

## Whirlwind Weekend II

I chose this name because it is the second time I have had two flights over a weekend with a return home in between. The first one was in May 2007, almost three years ago. Sofie and Leslie (at the last minute) are missing from this tale but the **VMG, AFW and May Locke** were still a part of my life this weekend. I had one day just for fun and one day for helping others. Loved them both.

Adriana had signed up to go to with me to the Vintage Mooney Group fly-in to Laughlin Bullhead City Vintage Mooney Group fly-in a long time ago after we were cheated out of two previous flights by adverse weather. I was up at 6 AM and checked weather. The Corona airport was reported to be socked in with fog. I live a scant two miles away and it was clear outdoors. Hard to believe, but the airport is in the Santa Ana River valley, so it makes sense. I drove to the airport arriving at 7.



Driving on Smith and then left on Butterfield, the world disappeared ahead, and I was still going lower

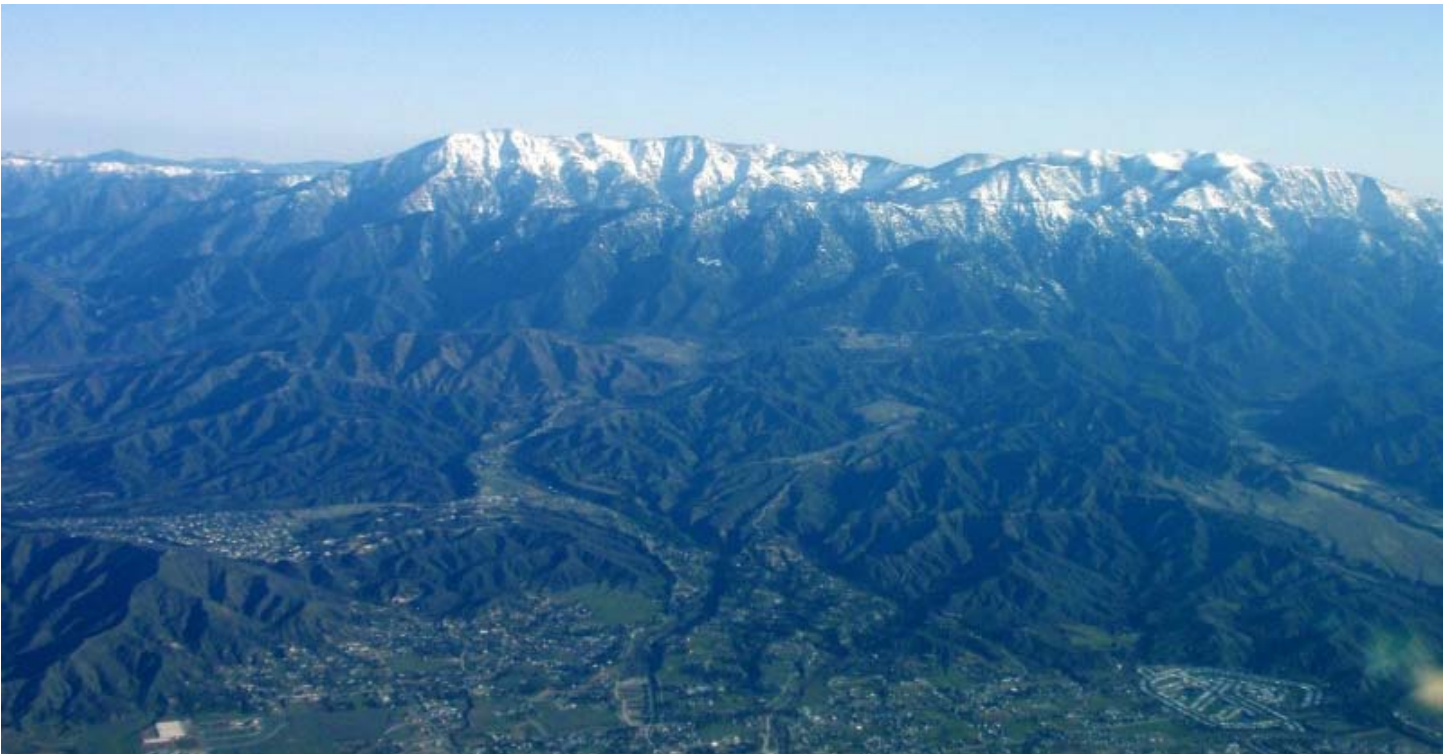


Looking 100 feet across the runway - - -



Compared to a normal flying day with the snowy San Gabriel Mountains way in the background

I pulled the plane out and parked my car inside. Adriana arrived late, parked in the hangar, we closed it up, and climbed in. It was 30 minutes later now and I had 3 miles visibility. When we were 200 feet off the ground, we were above it all, but I could still see areas of ground fog hugging the low spots for 30 miles ahead. The air was smooth, and while traveling through the Banning Pass a look out the left window showed what the Big Bear area was like.



Yes, it was chilly out at altitude, in the lower 40s - was nice and comfy in my Mooney though

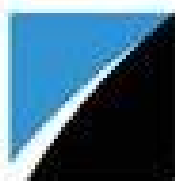
We landed around an hour and a quarter later without ever finding any bumpy air. Just like sitting on a living room couch two miles up. I know a few nice people who don't believe this can happen. We deplaned and Adriana helped me a lot by securing the Mooney with my chocks and the tie down chains, all of the things that hurt my knees. I saw the casino / hotels across the river waiting for us.



Our airport in the foreground, a **lot** of money in the middle, and clean air in the background



As always, some beautiful Mooneys from 3 - 4 states gathered together for a VMG fly-in



**LANDMARK**  
A V I A T I O N





Clean but modest looks on the outside do not prepare a visitor for the comfort to be found inside

Some people talked on the ramp by the airplanes but due to the brisk wind, most of us went into the Landmark FBO to wait for a ride from Arizona to Nevada. The Landmark is a first class FBO with all of the amenities a pilot could ask for. They were our gracious airport hosts for our day. They even requested a contact number so they could reach me during my stay if needed. Coffee, restrooms, a place to sit, big screen TV, pilot's flight prep info on a PC, fuel for the airplane, it was all there. We gathered around in small and ever evolving groups meeting new friends and hugging those we have known for a while. Our Vintage Mooney Group friendship is reason enough to jump in the plane and go somewhere, if they are going to be there. All of our fun activities are the frosting on the cake.



A pilots lounge with overstuffed seating and a flight prep area is to the left behind that tinted window



Two large courtesy shuttle vans pulled up to take us over the Colorado to the Riverside for lunch.



Little ol' white haired ladies gambling and a nice economical buffet, what a change of pace for me

Colette Eneboe pulled an excellent zinger on me just outside the casino. She's a great hugger too. There were nearly 50 of us in a reserved section just for the VMG. We had a great buffet lunch, the shrimp and crab salad was my favorite. The enchiladas were good too. We got to meet some very nice people from Carson City across our table. Phil made his VMG announcements including all about our upcoming fly-ins for the year, and I handed out some VMG nametags to those who didn't have one yet. After the shuttle ride back to the airport in Arizona, we saw Chris Floyd and his pal Drew who arrived a tad later than the rest of us. Back inside, we got to chat with Sylvia Paoli and her daughters who flew in from Fullerton CA. It was again time to go home. I did get to snap one picture of Adriana and Phil took one at lunch.





She was a little tired after staying up to 2 the night before

It was nice to have had a day with my friends again after nasty weather has taken many of my wintertime flights from me. I hope as the year progresses, there will be many more repeat stories in my memory.



Shortly after departure, this unknown but interesting area on the river came into view

It was a quiet return flight. The same sights, nothing unexpected to talk about, no turbulence or clouds, and the Mooney performed flawlessly. We motored home at 8,500', put the Mooney back in the stable, hugged, and called it a day. I went to bed early again.

An excellent video by Phil is here that tells a lot more about the Vintage Mooney Group day.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgslmHlkA98&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgslmHlkA98&feature=player_embedded)





Sunday was another great flying day. I had an Angel Flight mission scheduled to go to Fresno, pick up May Locke, and deliver her to El Monte so she can go to get a chemo treatment at City of Hope, a comprehensive cancer center. The weather at Corona was clear, but Fresno was socked in with fog and a quarter mile visibility. I made some coffee and waited. Their forecast indicated there would be 3 miles visibility by 1 PM. I wanted to be there around 2 PM. Two hours later the forecast changed to 6 miles visibility and I was comfortable with that. I fueled up and departed Corona alone this time.



Everywhere I looked the abundance of green displayed the outcome of our recent rains



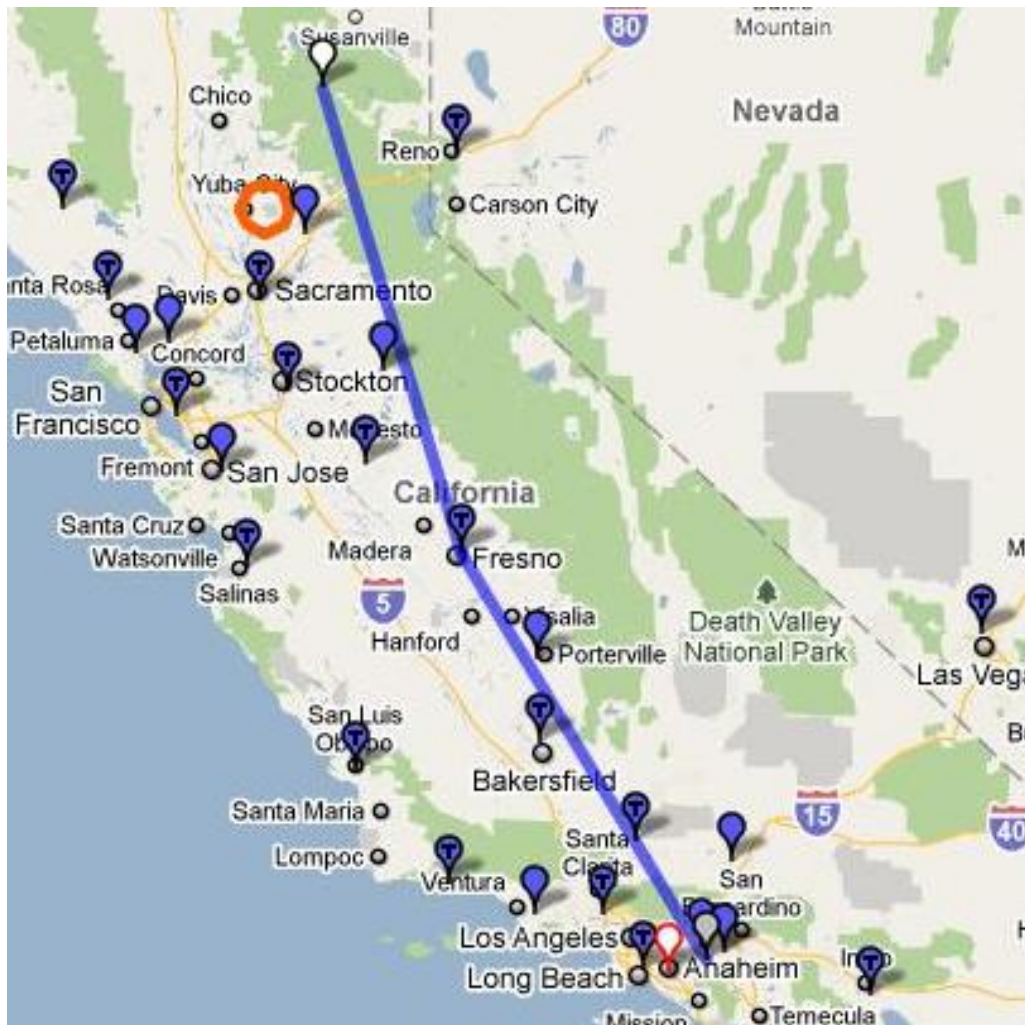
Once over the mountains, this area of the San Joaquin Valley was undercast around Bakersfield



Then it started to break up showing the valley floor and then I came to the end of them ahead



Kevin Moore coordinated our meeting time and place. He is another AFW pilot and a swell guy. While I was flying north to Fresno, Kevin and his friend were flying May south from Gansner Field in Quincy, CA to Fresno. We met at Atlantic Aviation, one of several real nice FBOs on the field.



May travels from Quincy to Fresno to El Monte via Angel Flight West



Kevin's Cessna 182 starting to taxi back to runway 29L at Fresno to go back home



May Locke and myself inside Atlantic Aviation courtesy of the nice lady behind the counter there

May is not only an AFW passenger, she is becoming a friend of mine. Today was the third time I have had the opportunity to take this gal for a ride above it all. She is battling breast cancer and while the chemo is leaving her hair and appetite alone, it is burning her hands and feet. She seems to be keeping her spirits up or doing a good job of fooling me. I am lucky to know her. God bless you May.



5807T was parked outside waiting to carry us south



We got in and settled. After engine start, I checked gages, set trim and flaps, set our route into the GPS, and listened to information 'Mike' on the ATIS. Then I called up Fresno Ground Control on the radio, told him who I was, where I was, that I had 'Mike', and my destination. I get to use a special call sign when on Angel Flight mission flights. I am accustomed to getting a clearance to taxi to the runway. He gave me a lot more.

"Angel Flight zero seven Tango, taxi to runway two niner Left via Alpha, Bravo three, Bravo. Your departure frequency is one three two point three five. Squawk zero one zero six. Climb restricted to two thousand until advised by Departure." I was supposed to repeat all of that to him so he knows that I got it all and got it correctly. I wasn't quite ready to jot it down so he had to repeat part of it to me.

He never mentioned the part about taxiway Bravo two so I missed my turn, but we got that sorted out easily enough with a U turn on the wide taxiway. Tower gave me a clearance to depart 29L. 2 minutes later I was handed off to Fresno departure who watched me for 20 minutes, then I was handed off to Bakersfield Approach Control. We were level at 9,500 and cruising at around 190 MPH most of the way. May fell asleep. I monitored the instruments, the gages, the traffic, and our progress on the GPS. George flew the airplane. The Sierras were gleaming with 100 miles of continuous snow covered peaks and even some of the high valleys were white. The clouds were still below us in that area. We reached the south end of the valley 10 miles west of Tehachapi.



The hills between the Valley and the High Desert go up to 6,000 ft. and do have some snow

Past Lancaster and Palmdale, and approaching the San Gabriel Mountains, I deviated from a straight line to El Monte. To go straight would require descending from 9,500 to 300 feet above sea level in 10 miles. Descending at 200 MPH, the 10 miles would be covered in exactly 3 minutes. That translates to descending 3066 feet per minute. The Mooney is fine with that and I find it fun, but that is no way to treat a passenger. My sincere thanks to Laurie E. for reminding me of that one day last year. She is a Commercial Pilot with thousands of hours of flying. A steep descent didn't bother her either, but she was critiquing my flying after a flight together, so I would improve my techniques.

Most non-pilots are quite comfortable with a much more gentle 500 feet per minute descent. That descent rate keeps excessive pressure from building in the head. It happens that I experienced just that as a passenger in the 1970s and wound up with a pounding headache all day until the return flight relieved the pressure. This was way before I became a pilot. We don't have to do all of the above math while we are flying, thank goodness. We have a flight instrument for that.



The VSI shows feet per minute up or down and doesn't even go to 3066' / min.

Hence the deviation. I veered right 20° to a lower ridgeline so I could start my descent earlier. Also because it was 'in the wrong direction', it gave me more distance to the airport. We were aiming closer to Burbank or Sepulveda. It all looks the same down there. Once past the crest, I rolled us into a descending left turn to head east roughly along I-210 with the throttle back to idle and the speed brakes popped out looking like shiny red mini-walls on the top of my wings. I kept glancing at the VSI to be sure I was treating May properly.

With extreme difficulty, I found the airport at El Monte and landed. I always have trouble finding that place. My thanks to the Tower Controller there, she is a super gal with an excellent attitude. She helped a lot. We parked in the closest transient parking spot available. May got out and I put her purse and a small bag on the wing so she could climb down unencumbered. Then once I was standing on the wing, I handed them to her. After I removed her suitcase from the Mooney's baggage area, she walked directly to the terminal while I walked around to the ramp with her suitcase to circumvent the 12 steps. We said goodbye with a gentle hug.

An easy departure from runway 19 and a turn to the left, pointed me directly to Corona, a scant 25 miles away. I leveled off at 3000' to be above Chino's class D airspace and below LAX's class B airspace. A few scant minutes later I was bounce, bounce, bouncing on Corona's runway. A nearly 500 mile day. 900+ for the weekend. After the tanks were re-fuelled, it was time for a Blue Can.



My new hat went along too ☺