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## OFF AIRPORT LANDING



By: Robert Curtis

The title of my first book is "Surprised at Being Alive". I had another opportunity to live that title on **February 5, 2024**. From the first day I started flying in OH-23s at Fort Wolters, Texas back in 1969, my flight instructor Lawrence Higgins would cut the throttle every time I flew over somewhere where I couldn't make a forced landing. Soon it became second nature to always or at least as often as possible, to have a safe landing area always in sight. I continue that process to this day.

Now to the Flying story. The major difference between fairy tales and flying stories is in how they begin. A fairy story begins, "Once upon a time, a long time ago, in a land far, far away..." A flying story begins, "Now this is no shit, there I was..." Other than the beginning there isn't a lot of difference between the two stories.

Now this is no shit, there I was, 1,000 feet above Ruskin, just cruising along solo on a nice Monday morning, being an airborne tourist, just enjoying flying. I had done a couple full stops at Airport Manatee to keep in practice and had then decided I would just fly around for another 30 minutes before I called it a day. All of a sudden the engine on Beryl Markham, my 1946 Ercoupe 415C, started to sputter. I had had problems with carb ice before so I pulled the carb heat full on and went to full throttle, while going to best glide at 80 MPH. This had always cleared up the problem in the past. Not this time. The sputtering continued to get worse, and my altitude was decreasing at the rate of several hundred feet per minute.

While I was doing this, without thinking about it I had turned south towards some open fields just across the Little Manatee River that I had mentally marked as I passed them headed north. About then the engine stopped altogether. I set up on a right base for the field of my choice so that I would clear the now visible power lines along Highway 41. I rolled onto final letting my airspeed drop to 70 instead of the normal 80 to shorten my landing roll. Final and touch down were perfectly normal. I stopped about 100 yards from the tree line. I had picked the best possible place for an emergency off airfield landing, Bay Breeze Turf Farms, many acres of flat, smooth fields.

A phone call to Bill Burton back at Manatee and he was on his way to pick me up. Thank you, Bill! I called the Bay Breeze office and thanked them for putting their turf farm exactly where I needed it. They said no problem with leaving her there overnight and to let them know if they could provide any assistance. After the rain passed, I came back and secured her for an overnight stay.

The next morning Keith Carver and an assistant from Tampa North Aero Services (X39) came down with a trailer, pulled Beryl's wings, and loaded her onboard for the trip north to their hangar and fixing whatever her problem was. I hope to be back in the air soon.

Given how things might have turned out, once again, I am surprised at being alive.

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## CHILI FEAST

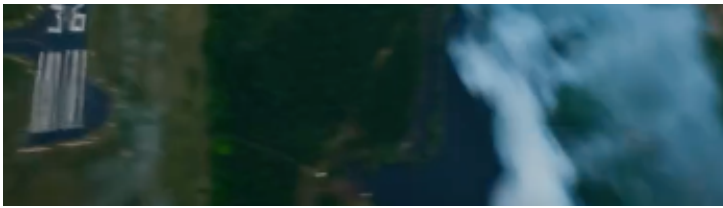


On Saturday, February 11, Winn Ross and Kathy Brassard threw an impromptu Chili Cookout in the pilot lounge at Airport Manatee. While Winn and Kathy brought a crockpot filled to the brim with Winn's personal chili concoction (very tasty), and another pot full of hotdogs, others pitched in with chips, desserts and other savory dishes. Rich Hueber came in late with a pot of pulled pork which had to be tried even though we had filled up on chili. One would be hard pressed to find a finer group of airport buddies anywhere.

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## A CZECK HEADACHE





Laurel Smith found this link and asked if I would share it with our FAMFAM group. It is a quick snippet to give a little thrill to your day. Do not try this at home.

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/705748118198393?fs=e&s=m>

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As of January 1, 2024, the FAMFAM Newsletter is no longer an attached .pdf file, but full embedded in the email. Most phones, pads, and computers will see the full newsletters with pictures. Some may have images turned off and will see text only. If you, or someone you know, is experience difficulty in receiving the newsletter, please check the SPAM folder and set your email to always accept mail from [ldrake@drakeip.com](mailto:ldrake@drakeip.com).

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If you have any announcements or news you would like to share with the group, please email it to me and I will include it in the next update (whenever that might be.)

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