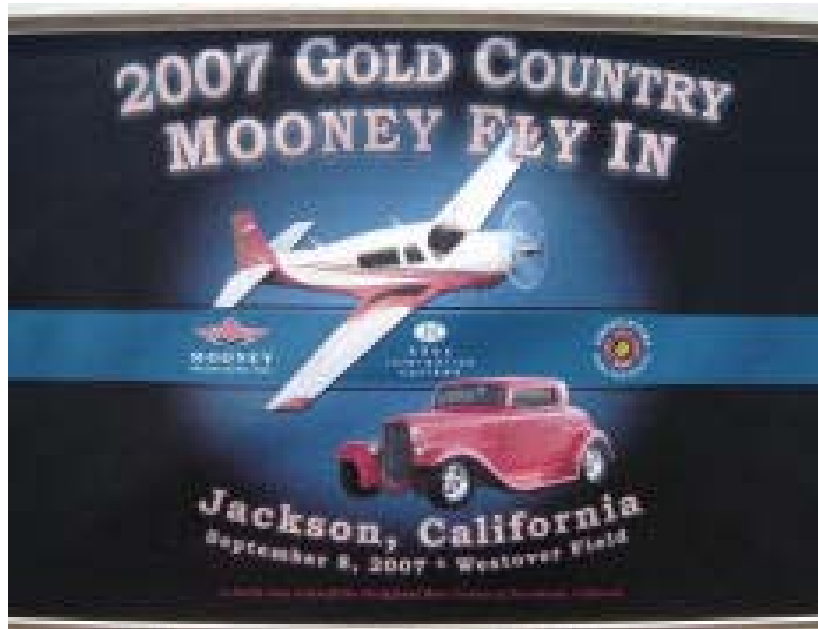


## \* California Gold Country \* September 8, 2007 \*

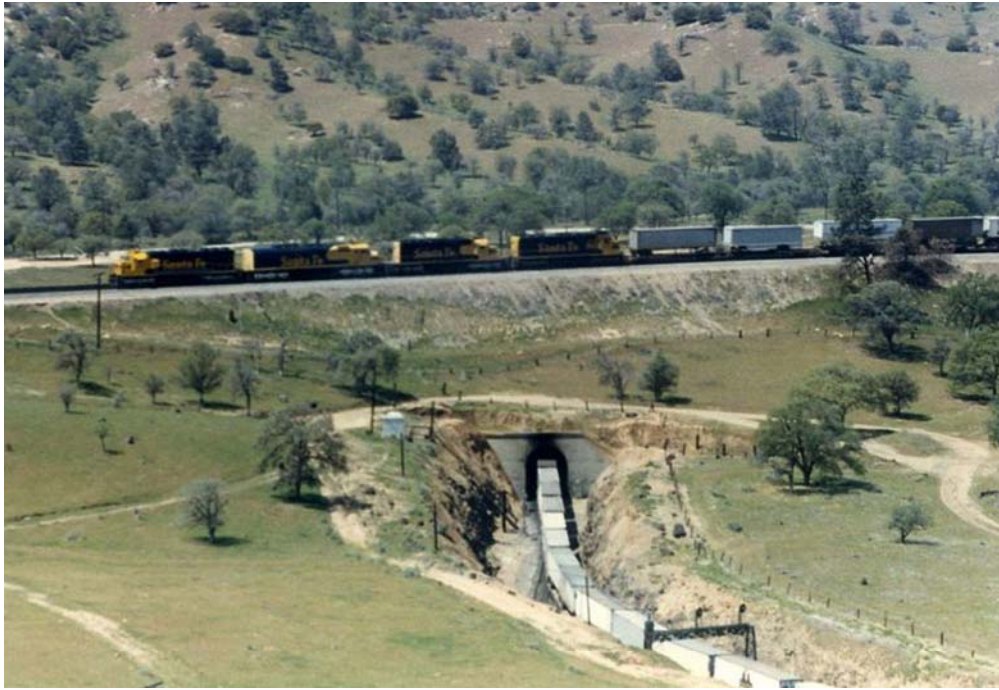


This all started with an exciting announcement at the Paso Robles fly-in a couple of months ago that the VMG (Vintage Mooney Group) would again be going to Jackson California this year. That's right, Jackson, in California's historic Gold Country, on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. I missed going last year but I was one of the first to sign up on the VMG website's registration page this time around.

**You know - how you just never know?** I had emailed my regular group of people who want to be notified about my upcoming flights around a month ago about a dinky five-mile flight to Chino, and three people responded. This time, I emailed my same regular group about this fantastic trip to Jackson and I got zilch. You **just never know**. I love these flights but do I not like going alone. Long flights can be very boring. Also, I like to have help pushing the airplane back up the rise into the hangar at the end of the day. Oh well, I thought, I will just go alone this time.

Suddenly, a week after I had made a brief mention of the trip to some associates at work, an email arrived. Tim Ly, a supervisor at the court where I work wrote, "[If the right seat is open this weekend, I'd love to fill it.](#)" I emailed back "It's yours." I later emailed him the offer that he could pilot (drive) the plane all of the way, if he wanted to. He replied "[Yee-hah, me behind the yoke pushing 150 mph in a retract.](#)" and so we both excitedly waited for Saturday. He didn't yet know we would be going 175 mph at times while cruising, and even faster in the descent to our destination. It is always wonderful to be excited about something.

I brought my Garmin 496 GPS navigator home so I could enter my flight plan ahead of time. I chose KAJO, KWJF, TLOOP, KPTV, KFAT, KMPI, and O70 as my route. (TLOOP is my personal waypoint defining where the Tehachapi Railroad Loop exists.) It is a very unusual railroad track layout that circles around and goes over itself to gain elevation without making the grade too steep. Per wikipedia, a train with 85 boxcars or more will pass over itself going around the loop. See <http://www.wikipedia.org> for much more information on this.



This picture Courtesy of <http://www.wikipedia.org/>

Tim and I met around 8 AM at my hangar. The sky was blue, the air was still cool, and the visibility was better than most days. We picked up some fuel and then went to the run-up area to plug in the required info to tell the Garmin 430 where we wanted to go. The Garmin 496 was already set up, so all I had to do was activate its flight plan.



When's the last time I got up and out early enough to cast a long shadow?

The engine checked out great, so as I started to taxi out onto runway 25, I remembered to tell Tim to hold onto his yoke and listen to me. As I pushed the throttle forward the Mooney started to sing her usual song, "LET'S GO, GO, GO", and so we picked up speed rolling westward on runway 25. At about 65 indicated, I said "OK Tim, start pulling back". He did and the nose came up, and we were airborne. I mentioned that it

was a bit steep and he dropped the nose to a perfect climb angle. I contacted SoCal for flight following and we were assigned a squawk code of 0246. Once again, we were 'in the system' with someone else watching over us.

I said 'Let's go over there.' indicating the direction we wanted to go with my finger. Tim rolled into a beautiful right turn and rolled out on a heading of 331 degrees, pointed right at our first waypoint. He and my Mooney took us up from 533' at Corona, to 9535' to top the San Gabriels with 2000' to spare. We then settled into a cruise altitude of 8500' per FAA VFR regulations for the rest of the flight.



Tim had been a student pilot 20 years ago but had to give it up for financial reasons after several lessons. I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to let him get back in tune with those special feelings that goes with piloting an airplane. I was not wrong. He single-handedly piloted 07T over 300 nm towards Jackson with the autopilot turned off. My hands were in my lap and I was at ease. Tim's flying skills are good and he could slip right back into flying lessons. We could see a lot of smoke ahead on the San Joaquin Valley.



The Garmin 430 showing we were arriving at the Tehachapi Railroad Loop



And there it was, right down there, but no train to be found

It is often difficult to find a strange (new) airport the first time there when the runway is laid out crossways to your direction of travel. And so it was. We were five miles out when we both spotted it at the same time. Tim had brought us down to about 4000 feet per my suggestion and now it was time to dump altitude in a hurry. Were high, fast, and getting real close quickly, so I suggested I fly it the rest of the way.



The airport was way down there and partially obscured by smoke

Tim reluctantly let go and I reduced power and popped out the speed brakes while rolling into a 45-degree right turn to lose altitude without building up more speed. Even less power and getting the nose high finally got us down to 130 knots where I could safely drop the landing gear. That helped immediately. Then were slow enough for flaps, which helped some more. A sharp left turn to the base leg finally got us low and slow enough for a stabilized final approach.



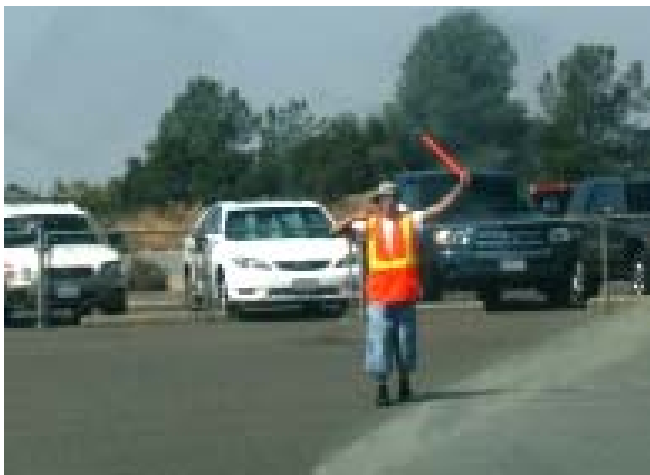
I get to drive a bit

What a visual awaited us. The far end of the airport just past the runway looked like it dropped off into a ravine! I made sure that we were right on the Pilot's Operating Handbook's published numbers for landing. No problem, we only used 2/3 of the runway to slow to taxi speed. Nothing like a perceived ravine at the end of the runway to get a pilot to pay attention.



A lot of smoke in the air and I still have to get us down some more (and fix my overshoot)

Chris Floyd had organized this fly-in in an exceptional way. Everything was thought of. Orange vested volunteers with bright orange signal sticks directed our taxi right into a parking spot. There were so many (30+) Mooneys there that we were parked behind four other Mooneys right in a taxiway. All of the marked parking spaces were filled!



The volunteers used a variety of techniques to direct us to a parking spot.

We got out and looked around. What are those? Not Mooneys for sure. Not even airplanes, but Hot Rods in abundance from a '23 Ford to a beautiful Panterra. What a wonderful day!!! Phil Corman was there and greeted us right away. Tim walked all around getting in wonderful shots with his camera.



Phil Corman from the VMG Board was so happy to see me ☺

Lee Uecker from the Mooney Company welcomed me and shook my hand. I had never met him before except for emails. After I good-naturedly teased him about him missing the Chino fly-in, I asked how he knew I was me, amongst all these Mooney drivers. Something about my mug shots in my previous flying stories. Yep, he's on this list too. He had brought a beautiful blue and white Mooney Acclaim to the event as a demo. The fastest single engine piston powered airplane in production with a published normal cruise speed at 25,000 ft. of 237 ktas. That is 272 MPH. \$600,000 and it was mine. Let's see, I could ... umm, oh, never mind.

Drool,

We went to the registration table and I admitted who I was. I was given a well thought out packet of papers including two lunch tickets and an official participant plaque. When I asked, "Who do I pay for lunch?" I was surprised to find out that the whole event was hosted. There were 213 of us for lunch this year.



More volunteers were working the registration table.



The next volunteer we saw was about to take our group photo.



7th Annual Gold Country Mooney Fly In, Jackson California, September 8, 2007

After posing for a group photo, we all got in line for lunch while listening to live music from a great group known as "Over the Edge" standing just off to the side of our lunch tables. There was chicken or tri tip steak right off of the BBQ cooked up by the local firemen. We were also treated to green salad, beans, potato salad, rolls and butter, and a choice of soft drink or bottled water. All hosted. It was a wonderful lunch. It was yummy in every respect. We supported the local burn unit, a charity supported by those firemen, by stuffing green into an actual fireman's boot being passed around. I hope they collected at least \$1000 that day. I think they did even better.





The 'boot'

There were three prizes. The car guys voted for their favorite Mooney. The Mooney pilots voted for their favorite hot rod. Picture this: a couple from - Florida won the third prize for the furthest flight to get to this event, flying two days and over 2000 miles in their Mooney for a tri-tip BBQ lunch. It was their second year in a row. How much does that say for the Jackson fly-in?



The couple from Florida along with our super host, Chris Floyd



Overview of the lunch area with the BBQ wagon on the far left

As I took an after lunch smoke break in the shade, I leaned back and looked at the sky ahead. Pilots tend to do that. Wow, I was treated to an awesome sight of a row of building high clouds, like a huge fence, that spanned many, many miles left to right. Gulp. "What am I going to do now?" thoughts spun around in my understandably rattled brain. Tim came walking by and I showed him the clouds. I pointed to my right and said "There is the sun, so that is west." Then looking straight ahead at the clouds, I was convinced that I was looking south, our intended flight path.



A Mooney departing with that wall of clouds in the background

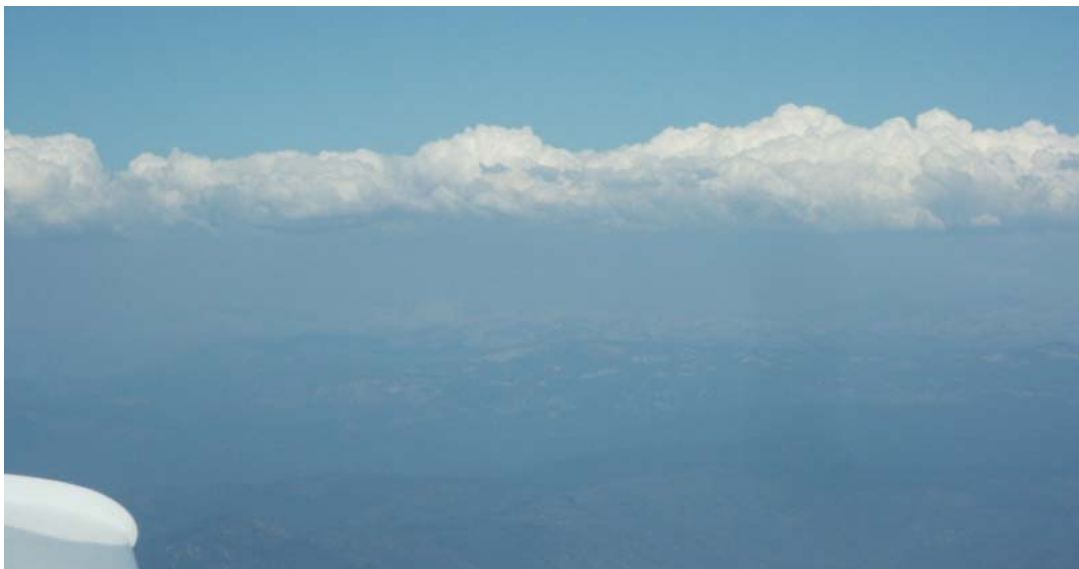
Once I got myself properly orientated a few anxious minutes later, I realized that I was looking east, and that the clouds were topping the Sierra Nevadas, and later I found that they went on for a good 100 miles. Again, everything made perfect sense and they would be next to us, not in front of us.



We had been parked behind this line of Mooneys before we pushed back to allow the yellow one to get out.

The cars started to roll and the Mooneys did too. All good things have to end. We taxied over and picked up around 10 gallons of fuel, courtesy of Tim, for a safety buffer in case weather or something else delayed us. It turns out we could have made it with 6ish gallons to spare but it was smart insurance for sure.

I took off this time and I wanted to show off my toys to Tim. First I put the autopilot (AP) on just to act as a wing leveler. I dropped a wing and proudly showed him how the AP picked it back up level. Then I dialed the heading bug to 140 degrees and punched the HDG button on the AP. The plane turned left to 140 and then leveled out going 140 degrees. Then I dialed the HSI course pointer to 130 as per the 430's message and pressed NAV on the AP. The plane rolled to an intercept heading of around 115 all calculated by the AP processor and later turned back to the right once we had intercepted the 430's flight path. At 9500 feet, I pressed the ALT button, and the nose came down and locked onto that altitude. Hands in my lap. I monitored the systems as I let George do the flying down the San Joaquin Valley. Tim mentioned how this "way" beats driving on the freeways. We saw those clouds for 100 miles.



We were going slower over the ground than normal and my mind raced faster than 07T trying to determine a reason. Maybe it was just a strong headwind? I have a real-time weather downlink subscription for my 496 and that didn't seem to be the answer. [The following is for pilots...] After informing Bakersfield approach, I flew a four point E-N-W-S square using the bug on the HSI and altitude hold on the KAP 150. My KTAS averaged just over 140. My buddy Joe A. later explained that 8.9gph I was around the best economy mixture setting instead of best power, which would be close to 11gph. I am still learning. I need John Deakin right seat – or FADEC!

I turned back on course and asked Tim if he would like to take over for George for a while. He said "Sure" with a smile that resembled a teenager driving daddy's car for the first time. After a few minutes of getting re-acquainted with the feel of the Mooney, he flew it with considerable finesse. He let me work the radio and mess with the GPS.



I did manage to get this fuzzy shot of Fresno's airport through all of the smoke in the valley.

Joshua approach informed us of a Challenger (corporate jet) ahead. I am constantly amazed how nearly impossible it is to see a 10 – 15 passenger airplane in the sky at 3 or 4 miles. When I do, it is usually not much more than a black dot in the sky. It was going across, ahead of us, left to right, and it was at our 2 O'clock before we saw it vanishing in the western sky.

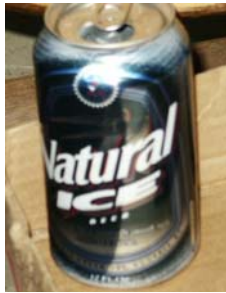
Tim found smooth air as he slid us once again over the San Gabriels. Once we were clear of the granite peaks, I reduced power to 20" manifold pressure as Tim lowered the nose and started to build up speed. We had 9000 feet to dump and Tim reached down for the trim wheel as control forces started to build up on the yoke. SoCal approach cleared us for a VFR descent with a restriction at 3500 feet. I was working the radios remember, so I replied, "Mooney 5807 Tango restricted at three thousand five hundred." I felt that I should do something to contribute to the flight.

We hit exactly 201.25 MPH in that descent and 07T behaved in a predictably docile manner. No vibrations, very little wind noise, and the only way to transition from the 210 to the 91 in a couple of enjoyable minutes, while seeing thousands of sights slide by. Kim, are you listening? ☺☺☺ I learned that trick from **Sherry**.

Just short of a bloody nose fistfight, Tim let me fly the Mooney again for the last five or ten miles. He is a very smart man and was probably thinking way ahead of me. Picture this: It was around 45 minutes before sunset and the sun was right down the runway on final approach. *Oh yes, let the old man do it.* So I did and taxied back to hangar 32.

We both had so much fun that we both wondered why no one else had signed up to go along with me for this trip; must be that everyone else is on vacation. Patti has been granted a special dispensation for she vows, "will never go up in one of those small airplanes" ...to each her own.

It was time to coax a couple of Blue Cans out of the refrigerator, and time for a few minutes of recapping the day's activities with each other. Those conversations are always special to me. When you go flying with someone, you truly share your time with each other.



Tim chose to remain incognito, photo-wise, but I did capture a shot of his Blue Can!

Ed Shreffler  
9/9/2007

Almost all of the photos are courtesy of Timothy Ly

P. S.

Additional fun info and more pictures are located at <http://www.vintagemooneygroup.com/Jackson2007.htm>

And Phil Corman's latest and greatest production is at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4podKVo030>  
That's my mug smiling through my left window, at 5:45 on the timer below the video. Otherwise, it is a great video.