

Flying High Over Charleston with Captain Jim Ellison



PHOTO BY BRIGITTE SURETTE

The Morris Island Lighthouse off the northern tip of Folly Beach is a lonely sentinel standing watch over Charleston Harbor.

A Bird's Eye View of the Lowcountry

By BRIGITTE SURETTE
SPECIAL TO THE MOULTRIE NEWS

Whether you're a resident of the Lowcountry or a longtime visitor, you've more than likely taken advantage of one of the many tours offered. Horse-drawn carriage rides downtown, Eco-tours of the islands or strolls through one of Charleston's many plantations offer ways in which to view Charleston, but nothing quite compares to a bird's eye view of the vast beauty that is Charleston.

Flying High Over Charleston, a privately owned airplane and pilot service located in Mercury Aviation Center off West Aviation Avenue, offers aerial tours, phenomenal photography opportunities and a way to see Charleston, East Cooper, West Ashley and the islands from a unique perspective.

Jim Ellison, owner of Flying High Over Charleston and a FAA licensed commercial pilot,

moved from West Virginia to Charleston over 25 years ago.

"My wife fell in love with Charleston and the wonderful climate and people here," Ellison said. Ellison worked in civil service in West Virginia and after moving to Charleston, obtained a degree in Special Education. While working as a Special Education teacher, he developed an interest in flying and received his pilot's license in 1980.

"After moving to Charleston, so many of our relatives from Indiana, West Virginia, Kentucky and Virginia wanted to visit us. What started out as means to get them here turned into my starting up a business in 1994," Ellison said. His wife Ann, a recently retired schoolteacher from Alice Birney Middle School and third-generation Greek baker, came up with the name and his aerial services attracted mainly engineering firms, corporations, geologists and photographers. In addition, executives moving to the area use Ellison's aerial tours as a means to scout the area to make both personal and business real estate decisions.

"The bulk of my business is corporations and photojournalists, but a third is the tours I give folks that want to see

Charleston as they've never seen it before. They've been on the carriage rides and the boat tours, but as one of my clients mentioned, I give them a memory that lasts a lifetime," Ellison boasts.

Front, side and back views

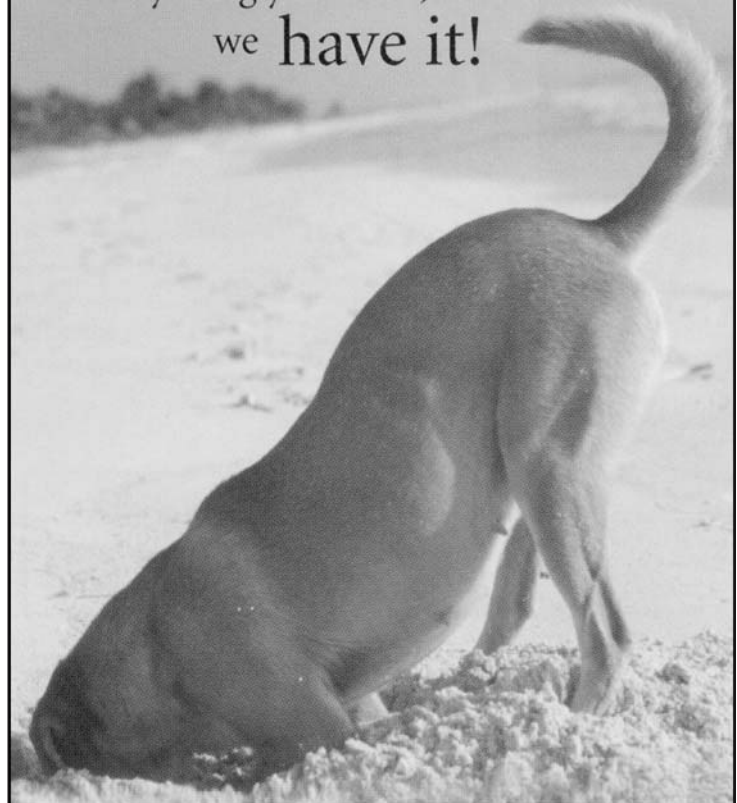
And boast he should, as I had the opportunity to view Charleston during a 45-minute aerial tour. Being an avid traveler, I'm accustomed to flying commercial airlines that get me from Point A to Point B. Ellison's plane, a Cessna Skyhawk, holds four passengers and offers front, side and back views at altitudes of 600 to 1,000 feet.

Upon entering Mercury Aviation Center, we walk up to the counter where personnel behind it are talking to pilots

to ensure that incoming guests have the accommodations they need upon landing and alerting ramp personnel that aircraft are coming in. Huge windows look out onto a tarmac that contain privately owned aircraft as well as aircraft owned by businesses such as MUSC and Motley, Richardson and Patrick law firm. It's a beautiful day for flying and our tour guide, Jim Ellison greets us with a slow smile and easy manner. He takes us out onto a tarmac containing Cessna, Lear, Gulfstream, King Air and Beechjet aircraft.

Jim explains the safety precautions and runs through a litany of instructions that he refers to as his "baldheaded flight attendant duties." My friends and I fasten our seat

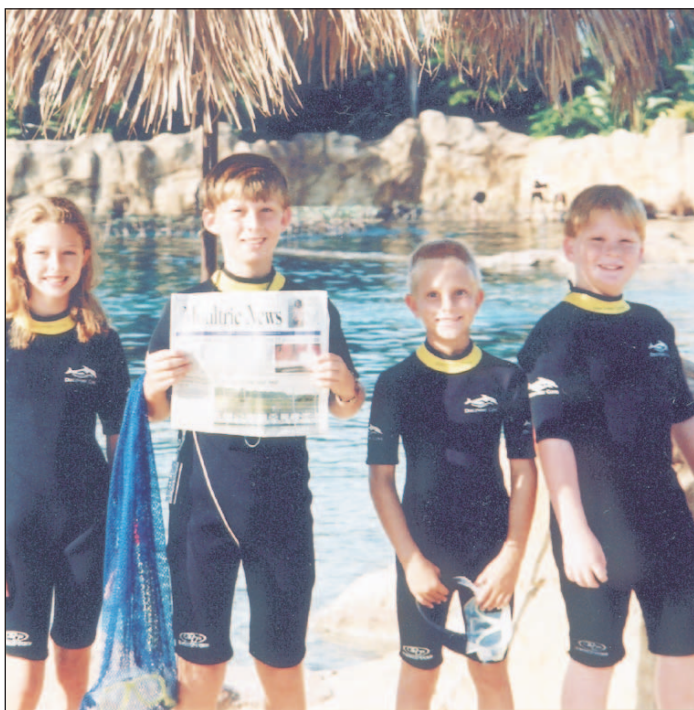
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On Vacation with The Moultrie News



The families of Hampton and Rebecca Lee and Kim and Beth Clark traveled to Discovery Cove in Orlando, Fla., to snorkel, feed the stingrays and swim with the dolphins, and they took along their *Moultrie News*. From left are Caroline Lee, Jackson Clark, Andrew Lee and Grey Clark.

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