

## The Wednesday Flight that Pooped Out

It was all set up. I was to meet Dave after work at my hangar. My annual inspection was due, and he had moved his shop 8 nm away so we needed to get the Mooney from Corona to Riverside.



This is not really a flight, it is just a puddle jump

He called to confirm and I said yes. I got to Corona's airport on time. I even had the hangar doors open. I thought he was going to drive over in his dark green pickup truck. Silly me.

Dave flew in and pulled up in a Cessna 172. For those that don't know, my knees are going down the tubes due to osteoarthritis. Most days, I need a nearby shoulder to steady myself with while climbing up on the wing. The plan was to have him assist me at Corona, and then I would fly my Mooney over to his maintenance shop at the Riverside airport, and then he would bring me back to Corona where my car was.

Well, it sounded like a good plan, and we got going as far as getting the airplane out of the hangar and getting the hangar doors closed, and I moved my car back in front of my hangar, and I got situated in the cockpit. I thought I was good to go.

He asked if he could do anything more and I said "Everything's great, you go ahead", and so he walked back to his airplane and got ready to take off.

I went through all of the usual items my checklist. I noticed that my landing light switch was on, so I turned it off. I checked the big red Master [electrical power] switch, and it was off, so that should be no problem. It controls everything, so I continued on. Everything was good until I turned the red

Master switch on, as I was going to be checking the two fuel gauges next. There was no clicking sound. There is always a resounding click as a solenoid comes alive. I stared at my fuel gauges.

They both read zero.

Well, cousin, I knew that wasn't true, because I had plenty of fuel, but glancing around the rest of the instrument panel confirmed that I had zero of one thing, and that was battery power. This has never happened to me before in my 20 years of flying. I just went flying with Jenny four days ago. The battery was 102% perfect just four days ago. (**No**, I didn't leave the master switch on when we got back.)

My mind was racing. I knew Dave is about ready to take off and go back to Riverside. I got out of my airplane as fast as I possibly could and I got into my RAV4, and I drove up to the runway area. I had my car's headlights on, and I started flashing **on, off, on, off with my high beams**. Dave noticed that (my headlight antics) just as he started his takeoff roll. And so he slowed down and taxied back to find out what was the problem. Wonder if he was cussing.

Dave removed a panel from the left side of my empennage and started checking all of my battery and ancillary electrical connections. Everything was just fine. So tomorrow he will come back with a charged battery and some instruments. He will work it out.

The good news is that it happened right in front of my hangar. And Aircraft Spruce is just two miles away. And they sell everything for airplanes.

To be fair, I told him to add this to my bill,

### Intermission

This story isn't over yet, so just sit back and enjoy a chick flick while I get what happened next down on paper. That is if you like happy, unusual, and even romantic stories. Here is a short story for you. If it is over the top, don't watch it. At least it is better than if I sent you a link to a video of an airplane crash. And, I do know how to see them as well.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lj\\_w0JEpNSo&feature=player\\_embedded#at=54](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lj_w0JEpNSo&feature=player_embedded#at=54)

### Two Days Later

On Thursday Dave called to tell me it would be Friday when he would be out to check my airplane. He followed through and called me Friday afternoon. He had replaced my battery with a charged loaner battery and because conditions were just right, he noticed something unusual then, Bingo!

A 1985 Mooney M20J has a 'courtesy light'. It is an interior light that may be used before entering the airplane at night in a dark airport situation. The light switch is ceiling mounted above the copilot seat so it can be accessed before getting inside. Because of that usage intent, it bypasses the master switch and it can inadvertently be left on. In daylight, it is usually not noticeable. But if left on, it will drain the battery. It did, and that was the cause of the dead battery on Wednesday.

Friday afternoon: Dave called and we set up to meet at my hangar again after I got off of work. I drove into a horrible 1+ hour Friday afternoon CA 91 commute traffic jam, but because Dave was delayed, he waited only 5 minutes for me. He again flew over in Frank's Cessna 172

I recorded my fuel and oil levels and soon, I was back in the pilot's seat. This time Dave waited nearby until my engine came alive. I turned the key and there was good engine noise and an instant breeze. As he walked back to the Cessna, I slowly taxied behind him.

He went through his run-up procedures while my Mooney was idling next to him in the 'run up area'. His engine was already warm from the flight over to Corona. I told him on the radio to go ahead, as I would need 3 - 4 more minutes for the oil to warm up before I did my engine run-up. He did, I watched him take off and turn toward Riverside. I waited for the oil temp needle to move, as always.

My turn now, and my steed charged down the runway and lifted off early, as I was alone. I turned toward Riverside and upon reaching 2,000', I throttled way back. (120 MPH is fast enough for an 8 mile ride). I called up the Riverside tower controller and he told me to report downwind abeam for 27.

Just as I came abeam the tower on my downwind leg for runway 27, he called me (on my airplane radio which I hear through my headset) and told me I was cleared to land on 27. He was the nicest guy you could have for a tower controller. I had my right hand on the throttle for power adjustments occasionally and then back on the yoke to control our direction while my left hand was forming a shield just above my eyes to keep me from being blinded by the sun which was very low and very bright today and exactly straight ahead, right down the runway. He later helped me to taxi to where Dave was waiting for me. I saw him waving a ½ block away to get my attention.

Long story short, Dave got my Mooney into his enormous maintenance hangar, I filled out minimal paperwork, we discussed the work to be done, and then we both got in that Cessna for the ride back to my car at Corona's airport. And then it happened. The real reason I wrote about today's stuff.



A typical headset

Once I got in the Cessna and I was situated with my seatbelt secured, I took the supplied headset off of the glareshield and I put it on for the upcoming flight. Immediately, my right ear felt wet and uncomfortable. I yanked it back off, and drops of liquid were falling onto my shirt and jeans. Dave had just washed the Cessna and wondered if water had leaked in, but this liquid felt slightly oily.

I tried to clear my ear with my fingers. The right side of my neck was now wet and slippery too. It was a puzzlement until Dave thought of the gel cups, the type of seals around the ears on these headsets. If the rubber seal got a crack and the gel leaked out? I was still busy trying to get all of the liquid out of my right ear. Dave ran over to his truck and brought back another headset for me.

I was again marginally comfortable sporting a pair of David Clarks while Dave started the Cessna's engine. A nice, quiet, weak sounding engine. I scanned the instrument panel. I could not find anything except the standard six pack. It was five minutes before sunset and the instruments were not back-lit and I could not even find the transponder. Good thing Dave was left seat.

The take off roll was short and the climb angle was steeper than I am used to. Those big Cessna 172 wings provide a lot of lift at around 70 MPH. Mooneys fly different for sure. The whole 8 mile flight seemed slow, quiet, and very comfortable. I still couldn't find the transponder on the instrument panel. He was my pilot. I went into passenger mode and just enjoyed the view of our area down there.

We came in for a landing at Corona and 2 miles out, Dave reduced power to slow down. 1 mile out, he brought those huge barn door flaps down and it seemed like we slowed down to a crawl. We seemed like we were just suspended there and what was holding us up? That is a fun experience.

He taxied right up to my hangar, curb service if you will. I removed my headset and put it in the back seat as requested. Dave opened my door for me as the door lever is actually behind the seat back. I got out and went to my hangar where I had some mechanic's hand cleaner but my hands were still oily. A Blue Can was in order. Dave got the Cessna maneuvered to face the other way and soon he was back in the air for another 8 miles, back to Riverside.

Let you know if anything comes up, I promise. Here is that Cessna 172.





Back at home, I got some hot water and hand soap and scrubbed my hands. They felt better but I was not going to wash my neck at the kitchen sink. My shirt still had not dried. It was not water, it was some kind of an oil substance on the shirt. And it does not reduce belly fat.

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