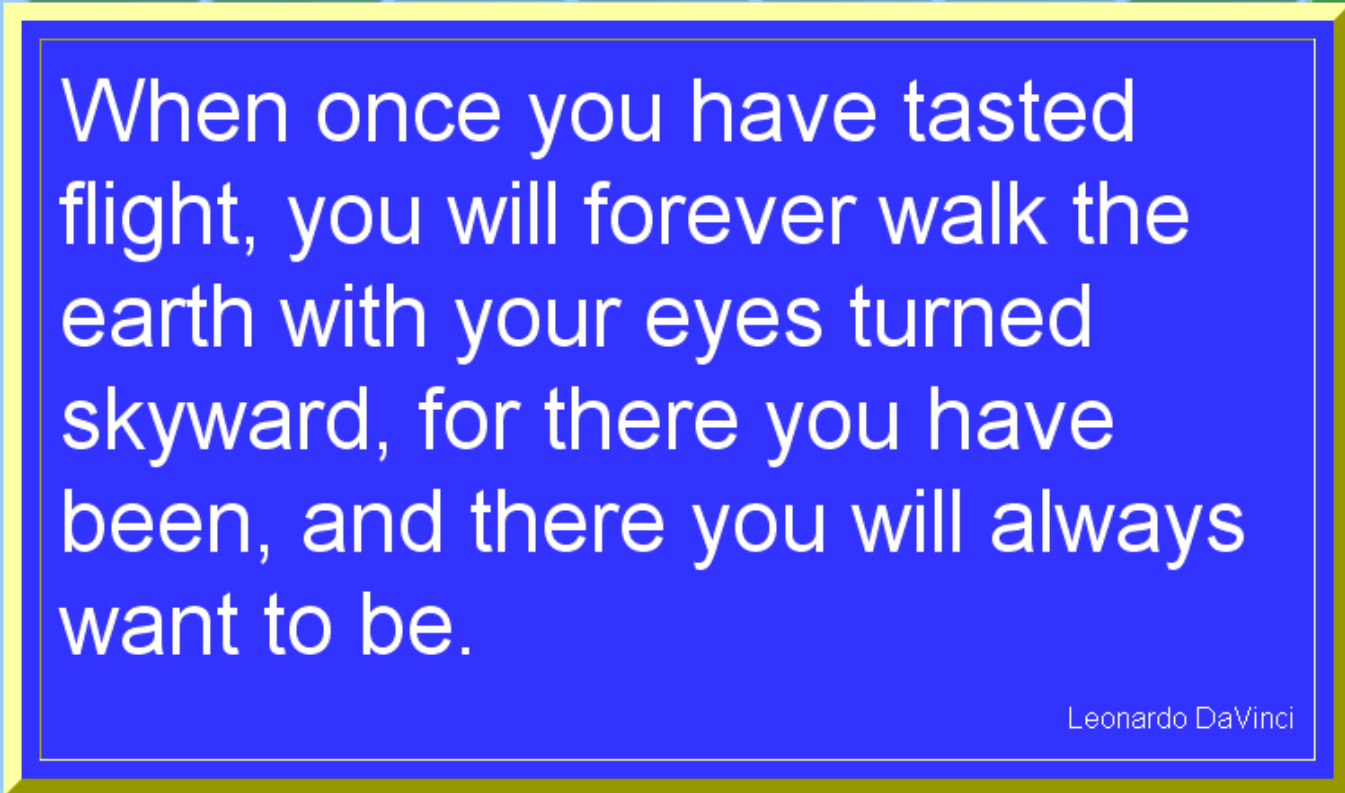


Cattin' around with Cat

Not really what happened but it is a catchy title. More proper would be My First flight With Catherine, but I am never proper except as required by law. It was a week ago when a surprise email came in.

The aviation community is a close knit one and aviation people tell aviation people about all things in aviation. Whatever her source, it said in part "I've only flown commercial before but I'm always ready for a new adventure." Immediately I thought of sharing the gift of flight with one more person.



When once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always want to be.

Leonardo DaVinci

In just a small way I can give back. Then I learned she weighs about 110 pounds and I thought of finally being able to get back into Angel Flights again. She didn't know about it, but she Googled Angel Flight, and was impressed. The days went by and a week after that initial email, we both decided to give it a try. Our meeting time was set for 11 AM on a clear skies Sunday.

Comedy of Errors Dept

Well we had an exercise big time in crossed wires. I arrived at 11:05 and she had not arrived yet. Opened the hangar and sipped coffee while listening to Leo on KFI and watching airplanes take off. I forgot to bring her cell phone number with me and I was getting really warm because I also goofed big time and wore a long sleeved shirt. I decided to go back home and change into short sleeves. And I called her cell then when I got home. She was running way late and said she needed maybe 15 - 20 more minutes. I quit rushing, and drove safely back to my hangar.

I got there and listened to more of Leo's tech talk on KFI where he helps callers with all things computer, cell phone, camera, etc. Still no Catherine. Damn, I forgot to bring her cell phone number with me again. Time kept on ticking and I hoped she was really going flying with me.

She had left me two voice messages and a text message. All on my home phone. I never thought to check while I was home again. I don't get texts on my home phone. I heard the messages that night.

I could not stand the uncertainty any more, got back in the RAV4, and went home again. I called her cell phone and found she was at the airport, and driving all around asking pilots how to find me because due to tech problems, she could not print my 'find my hangar' instructions, and she could not open attachments on her smart phone either. At least she was at the airport and she told me where she was parked. I said "Please don't move." and I drove back down there.

There she was on her cell next to her Jeep. Turns out her dog got loose. More drama. But we finally found each other at least. The weather there was perfect with shade and a nice breeze. I gave her a 'congratulations for connecting with me' hug and she followed me to my hangar in her Jeep.



I wanted to take her to French Valley airport and Temecula for a sandwich and a Coke at their airport café then travel from there on my SoCal scenic loop. But eleven AM had turned into 1:47 PM then.

She is one of those special people who was into learning all about this airplane flying stuff so I showed an aeronautical chart of the SoCal area after going through the walk around inspection with her. On day one, she sumped the tanks, helped get the Mooney out of the hangar, and gave me that special boost needed to assist me in climbing up on the wing to get my butt inside. But first -



We got our picture taken

Run-up was good as I explained some of the things we were doing there. Take off with full tanks at 80° was OK because of her light weight, and Mother Nature did not toss us!! I turned left crosswind, then left downwind. She was concentrating and taking it all in. We flew over the city.



A picture out my left window showing an industrial area and one out my right window showing a residential area depicts much of Corona today

A minute later it was time to make a 40° right turn. I said "Why don't you turn us right there, as I pointed in the direction I-15 goes south from Corona." She said "Me?" I said yes. She did a beautiful

job with my suggestions coming through her headphones. 10 minutes later, she was still flying the airplane. I said do you want to take a break and just enjoy the scenery? No, she wanted to fly.

We were getting within 10 miles of the French Valley airport and I had to ask her please, before she would let me fly again. Maybe she is Pilot Material? We pulled up near the café and with her help, we pushed 07T back into a spot. I showed how to chain an airplane down and she did that too.



She had a veggie burger, BLT for me. I shared my pasta salad, she shared her onion rings.

We had fun with the waitress and now three of us were smiling. We talked about a hundred things because this was our first meeting day. I asked her do you want to take off from here? She said yes and I discussed that upcoming procedure. Lunch was great and we left there still smiling.

We walked back outside and she had more airplane questions. Again, the weather was perfect. Airplanes landed and took off and more questions and answers. Her understanding was unusual to me because most people don't pick flying stuff up quickly. She seemed to fit right in.

I explained we would take off on Rwy 18 and I would be steering with my feet on the rudder pedals to start. I would call out 60, 65, 70, and rotate. She would start to pull back on the yoke. We were both in agreement. It was time for us to get going. She was happy, which made me happy.



Catherine had no problems with ground handling as I showed her how everything worked

After taxi and run-up, it was time for me to shut my window, Catherine to shut her door, and get flying. That Mooney 4 banger came alive and we started down the runway. I said 60, 65, 70, rotate. Nothing happened. I said pull back a little more and the nose lifted off of the runway. I brought the landing gear up. The nose was pointed too high! I gently pushed forward and explained the sight pattern we wanted to see. We continued southbound over Temecula. Yes, she was flying us again.

I looked off to the west and the haze and marine layer covered everything over there. I decided to jump to Plan B and slowly return to Corona for today. I explained - and then she brought us around in a smooth left turn to head back. We climbed to 4,500 and I asked her to hold that altitude and aim for Lake Elsinore. She did. Then when we got closer, I said head over 'there' in that lower valley.

The Moment of Panic

We were going along just fine when the nose started to point slightly down. I quietly waited for her to make the correction. Oops, she pushed forward on the yoke and now we were pointed steeper down at the tan barren ground ahead. The airspeed increased to 200 MPH. I heard a shriek over the intercom and it wasn't even Halloween yet. I said some comforting words to her as I gently brought the nose back up to the horizon to arrest our abrupt descent. Then she did fine again. She just kept wanting to fly that Mooney. I love the opportunity to let other people get the feel of flying.

10 miles out, we were way too high, so I got to exercise my speed brakes for a while. And I dropped power to idle, so I had to explain what that new sound was. Soon, everything was back to normal.

We got back to Corona and this time I had to plead with her before she would let me take over the controls. ☺ I put it down on the centerline at the airport of my choice. She got out and grabbed the black sweater she had brought along. A cooler breeze was blowing now and we were in the shade. She made a quick phone call, then I got out and looked around before getting back down. I was still standing on the wing, camera in hand. Her phone call was complete now, she put it away.



Well, poor gal had no pockets and she had to put it somewhere

As always, what I do is all innocent fun. I pulled my car out, BEEP, BEEP, BEEP, BEEP, I blew my car horn and pointed, disturbing another phone call of hers as I just noticed her missing sunglasses were right there on the ramp right in front of where I was going to park my RAV4. Been there all day I recon. She snatched them up. I parked my RAV4. I grabbed a couple of Blue Cans and sat down.

We did kick back for an hour and just chat side by side. I think both of us think each other are 'different' but fun to be with. She wants to fly with me again. She had to get going and she did give me a nice thank you hug. I think she is going to be a great Mooney fly-buddy. Hope you do too.

Ed Shreffler

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