

VMG Enjoys Chiriaco Summit

It seems like the 2010 - 2011 winter had been a lean time in terms of fly-ins being publicized and the flying weather had been low clouds or rain or nasty Santa Ana winds. Not to mention Corona's airport being out of commission for weeks due to being flooded by the Santa Ana River. And I had been under the weather myself for a week or two. But then in February, Ozzie sent an email out to us about a VMG fly-in to L77 on February 26. I was so, so, so ready for a fly-in. I emailed my friends.

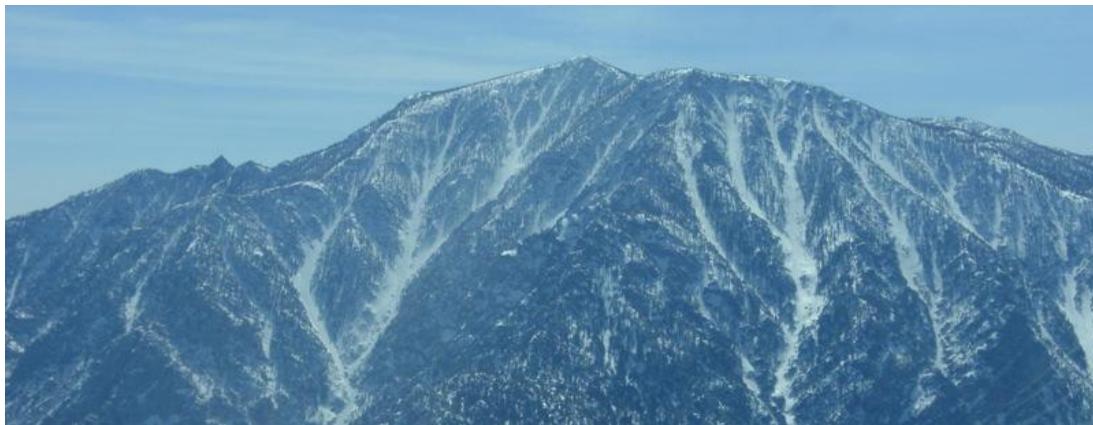
Soni replied and she was raring to go. That weekend turned up really stormy here so Soni and I drove to a fantastic Corona Pilots Association breakfast together in Riverside instead. I did drive to the airport the next day and I saw this on the drive over. This is not normal, it is a lot of snow.



The San Gabriels to the north of the LA Basin were just covered in that white stuff

Ozzie sent another email with a 'rain delay' date of the following Saturday. Soni was busy but Charles was free so he and I went instead. It was awesome up there today! I have never experienced such smooth air, just like sitting on your living room couch.

The great weather brought all of the weekend pilots out to take to the air. The airport was abuzz and the nearby skies always had some airplanes. When I contacted ATC after departure, it was very evident with the poor controllers communicating with so many pilots in rapid fire succession. It took a few minutes to 'get in' when there was finally a few seconds of quiet time on 135.40. The next sector of airspace on 134.00 was closer to normal but when we got to Palm Springs on 126.70, it was crazy again. We leveled off at 9,500' and saw ground speeds of almost 200 MPH due to tail winds.



The snow on San Jacinto had melted big time in only one week

We were almost 40 miles out when I suggested to Charles that it would be a good time to start heading on down as he was doing the flying. We were talking with LA Center by then on 128.15 and I informed ATC about us heading down. She said "Thank you". When we got down to around 5,000 feet, we dropped off of her radar and she said "Mooney 5807Tango, radar contact lost, squawk VFR and switch to advisories". He set the transponder to 1200 and I dialed in 122.90 on the radio. Charles set us up on a right downwind to runway 24. When he let me take control at pattern altitude, I relied on him to guide me on the turns as I cannot see the airport once I start turning to the right. I made a beautiful landing.

Ozzie, in his bright red shirt and brilliant white hair was there to guide us to a close parking spot using hand signals. He pushed us back toward the fence and I hit the brakes when he signaled me. Charles chocked the front tire to keep us from rolling and I slowly climbed out onto the Mooney wing and stood up. From that vantage point, I could better see my VMG friends on the tarmac.



Off to my right were about 10 Mooneys and pilots making new friends or welcoming old friends



And over there, I think that was Ish, Dana, and Henry - and of course some more Mooneys

I introduced Charles to some of my VMG friends. We saw two more Mooneys land and Ozzie assisted them into parking. Soon it was time to walk over for lunch. I made my way over in trail. Ozzie told us that there were two chairs left at two tables, so we each went our separate ways. My empty chair was right next to Ozzie's while his wife Jo was sitting at another table. Ozzie had put this

fly-in together. He is out of Tucson AZ. On my left was John Deptula from KRYN who I had not seen in over a year. We reminisced a bit and that was fun after not seeing him in over a year.



I wanted a fresh page to show off all of those magnificent Mooney tail feathers lined up



Inside, Dana and Ish are on the left with Charles and Henry facing us

Dave, my A&P, flew in and he got there last because he was flying a Cessna, the poor guy. I saw him look around and then quietly find a place to sit in the far corner. That is not the Vintage Mooney Group style, so I made mention of that to the guys at our big round table and everyone scooted over a bit and soon there was plenty of space. I got up and walked over to Dave and told him to grab an empty chair and join us. There, that was much better. Dave had purchased a Mooney M20C that he had to make flyable again and he sure enjoyed talking to Mooney pilots.



Dave in black, wound up sitting right next to Ozzie and they got along great while waiting for lunch

A new face for me was doing a lot of the talking at our table and if WWII B-17 and B-25 airplanes are of interest to you, he is the man to talk to. As I did not know him till then, I introduced myself to Tom Clark out of Kingman AZ and I think he is going to host a VMG fly-in there in October. I'll be there.

Several people had asked me during the past hour about why Phil Corman wasn't there. Phil had been a friend of mine for the past few years and they thought I would know. Phil, Larry, and Carl had led the VMG for about the last four years but Phil was the most visible to many. Almost always, Phil was the one to stand up after lunch at a fly-in and announce the next planned Vintage Mooney Group fly-ins. And he would have us stand up in turn and introduce ourselves to the group. And he would

hand out awards and prizes for fun things like being the oldest pilot there or flying in from the furthest distance of all of us. He did all of these special things because he is one of those people who 'gives' with nothing expected in return. He sent an email out a couple of weeks ago saying that he was stepping down. That is all that I know. Phil, if you are out there, we miss you.

After lunch, Ozzie stood up and gave us a short 5 minute talk on what was coming up in the future and he made mention of Phil stepping down from the 'hub' of the VMG. Soon we all got up and a few people went out the east door back to their airplanes and many headed out the west door to the Patton museum there. I went to the restroom.

Remember before cell phones, cordless phones or even Princess phones from AT&T when we all had regular black telephones with the rotary dial? Remember the distinctive sound of 'that' ring? Well I was in the men's room and someone came into the next area to my right. All of a sudden, 'that' ring went off and it startled me. I could see the guy next to me reach into his left jeans pocket and turn it off. Funny in retrospect.

Most of the gang had walked over to the Patton museum over to the west of the café but I went just a few feet out the same door and stopped. This just grabbed my attention because I did not expect it.



Yes, this next to nothing settlement in the desert has their own Post Office



Also, the owner had built a shrine and his signage indicates Mass is available every Saturday at 5 PM



General George S. Patton Memorial Museum, Chiriaco Summit On I-10, 30 miles East of Indio CA

I got that last picture from the Internet because I didn't want to walk that far. I just went a few steps more and sat down in the shade at a picnic table. I was alone and lit up a cigarette. Dana came by heading over to the museum. Dave came by on his way back from the museum and sat down. Then Charles did the same. Then Ish. Then a new face stopped by. It was Josh Karch who flew in a tad late from Sacramento. It was his first VMG outing, we welcomed him and we answered his questions. Then, he went back in for a bite to eat by himself. He wanted to hurry lest he became late with skies getting dark and possible stormy weather in northern California getting in his way.

It was time to leave and I made my way back to airplane parking. I had to laugh regarding post 9-11 airport security. This place was still just like all small airports used to be. A four foot high chain link fence with a swinging gate was all there was for security. And the swinging gate was wide open.



5807Tango and Charles both pointing the way east for my take off direction

So I did an eastbound take off and made left turns on the way up and out to head back west. I cranked it around having fun doing climbing 45° left turns and then Charles 'took it'. The air was still silky smooth. I couldn't believe it. I wanted to set us up so I could take a picture of where we were down there on the California desert.

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Airplane parking is on the left, the café is in the middle, and I think that the museum is on the right

We motored on slowly gaining altitude and decided to top off at 6,500' on the way back. There was a valley ahead of us and really no need to go any higher. We had expected headwinds. Where we were showing 175kts ground speed on my GPS on the way over, we now saw 135 instead. But it was still smooth air. It took us 45 minutes to get home including U turns on our departure and our landing but it was 45 minutes of fun. When we had passed Palm Springs, ATC notified us that radar coverage would be lost but that we should remain on our beacon (transponder) code and to contact SoCal on 134.00 once we were west of the Banning airport. Charles questioned me. I explained that is normal due to the mountains, and it happens on every flight through that area. Radar cannot see through granite.

On our descent, ATC kept us above 5,500 until we were west of the March Class Charlie airspace, then we went down. Not only smooth, but clean clear air blessed us. I got to take control again 3 miles out and presented Charles with the second smooth landing of the day.

As soon as we came to a stop, he got out, I tossed the keys, and opened the hangar. As soon as I climbed out, he had already pulled his car out of the hangar. I backed my car out, he pushed my Mooney in, and we each had a customary Blue Can before saying goodbye. Till next time buddy - - -