

AYA Friends = PRICELESS!

By Guy Warner

A few days before Hurricane Irma visited Florida I got a call from fellow AYA member and good friend, Hal Beauchene, who lives in Enterprise, Alabama. Hal encouraged me to fly my Tiger up to his airport where he was making arrangements to put it in an empty hangar. At the time Hal called, Irma was a category 5 hurricane and forecast to travel up the west coast of Florida. The St. Petersburg/Clearwater airport (KPIE) where Heidi and I hangar our Grumman was right in the forecasted path, and our hangar is only 3 feet above sea level. Yikes!

I thanked Hal and readily agreed to fly the plane up the next day. My plan was to rent a car and drive back home the following day. When I arrived at the Enterprise airport (KEDN), Hal was waiting for me. He had arranged with the City of Enterprise, which controls the airport, to allow me to hangar my airplane there until the storm passed. We put my Tiger in a hangar, locked the door, and I gave a huge sigh of relief knowing my plane would be safe.

Then, Hal told me that we would grab some lunch and afterwards he was going to fly me back to Clearwater in his Tiger. I tried to talk him out of doing that, but he and his lovely wife, Vickie, insisted that he should do it. The roads leading out of Florida were jammed with evacuees and gas was getting scarce. They were concerned that I might not be able to get back home if I tried to drive down the next day. Besides, Hal said that I just might need an extra day to make preparations for the storm, and boy was he ever right about that!

Hal flew me back to Clearwater that afternoon. AYA member Bob Gibson met us at the Clearwater Airpark (KCLW) and drove me home. After refueling and filing a flight plan, Hal jumped into his Tiger and flew back home, which is a flight time of two hours and 20 minutes, one way.

Hurricane Irma did come up through Florida a little east of Tampa but fortunately when it passed by us was only a Cat 2 with diminished winds. We saw gusts of around 100 mph here where I live as Irma stormed past. The oak and Cypress trees on my property had a lot of broken off branches and I had a good deal of chain sawing and cleanup work to do. But our plane was safe, our home didn't sustain any damage, nor did our airplane hangar. We were lucky!

A few days later, I drove up to Enterprise in a rental car with my sister, Sue. Hal and Vickie put us up for the night in their home, and the next day we flew the Tiger back to Florida.

Now, the whole point of this story is that our AYA circle of friends is one of the wonderful things that has come from being a member of this organization for so many years. We take care of each other. Thank you, Hall and Vickie for your kindness, and for caring enough to have my back!

Yearly cost of an AYA membership = \$60.00. Friendships that come through the AYA = PRICELESS.