

The Borrego Springs VMG Fly-in 2012

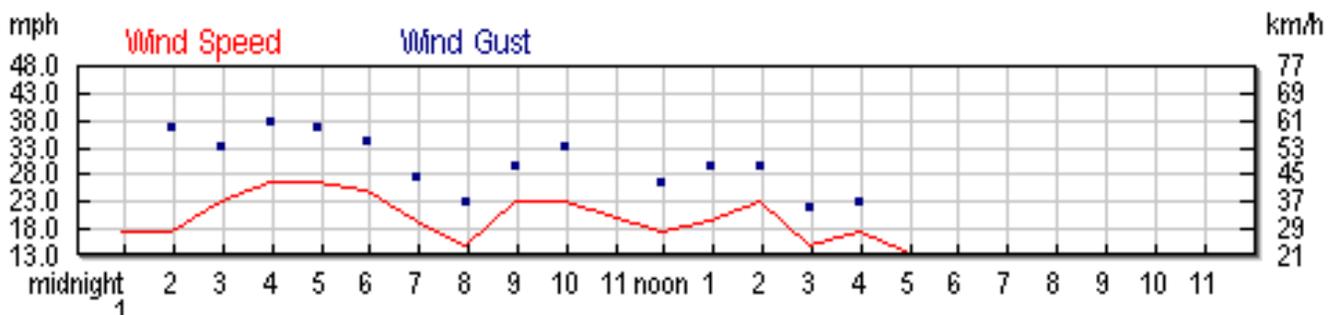
This VMG fly-in was to be our kick off fly-in for 2012. More people registered to join us than for other fly-ins lately, and I had a hunch it would be a good time for everyone. I put the invites out for someone to accompany me, and Adriana replied. 'Ed its Adriana! Can I come along? Please, (please please :)' She sent me a pretty picture and I did not recognize her, she had dropped over 50 pounds since I last went flying with her. She used to have a round face.



Now, we had not flown together in a long time. And that was because we unfortunately have a horrible track record of actually flying together. One time it was due to low overcast clouds that day. Another time, it was because she turned up sick and had to stay home. Yet another time, it was because I was not chosen as one of the 100 airplanes invited to fly-in to Edwards AFB for a special event. I wrote her we would go, while suppressing thoughts that we actually would not, due to our previous track record.

As I went to bed Friday night, this Internet forecast of winds was to be the fodder for my dreams. 'Saturday, sunny. Highs 71 to 81. Areas of winds north 25 to 35 mph with gusts to 60 mph becoming east 20 to 30 mph with gusts to 40 mph in the afternoon.' I had spent some time and money preparing for this fly-in and I really didn't want my plans dashed yet again by Mother Nature.

She called me at 7:30 as I had requested a wake-up call, (and I sprang?) up out of bed. I didn't make it to the phone in time as my answering machine in the kitchen grabbed it in 4 rings. I guess that I needed more like 7. I fired up the coffee machine, and called her back. We would meet at 9. Looking out the window, the olive tree out front was gently swaying. I crossed my fingers. I checked the current weather and it was not quite so smooth, but it still seemed doable.



At 9 AM, the hangar doors were banging from the Santa Ana winds. Soon Adriana arrived and she greeted me with a hug. We talked for an hour waiting for the wind to subside. Finally someone took off and we watched the plane fly by us. A lot can be learned from observing other planes in flight. Finally I decided to get things in motion. She sumped the tanks (clean samples) while I did another walk around inspection. Then we called for fuel. Jordan drove over in the fuel truck.



A half a tank of fuel is almost \$200 these days.



She's ready to go flying and here I come.....

Another plane departed and she commented as to how it didn't seem so bad. I said, "wait 'till you're inside". We got in and fired that puppy up. The taxi down to Rwy 7 seemed normal and the run-up was fine. When we got up to 75, I let the plane depart. The plane started rocking and rolling and the copilot started exclaiming. Time for two hands on the yoke for positive control. The next 5 minutes were work constantly getting the Mooney back level. Then after a few thousand feet of climb, it started to settle down. At least the air was clean. That is typical for our wintertime Santa Ana winds.

The autopilot took over and headed us right to our destination. Nearing the Borrego valley area, there is a range of hills straight ahead rising up to 6000 feet. As we want to start heading down, we always veer left and follow a lower area in the hills. Of course, it started up with the turbulence again. We followed a path similar to the curved white line below. Then I spaced out our descent as we had a long way to come down. I joined in with one Mooney ahead of me and another one behind me.



At least the landing was nice and we parked behind Joe's Mooney.



A nice line of Mooneys with something in the middle that definitely looks out of place.



Early arrivals congregated up on the observation deck to watch the rest of us land

The majestic views of the surrounding mountains was a beautiful backdrop to a wonderful interaction among Mooney owners. Folks were getting to know one another. They kicked some tires and two Mooniacs discussed some minor mods they had made to their respective Mooneys.

Everyone went inside and we filled up 3 tables for 12 and around 4 more tables for 4. It was noisy. Lunch was served promptly for everyone but Adriana. One of those uncomfortable moments. We figured out why later. She flagged a waitress and soon her lunch arrived as well. I have always enjoyed lunch there before. I chose Chicken Assaggio Lasagna and it was not my favorite.

The 'ding, ding, ding' from the side of the room got our attention as Carl tapped on his water glass. He thanked all of us for participating and asked us to introduce ourselves to the group and pointed to a table to lead off. Dave Marten was at his first VMG fly-in and his small children fly along.



That is Dave's young daughter at the table.

Dave Marten stood up and not only introduced himself and his family, he also said he would see what he could do to host a future VMG fly-in at Mojave airport in southern California in March. The rest of us then introduced ourselves as we went around the room. It was as much fun to see the fresh new faces of those who ventured forth on their first VMG fly-in as it was to sit with friends that we have met through the VMG over the years.



Lisa on the right, is a pilot, Mooney owner, and first timer with the Vintage Mooney Group

After we left the restaurant, some departed right away, some taxied for \$5.25 fuel, and some engaged in more Mooney talk. Some new friendships were born that day. The Vintage Mooney Group is about the Mooneys, the flying, and especially about the people. I hung out by my plane and talked to the other pilots who came by. That's how I met Hugh Dietz for the first time.

Time to go, we lifted off and headed straight east over low desert toward the Salton Sea some 20 miles ahead, to gain the altitude I needed to make it back over the hills. A voice on the radio said "Hey Ed, we will pull up next to you and take your picture." It was my buddy Joe. I said I was turning back northwest on course to Corona. He said to go ahead and they would pull up next to us.



Adriana took our in-flight picture, but probably it was in the morning on our way to Borrego Springs

We kept climbing and heading northwest. 10 minutes went by. I started to chuckle. I leveled off and our ground speed climbed from 125 to 165 knots, (190 MPH). I explained that I think Joe thought his Mooney was faster than mine, but he was still back there. I chuckled again. It's a Mooney pilot thing.

Finally, one third of the way home, "Ed, you might want to throttle back." I burst out laughing as I slowed down for him. Sorry Joe, it was a special moment. He came alongside and got great shots.





All having fun!

Joe was headed to Chino, so we went our separate ways and I kept us going slower as it saves on fuel costs, we had only 20 minutes left in the flight, we had to descend, and I got to flirt with Adriana longer. A win, win situation.

Back at Corona, the Santa Ana winds were still blowing. I turned on a 45° entry for a right downwind to Rwy 7. We were getting bounced around. I slowed us down to 100. A right descending turn to all of those dormant trees below made it look like everything was dead below us. We were now going 90. Another right turn put us on a 2 mile final and the bouncing continued as I saw the runway two miles straight ahead. I had us slowed down to 80 by then. Slowing down to 75 and getting real low over the trees below had us on a good glide path for the runway. Once past the trees and over the grass overrun area. I slowed to 70 and got us down to about 6 feet above ground. Then 5 feet.

Then it happened

Wind shear slammed us down on the grass 15 feet short of the runway. It was hard enough to make the Mooney bounce back up right away. There was no time to add more power to arrest the sudden descent. When we next came back down, maybe 5 seconds later, we were on the centerline of the runway as if nothing had happened. I was shaken, but just emotionally. Adriana was fine.



We hung out together for a while, just having fun, as always

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More of my stories are on my Webpage at: <http://www.mooneyevents.com/shreffler.html>