

## Paso Robles - CA Wine Country

Most everything worked out for me today (Saturday 06/09/2007). The VMG had a Paso Robles (PRB), CA fly-in trip planned, one of my flying buddies, Sofie, wanted to go with me, the Mooney had a fresh oil change and enough fuel to get up there, and the weather was promising. I went to bed early last night with my flight routes planned, and high hopes for a great day.



I woke up to low overcast gray skies. "No fair, dammit", I thought as I went to the other windows around the house, looking for blue skies. Nada. Nada. Nada. Why was yesterday severe clear on the way to work? Why? Does this happen to all VFR pilots?

I made coffee and hit the Internet. I checked wunderground.com and watched the satellite pics from the past two hours. There was a 'hole' in the clouds just 15 miles southeast. Was it a sucker hole? Why does a promising great day have to start off this way?

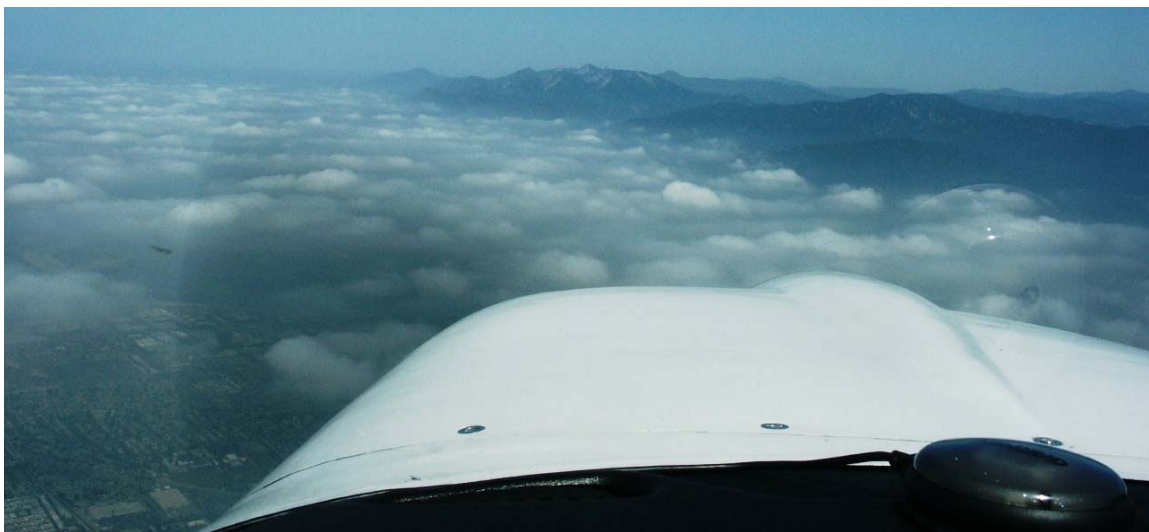
I called Sofie on her cell and told her I wanted to check the next hourly weather on the Internet from several airports ten minutes later and that would make me late to get to the airport. She said "No problem." All things added up, I probably arrived at my hangar 30 minutes late. I know, pause happens.

When I arrived at hangar 32, she was there and waiting. With a smile. With no complaints. And she wanted to pitch in and help. I smiled and thought about the phrase 'Hangar Wench' which I had heard about but had never actually experienced. I checked out 'wench' on dictionary.com to be sure I was not portraying something unfair and this is what came up. 1. A country lass or working girl: 'The milkmaid was a healthy wench.' 2. Usually Facetious. A girl or young woman. 3. Archaic. A strumpet. (No archaic strumpet is intended here. ed)

I did the airplane walkaround inspection, and after I told her how, Sofie reached under the Mooney's low wings and sumped the fuel tanks for me. Then she started to pull the Mooney out of the hangar. This hangar wench idea was growing on me.



The sky was partly blue by then so we took off and after a minute I made a 45-degree right turn and pointed the Mooney up and northwest. We saw some clouds five minutes later but by then we were above them. An airliner out of Ontario passed, right to left, 3 miles ahead of us but we couldn't quite catch it. 😊



Clouds were still over the Covina – El Monte area.



Large water pumping operation in the mountains

After we touched down on runway 1 at Paso Robles, Donn Larson talked me through the turns while I taxied, so I could find the VMG parking area. It was almost a mile away. Larry Palmer guided me into a parking spot at the far end of 25 – 30 VMG Mooneys. We pushed her back off of the taxiway, tail first, but left the nose gear (front tire) on the tarmac. The pushback was slightly downhill, so I held 07T where I wanted her with the tow bar while Sofie retrieved the wheel chocks from the baggage compartment and chocked the front wheel to keep the airplane from rolling backwards. After locking 07T up, I took some pictures.



Mooneys, Mooneys everywhere.



Watching the aerobatic competition being held over the east end of the airport

Sofie wanted to pay for lunch. Phil and Linda Corman were our gracious hangar hosts for a great barbeque lunch at their hangar. They had everything set up, people were eating lunch, and more hamburgers were cooking on the grill as we walked up to the hangar. We got to sit next to Paul Lowen, the Mooney guru from Lakeport CA. The head count was around 40. Nice. Really nice.



The Vintage Mooney Group hangar BBQ



After lunch we all took turns standing up, introducing ourselves, and saying whatever we wanted to the group. Then Donn and Barbara Larson were presented with a plaque honoring their years of service to the VMG to the resounding sound of our applause.



Barbara Larson with plaque and Donn Larson in white shirt looking on.

Next it was awards time. The oldest pilot was the first category. I yelled out "I bid 67." That got some laughs. The winner was 79 years old. Later came the farthest distance traveled. Jo and Ozzie Kaufman won that with a 527nm (606 mi) trip from Tucson AZ.

When all of that was over, we all went outside for a great group photo. The picture is already up on <http://www.vintagemooneygroup.com/PasoRobles2007.htm>. People mingled and chatted all around the hangar. I sat down within reach of a clear plastic container of cookies.

Somebody came up to me and said, "Are you Ed Shreffler?" After admitting to the truth, he told me how much he enjoyed my (these) stories and pictures. I said a sincere thank you and told him I email VMG and AFW flight stories. Someone else overheard and asked, "Do you do Angel Flights, I just joined." Phil Corman overheard that and wanted to get on my (this) 'Fun Flights Completed' email list. The fun expands almost exponentially.

The group started to depart and so it was time. We walked out to the brown and white Mooney and did a walkaround inspection in very warm weather. I checked the fuel level. It was kinda' low for a flight to Corona, but I had a plan B. Tehachapi was my planned fuel stop on the way back. \$3.99/gal. is a great price for 100 Low Lead these days. I climbed aboard and set the parking brake, then Sofie pulled the wheel chocks, stowed them in the baggage compartment, and climbed aboard. The hot start worked, RPM up, parking brake released, and we climbed up the slope and onto the taxiway like pros. I stopped behind N201CD and did my run up.

We launched off of runway 1 and made left traffic. Once past the airport area (3 – 4 miles) I made another left turn and told 'George' (autopilot) to take us to Tehachapi. He did. I contacted Oakland Approach for flight following with an intended cruising altitude of 7500' msl. It was bumpy there so I informed ATC that we would continue our climb to 9,500. What a difference. Smooth air and 10 degrees cooler.



Canals and crops growing in California's vast San Joaquin Valley



Highway 58 from Bakersfield to Tehachapi leaving farm country and heading southeast through the foothills.



GPS Moving Map display 44.8 nautical miles from Tehachapi

About 40 miles out, the red Left Fuel Low annunciator sign came on. OK, that works. I switched to the right tank which had over an hour's worth in it. On this particular flight direction, we had to clear some pretty high hills just before descending into the valley area where the Tehachapi airport is located. With the airport in sight five miles away, and 4 or 5 thousand feet to descend, I got to have some fun. I announced my position on 123.0, turned the autopilot off, reduced power, popped up the red speed brakes, rolled over into a 45-degree bank, pointed the nose at the dirt, and dropped like a rock. 1700 fpm baby. I would never do this with most of the people that go with me. It would scare them. Sofie was having fun. She told me later that it was the high point of that leg of flight.



Precise Flight's Speed brakes deployed

I went to Tehachapi because the price was the best in town, err, the county. There, I taught Sofie how to fuel up an airplane. The static line, the credit card machine, the pump's funky on/off switch, the 'pop, twist, and pull' fuel cap. She did the second fuel tank by herself including the fuel cap. She's already almost as good at this stuff as Darrin.

We blasted out of Tehachapi northwest bound into the wind, made climbing left turns and headed southeast at the hills nearby with the wind farms. It is awesome electricity producing technology with zero pollution.



Sure, it was a bit bumpy over the High Desert, but, again, with enough altitude, it diminished to jiggles. Sofie was having fun. She told me later that she likes to look out of the right window and imagine that SHE is flying. No airplane, just her in flight up there. I want my airplane with me, thank you.

South of Palmdale/Lancaster, Joshua Approach wanted me to confirm that I was level at 9,500' and not climbing. I confirmed that was true, and asked why the concern. He explained on the radio, but a minute later I got a visual explanation that words cannot describe properly. An orange over blue Southwest Airlines 737 went by, left to right, just ¼ mile ahead and 1000 feet above us. I love these ATC guys and all of you VFR pilots should do flight following all of the time, (in my humble opinion).

Once over the San Gabriels, I got to point the nose of the airplane at the dirt again for a few minutes. ATC restricted me to 7500' for a while and then, later to 3500', until I was clear of Chino's Class D airspace. Once SoCal told me to squawk VFR and contact advisories, Sofie tuned the transponder to 1200, I dialed in 122.70 on the com radio, over flew KAJO from north to south, made left traffic for runway two five and made an ehh, ehh beautiful landing. Really!!! I rolled almost to a stop without touching the brakes. Thanks Chris.

You think this story is over, guess again. I pulled up in front of hangar 32, switched everything off, and pulled the red mixture knob all of the way out. The engine quit as expected. We got out, opened my hangar, drove our cars out, and parked them in front of Doug's hangar, next door. I hit the fridge and retrieved two



cold blue cans. Before either of us could pop a top, airplane noise was just outside. Of course, Doug had just arrived in his plane and was waiting on the ramp for my airplane to be out of his way. Sofie and I pushed 07T up the incline and into my hangar. Then we both went to our cars, and moved them again, from in front of Doug's hangar, to in front of my hangar. Coincidence happens.

I opened the back door of my RAV4 and we sat down and had a 'tailgate party' for a while, while talking about the day's activities. I was just fine with kicking back and relaxing. Sofie was too, for a while. Then she wanted to 'do something'. I didn't believe her at first, but then I had to.

Looking at the nose gear doors, I saw areas that could use some cleaning. Now, people, I am not lazy. But to kneel down to work on something that low to the ground raises havoc with my pain threshold due to the arthritis in my knees. I gave her a rubber glove and some solvent, and she attacked the dirty areas. This hangar wench idea was getting to be really comfortable by now. Every hangar could probably use one.



Looking much better than before

It was soon time for Sofie to go back home. She put everything away, gave me a hug, helped me close the hangar doors and drove off. I went home and popped another Blue Can. What a day. What a flying buddy.