

Minden at Lake Tahoe - Vintage Mooney Group - 2010

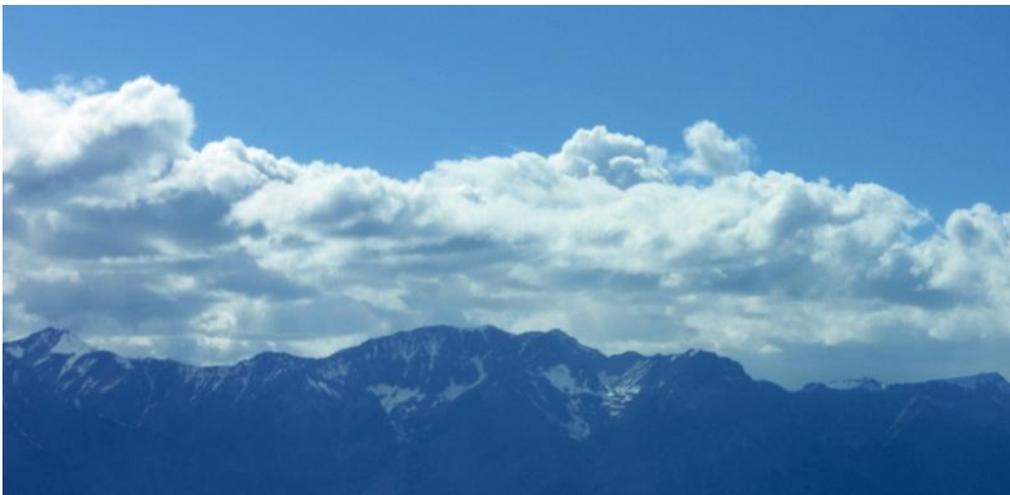
The Lake Tahoe area is always beautiful. When I found out that the Vintage Mooney Group was going to go there again this June, I let all of my flying invitees know that there was another Tahoe flight available. Kent wrote "Pencil me in", and so it happened. He made the hotel reservations.



It seems Kent keeps re-inventing himself - but his humor is constant

I took a vacation day Friday, and we planned to meet in the late morning at my hangar, but things happened and we departed around 1:30. There were a lot of low clouds in the LA Basin but by then there was a decent sized clearing right over Corona. Some of us local pilots call it the 'Corona Hole'. I went the other way until we got higher, and then I turned northwest, and we climbed right up through it to the top of that layer of clouds. Then looking around, there were clouds everywhere below us.

Once over the San Gabriel Mountains, it was cloud free and we continued northwest to Rosamond CA to circumvent military restricted airspace, then northeast to Inyokern. The ride was jiggly.



Next up, fly over these mountains and under a new cloud layer, a bumpy combination for sure

Kent is a big teddy bear with a heart of gold but he chose to have a breakfast of a cheeseburger with extra pickle and a cheddar quesadilla that morning. I had coffee and a cookie. A layer of cumulus clouds were now above us with up and down drafts for us. We were moving in all directions. Kent asked for my plastic bag and say no more.

As the two of us weigh a lot, we departed Corona with less than full fuel to compensate, and I knew that we could not make it all of the way on less than 30 gallons. To make matters worse, we had a big time headwind. One time, we saw a ground speed of 90.6 knots when my normal is 150. Our sorry average was 120. We aimed for the Lone Pine airport right next to US 395 and that is a story itself. I have never seen an airport laid out this way. It still seems crazy. Look at this airport layout.



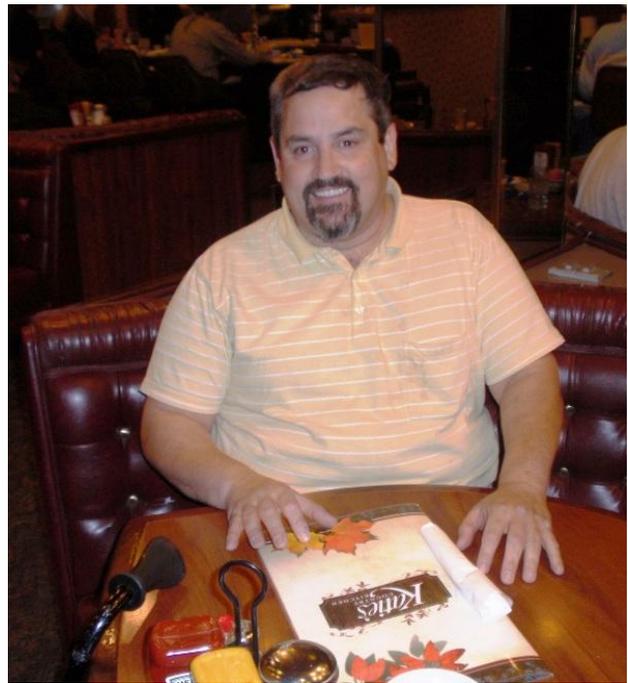
This is looking east, the runway is at the top, the only FBO for fuel is at the bottom of the picture, and no signs were posted to direct us to taxi west to an area not visible from the runway due to trees

I fueled up to half tanks again at \$4.75, and the nice young lady at the FBO helped us immeasurably with plastic bags, paper towels and all manner of 'say no more' clean up assistance. Kent was soon himself again. Later, we were roaring down Rwy 34 northbound. Kent was finally wearing Kim's acupressure anti-nausea wrist bands and he was joking and confident. They work.

We endured another 1000 bumps in the air but finally we landed at KMEV after 6 PM. Hutt Aviation was our host for the weekend but we were too late in the day for their ramp services. A county employee monitoring 122.8 in a red pickup led us to the wrong parking place and drove off. We had a bit of a walk ahead of us. More flying stuff picks up way later on. Now about our weekend there.

It was windy there and I slipped on my winter jacket. The next bit would be funny if it was not about us. It must have taken us nearly 10 minutes to exit my plane, and another 10+ minutes for me to chain it down and put my wheel chocks in place, but I did it. A blue and white Mooney landed. Then it was another 10 minutes for us to walk to the Hutt FBO. We went inside and found Mike Jacobs who had just driven down to pick up Kevin and Darci who had arrived in the blue and white Mooney.

Mike offered us a ride to the beautiful Carson Valley Inn, a Hotel / Casino with two restaurants and a coffee bar, where the Vintage Mooney Group had obtained a special group rate. We checked in. Mike and Kevin and Darci went to the CV Steakhouse to join the rest of the Vintage Mooney Group. Their dining room was full and we were late, so we opted to go to Katie's Kitchen just down the hall.



After "Quick Draw" dispensed with all of the Hooligans, we settled down to a delicious dinner

After dinner, we split up, with me hitting the penny slots while Kent played Poker and Blackjack with the big boys. There, he met his new friend, 'Tahoe Tom'. Meanwhile, I learned how those 9 pay-line slot machines worked and soon I was investing **9¢** every time I pushed that big white plastic button. The drink lady came by and I asked her to bring me *her* favorite beer. Soon Taz and I were on a first name basis. Dan and Maria Symula surprised me by walking up to me to say hi. We had never met except by emails and he had seen my pictures in my stories. He said he recognized my beard. Two hours later I went to my room in devastated disbelief that penny slots had beat me for \$20.



Taz's choice, Sierra Nevada Pale Ale was pretty good, and I went to sleep

Saturday morning, I was again in devastated disbelief that there was no in-room coffee maker. What a bummer. As soon as possible, I was downstairs in the coffee bar for Danish and coffee. Back in my room, I dialed Kent's room, no answer. I called his cell and heard an Out Of Service recording. I banged on his door, no answer. I went back down and outside, but could I not get his cell to ring. Finally figuring he was ahead of me, I went to the airport with the hotel shuttle service for the Vintage Mooney Group gathering. He was not there either. He is a big boy, and I was not worried.



I met everyone on the ramp around the Mooneys (except mine which was still parked way over there) and had a great time meeting new faces and welcoming good friends. Kent worked things out and soon he joined us. It was great to see Bob and Charlotte again, it had been nearly a year, and I missed them. Anita and Linda welcomed me as they had done many times in the past. When I saw my 'bro' Phil, it was again time for smiles and hugs. And again when I saw Ish and Christine there.

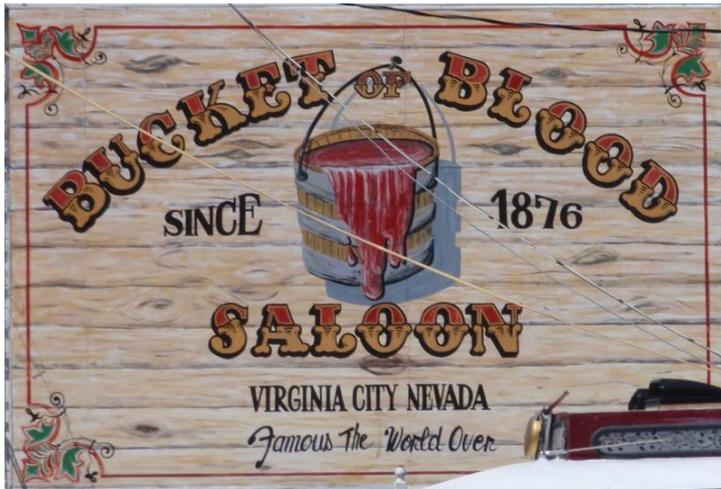
Then we had our lunch in a hangar that Mike procured for us. Phil made the announcements on what was coming up in the afternoon and about future fly-ins. After lunch, a lot of people helped folding all of the tables and chairs and walking them to a nearby trailer. In 5 minutes, the hangar was cleared.

A few folks took off again for home. Bruce and Cathy Smith had rented a car and offered to take Kent back to our hotel / casino (he is a gambler), and offered to take me along on their car trip to Virginia City for the afternoon. The VMG had planned it for fun, shopping, socializing and drinking.



We took US 395 to Carson City, then US 50 and 341 up in the hills past Silver City to Virginia City

In downtown, street parking was scarce but a car pulled out right in front of us, and Bruce slid in as slick as that. We walked around a bit and saw other VMG people doing the tourist thing as well.



A lot of saloons with long bars had fancy signs, but the quiet 1862 sign got my attention

Cathy opted to go shopping while Bruce and I went across the street for an overpriced beer. We got to know each other a bit and Cathy found a 'must have' wall hanging. Right across the narrow street was a rock shop right where we were parked. For some reason I went in. I never go shopping.



I bought my wife a small rock crystal, her birthstone, the amethyst

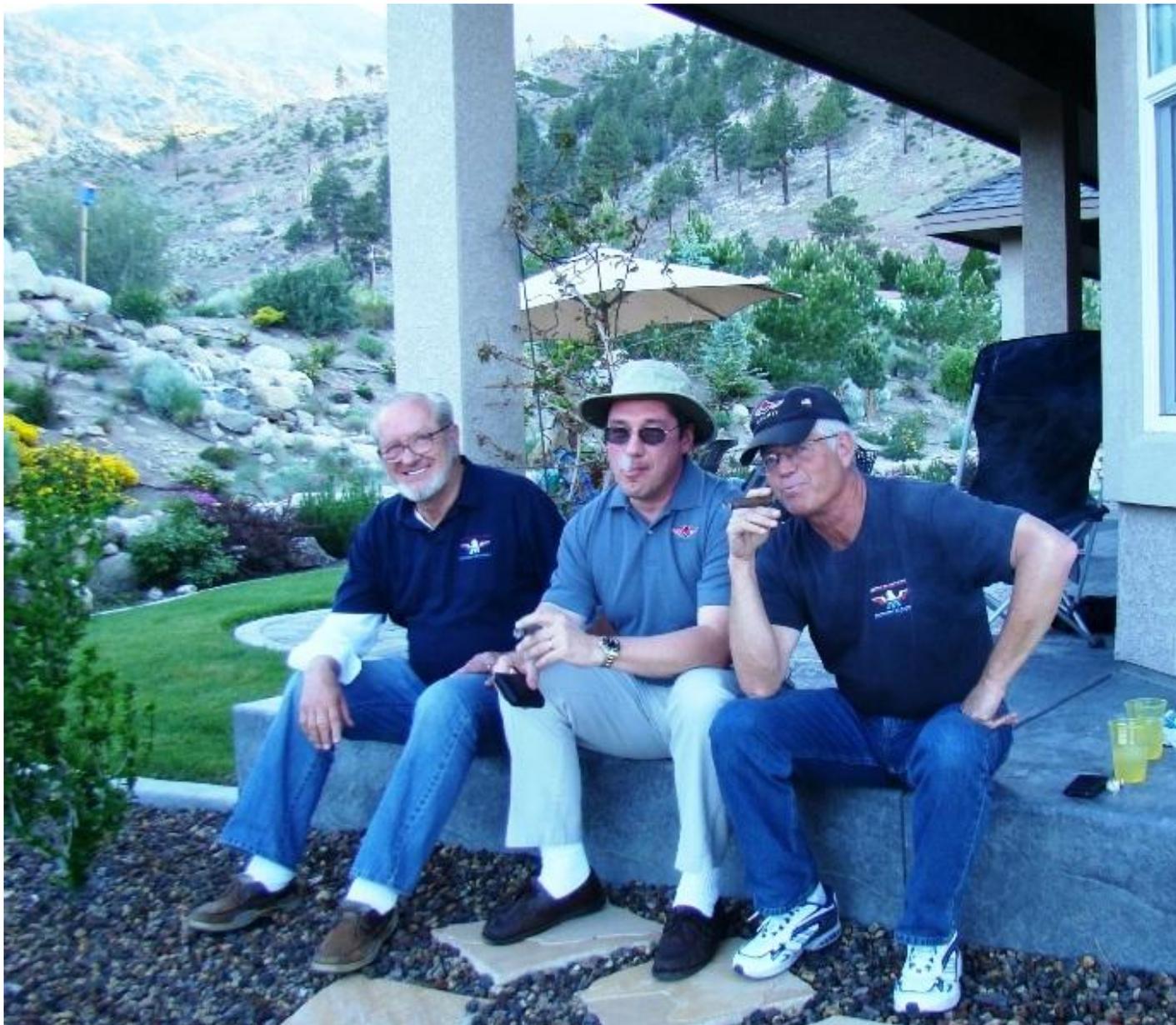
The group was gathering up to go to our next destination, Mike & Mary Jacobs beautiful home in the foothills of the Sierra Mountains overlooking the Carson Valley for Mike & Pam Whitehead's famous "Weed Whacker" margaritas. Mike & Pam weren't there this time, but Kevin and Darci Smith brought along their Magic Margarita Machine. First we stopped by the hotel to pick up Kent. I asked a complete stranger to take this next picture as I had been taking all of the pictures so far.



Pictured outside of our hotel, I am with Cathy and Bruce who generously took me with them Saturday

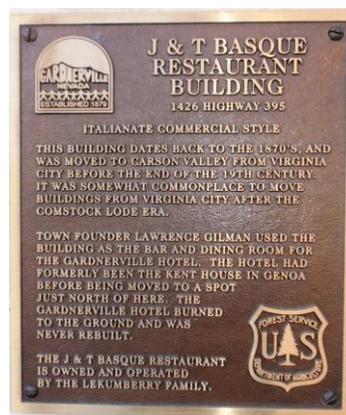
Kent joined us and we went up to the Jacobs' home, where we got out, and the Smiths went back to the hotel to rest a bit. What a great couple they are. Right off we noticed the view, amazing.





Around back, I'm hanging out with Ivan Petrzelka and Phil Corman as they enjoy their cigars

Kent was in front of us on the backyard swing bench telling us more stories. We got there a bit late, and no sooner had Kevin made me a fine margarita and it was time to go for dinner. Bad timing.



The Vintage Mooney Group had arranged for a \$27 dinner including 'from scratch' soup, appetizers, wine, choice of entrees, wine, desert, and taxes at the JT Basque Restaurant just a ¼ mile away from the hotel. All 30+ of us were there seated at a long L shaped table in the **far** corner of the restaurant.



Lucky me, I got to sit in the fun people area. From left, Robert and Victoria Brown, yours truly and Kent, and Dolores and Robert Davis. Kent was entertaining the five of us who could hear him, as the room noise was evident. He went on and on with topics that just flowed from one to the next.



This steak was

sooo good !



When we all stood up to toast Mike & Mary Jacobs, who did all of the behind the scenes work to make our weekend so enjoyable at a reasonable price, the couple at the next table must have been thinking, 'Who the heck is this rag-tag group?' We were back to the hotel by 10:00 and time to spend more at the casino ya know. I had another \$20 bill to invest to find out if these machines ever pay.



Approaching 11:30, this pull paid \$1.22 on a nine cent bet bringing me back up to \$17.47 of my initial \$20. The Triple Diamond symbol in the middle is like a wildcard, except that it pays 3X. Therefore I had a Bar-Bar-Bar X 3 plus a double-Bar, double-Bar, double-Bar X 3 plus four Any Bars X 3 plus - you get the idea. Gosh, there really is a Santa Claus. I ordered a beer and pushed the 'Spin Reels Repeat Bet' button. Another 9¢ went around and around, and another, and another. You slot machine players know exactly what I am talking about. Time passed totally without notice as it does in casino environments. In fact, I have heard that there are never any clocks on the walls in casinos. I was playing at an 8 machine kiosk of identical machines, so for diversity, I would occasionally cash out and move left to the next open machine. Taz was off, but my drink guy always found me.



Bingo, at 12:12, this alignment paid \$3.70 because this time it paid $3 \times 3 = 9$ times on 6 of 9 pay lines

I suppose us amateur slot players dream of someday seeing that mystical '777' show up right in front of us. I think I did better. At 12:45, **2 Triple Diamonds and a 7** paid a whopping \$9.06 on a 9¢ bet boosting my current credits up to 2264 or \$22.64. Just remember, this was just a penny machine. But 100 to 1 is about as good as it gets on this machine. Just 3 Triple Diamonds would beat it.



As it paid on pay line #9, it would have been worthless had I spent less than 9¢ on that pull. It wasn't the money, it was the thrill of winning for a change. I think you can relate to that. I cashed in.

Sunday morning, my wakeup call was too early at 9 AM. You sleepy heads know. After shower and all, I was a new (old) man. A knock at the door. It was Kent with coffee in hand. OMG what a treat. He stated that he chose a no breakfast morning. I shared the coffee. I am never in a hurry except when I am late for something or someone. Corona could wait. We had some more fun conversation. I had my 3rd story hotel room curtains pulled wide open and asked him do describe what he saw outside as the view was great. He went on for a paragraph about the meadows and the buildings and the trees and the creek and the mountains and etc. Then I told him what I saw, not one cloud in the sky. Two different perspectives. Pilots always look above the horizon. He smiled and agreed. We got ready to go, and the hotel shuttle took us to the airport some 3 - 4 miles away.



Thanks to Hutt aviation who put us up with free parking and a special 30¢ a gallon discount on fuel

Hutt had a dedicated pilots' weather info PC for pilots to use. Then, in their comfortable conference room I called '1 800 wx-brief' to connect with a Flight Briefer at the nearest FSS, a division of the FAA, in turn a portion of our DOT headed up by the Director of Transportation, who reports to Mr. Obama. Actually, now with privatization, the guy I talked with actually works for Lockheed Martin.

Oh yeah, I called because I wanted a pilot's Standard Weather Briefing and ten minutes later I had heard about more bumps in the day's air. Bumps don't scare me (anymore) and they don't make me sick in my tummy, but they sure as &\$%@ annoy me. I want smooth air. Kent's zero breakfast choice sounded good to me. Sean (pronounced Shawn), drove me out to my Mooney in their golf cart and I assessed my needs. I needed fuel. He drove back to the big hangar to get in his fuel truck.



I took this looking west while waiting and again counted my blessings for just being here, albeit briefly



Kent showed up in style with the pretty gal from the office but she was smiling at me, or so it seems. I took on 20.2 gallons of 100LL to bring it up to 36.7 gallons, a few gallons over half tanks this time. This is 9 gallons (54#) more than when we left Corona Friday. I was juggling our fuel amount, the weight, the temperature, the field elevation, and the runway length. Not enough fuel means another stop at Lone Pine. Too much fuel means we are too heavy and we won't leave the ground. ☹️

I had a long runway, and used a lot of it with the tires touching it. Then we popped up pretty good for a bit, then we didn't gain more altitude for a while. We were safely clearing houses and such but there was no news from my 'going up' gage. Mooney pilots know what to do. I dropped the nose 3°.

This is the neat thing about the Mooney's laminar flow wing design. Nose down means the drag decreases and airspeed increases. Greater airspeed means greater lift being produced by the wing. Up we went. Emotionally, I went higher as well. All was well again 😊



By 2:09, we slipped over California's Mono Lake. Huell Howser didn't seem to be there that day. We motored on. Every time we were getting close to an airport with fuel service, I checked our progress. We were still good to go. Another bit of good news, the military restricted airspace ahead was available to pilots above 6000'. That saved us 15 miles. The Palmdale, Lancaster area was my last fuel decision point, and we were good to go safely on to Corona. Bad headwinds aloft were minor.

Can I say 'crappy' here? I guess so, it is my story after all. I made a crappy landing at Corona. Like the bowler who leaves a 7 - 10 split. Like that missed putt on 18. Like that tennis shot that goes out of bounds. It was not pretty. It was, however, at the airport of my intentions, so I collect 2 points for

that. It was 4:02 PM. After we got done bouncing around like a clown-mobile cartoon, I got us slowed down and we taxied back to my place. I had a Blue Can while Kent gave me another one hour show with his special humor keeping my grin plastered in place. Oh, about the fuel? I still had 15.3 gallons indicated. When I filled up to the top again, the JPI indicated amount was off by only 0.4 gallons. ☺ It is much more accurate than the Mooney's fuel gauges, and that is why I bought it.



Mike and Mary Jacobs, our host and hostess as captured by Phil's 'Kiss Cam' at the restaurant.

For another 166 pictures of our awesome VMG weekend at the Minden airport in the beautiful Carson Valley, the dinners, a Friday fun trip to Carson City, and Saturday to Virginia City, the margarita party, and more 'Kiss Cam' shots including mine, Phil Corman has posted them here for your viewing pleasure.

<http://picasaweb.google.com/philcorman/VMGMindenTahoe?>

The welcome mat is always out for you to join me and my Mooney as we wing our way to more scenery and always more fun. I am dedicating the rest of my days to having fun and I hope all of you do too. Life is too short for any other choice. Eat a light breakfast.

Ed Shreffler

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<http://www.mooneyevents.com/shreffler.html>