectored us east of KBAL. We were treated to interesting sights of cruise



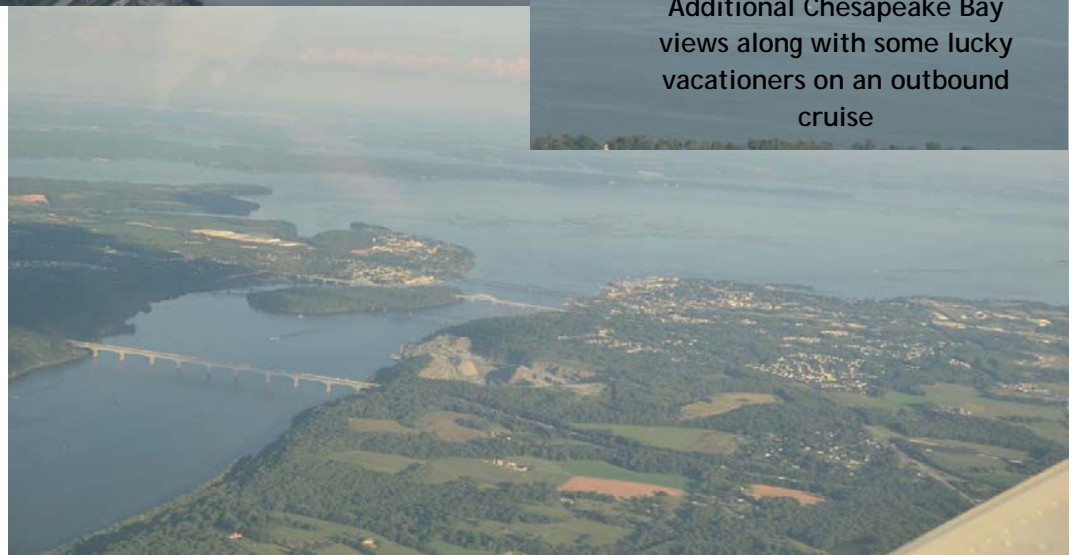
**Returning to KFME from 7N7:
Baltimore's Francis Scott Key
Bridge is visible ; a hefty \$4.00
toll for a regular car to use**

ships heading off into the bay after taking on a load of vacationers and cargo freighters along with the architecturally appealing Francis Scott Key Bridge, and distant views of Annapolis. During the third trip, ATC vectored us just to the west of KBAL and we were able to see arriving airline traffic passing under us completing the ILS into runway 10.



**Additional Chesapeake Bay
views along with some lucky
vacationers on an outbound
cruise**

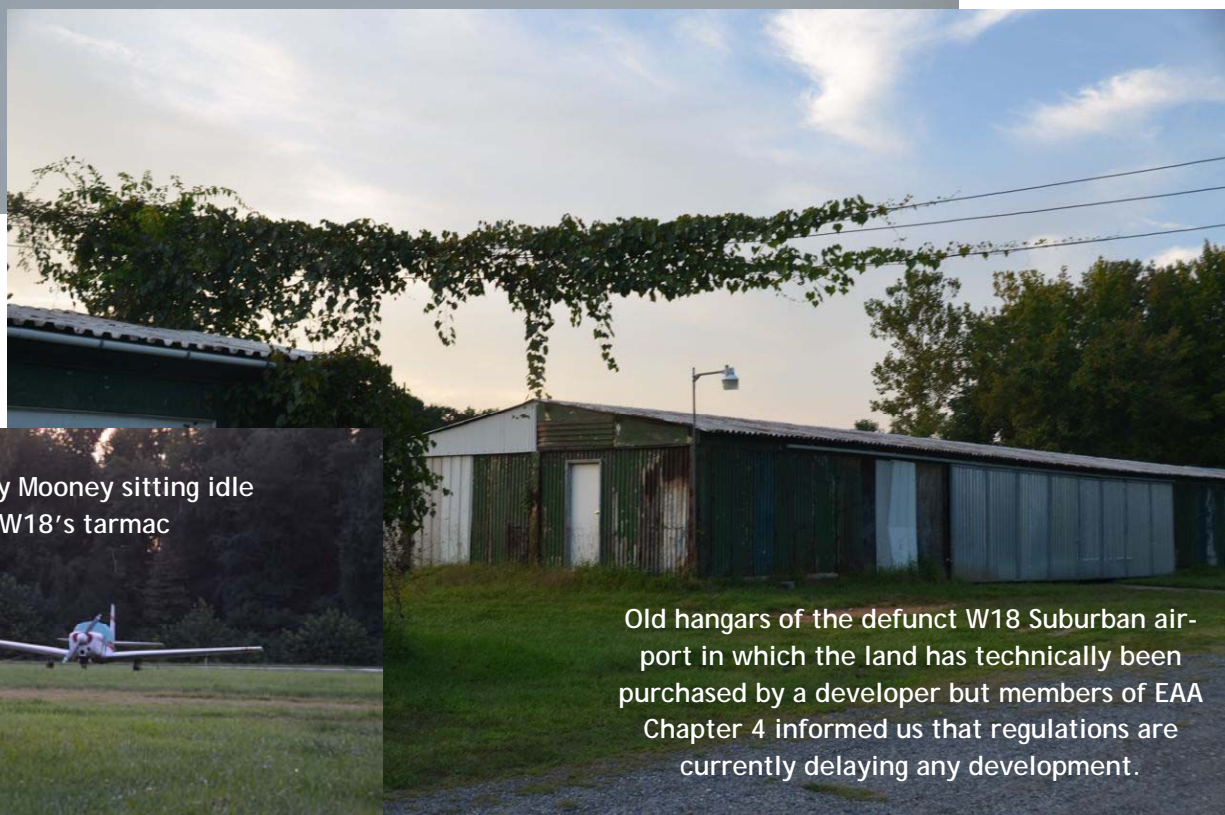
A side note for any aerial photographers; borrowing our friend's polarized filter lens for our Canon D7000 Digital SLR Camera, we attained better image quality without the haze and "noise" interference normally seen in aerial photographs, a much needed item on our purchase list.



We were greeted by a fellow pilot in the pattern practicing touch-and-go's in his gyrocopter



A FedEx DC-10 approaching Baltimore airport as seen from the ground at Fort Meade Tipton tarmac. Many aircraft pass in all directions overhead as three major Class B airports and 1 airbase surround the vicinity. The day of our arrival, my wife and I think we spotted Air Force 1 heading towards Andrews Air Force Base.

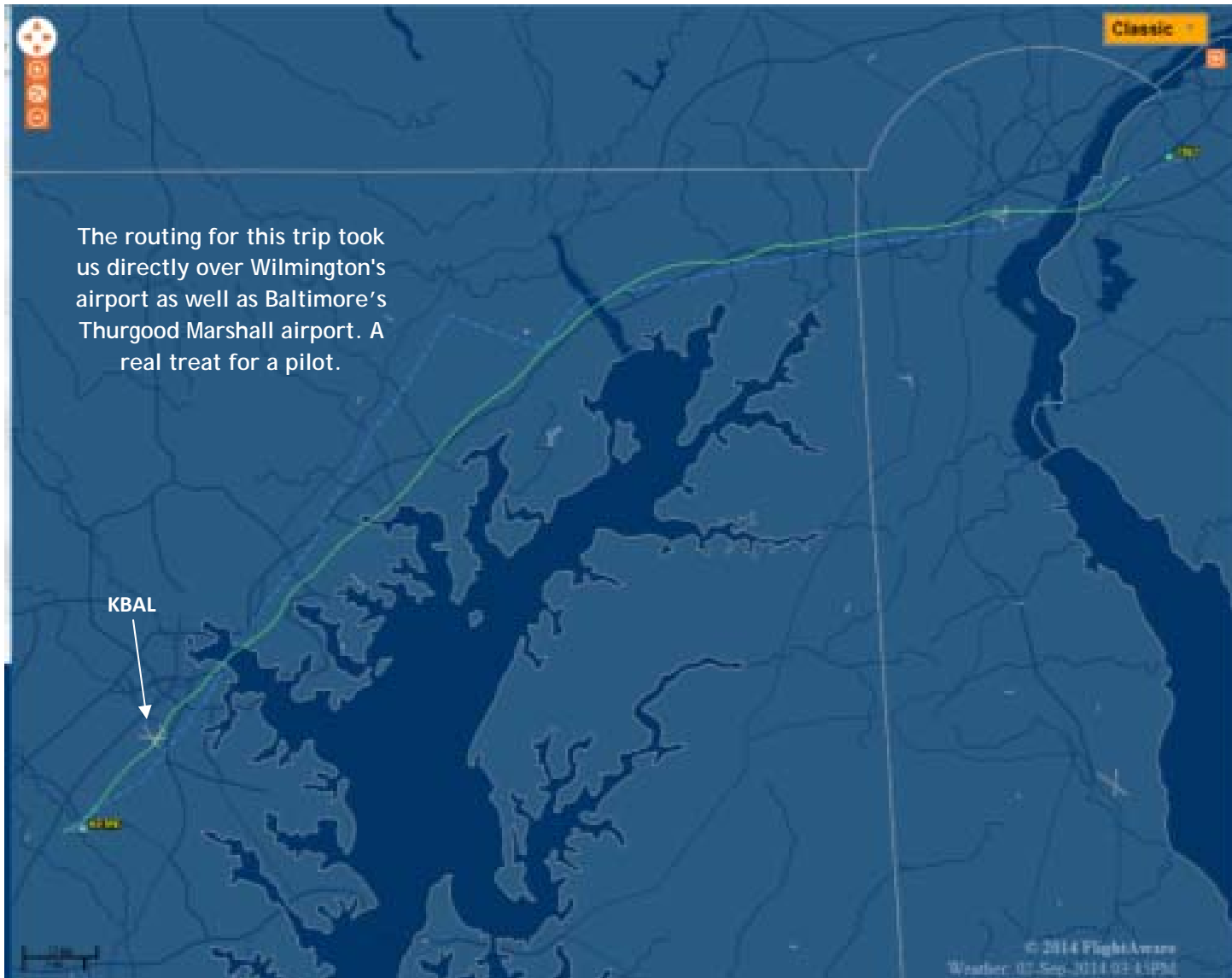


Short body Mooney sitting idle on W18's tarmac

Old hangars of the defunct W18 Suburban airport in which the land has technically been purchased by a developer but members of EAA Chapter 4 informed us that regulations are currently delaying any development.



The second trip, I would like to highlight for the group because never in my flying history have I been cleared to fly directly over a busy airport. During our clearance Philly ATC cleared us to fly just north of Dupont, direct BELAY intersection, direct Baltimore VOR, then direct KFME. Not thinking much of it, I continued flying the route as indicated. Nearing BELAY I began to realize that we would fly directly over KBAL as the VOR is located on the field. Approaching KBAL we were handed off from Potomac approach to Baltimore tower, who instructed us to fly directly over runway 22 and maintain 2000 feet giving us a fantastic bird's eye view of the entire airport. And even though the visibility was not great, creating a haze in all of the photos that were taken, this was the highlight of the trips we made while in Maryland.



Downtown Baltimore / Baltimore Harbor





Different Exciting views as we flew directly over runway 22 of Baltimore's Thurgood Marshall airport





A bustling general aviation airport that we stumbled across while driving throughout Maryland was Kent Island's Bay Bridge (W29). Aside from having some interesting aircraft like the "Airplane Hotlanta, GA" Sikorsky, this airport is also a certified LSA service center.

For all three trips, nearing Fort Meade after finally clearing Baltimore's airspace, we had to make rapid descents into the traffic pattern, but this was nothing out of the ordinary and only involved a slight deviation from a normal descent.

Since rejoining aviation after my seven year hiatus, I have become used to the Rio Grande Valley with its eight airfields in the local area. Travelling north pilots fly for nearly an hour over the King Ranch before encountering additional airports. We accept that the \$100 dollar hamburger costs a little more as the airports are slightly farther away and are reminded how large Texas really is! But when looking at the Washington area, there are so many airports around that a person would need to visit a new destination for a year and still not run out of new places to visit.

Because of the short time Mailinh and I were in Washington, we were only able to see a few destinations. I would love someday to visit Kent Island with a final approach over the Chesapeake Bay, Ocean City, the Appalachian airports such as Windwood Fly In, Frederick (Home of AOPA), Annapolis, and Virginia. I hope one day to return adding these places to my list of "I was there" airports.

Flying throughout the general Washington / Baltimore / Philadelphia region is really no different than any other densely populated area throughout the United States. I encourage every flying family to experience this area at least once in their lives. As always, it requires diligence on the pilot's part in maintaining situational awareness, good radio communication skills, willingness to use flight planning and patience if commercial traffic is heavier depending on the time of day. However, if a pilot is apt to work within these requirements, then he or she will be treated to the beautiful sights that the East Coast provides.