

Lake in the Sky 2011

It was over a month ago when a few emails appeared here in Corona. I think it was Paul and Gina that first tipped me off about an upcoming flight opportunity to Lake Tahoe (TVL)*. Soon I had all of the information I needed to decide that I wanted to do a TVL flight this summer to see their airshow. It was being promoted by the City of Lake Tahoe, the Golden West FBO* on the field, and the Mooney Ambassadors group headed up by Jolie Lucas. And us Mooney pilots were their invited guests! I was hungry for Tahoe, and more great Mooney people, and they were going to be there.

My Back-story

I had flown to TVL twice in the summer of 2008. The first time with Kim was to a very well attended Vintage Mooney Group fly-in, and a few weeks later I flew up again with John Jones to their annual Airshow. Both times delivered great memories. Both times we were greeted by Michael Golden, the cordial owner of the Mountain West FBO at the Lake Tahoe airport. Flying with a fly-buddy is great, meeting other flying people is awesome. I always meet the neatest people when I do these things.



My goofy grin with Jolie

Before we left, all great Mooney people in a goodbye group shot

Pictures above were from my second flight there in 2008. Everyone was so much fun to be with that I really wanted to do it again and again. Bob and Charlotte are on the left. Then zany Mitch in white and John who flew with me in brown. Paul, Gina wearing pink, and Bailey their dog who flies with them are lined up in a straight line. Then Michael who owns the FBO there. I'm on the right.

Michael had opened up his FBO to us almost like it was our private Mooney Clubhouse and we were free to hang out there as much as we wanted to. Such great memories.

I tried to fly back there again in 2009, this time with Kent. Kent was a fellow programmer I had worked with and we had so much fun together on a previous flight back in 2005. In 2009, it was overcast in the LA Basin that day. We flew in circles for nearly an hour and a half, looking for a break in the overcast, but we could not find a hole for VFR* flight and had to go back to Corona. He fell asleep up there after a while. I flew the Mooney back home. I wanted to get Kent to Tahoe and Mother Nature said no. He slept over, but the next day we saw more of the same in the sky.



Love this picture of us two silly guys under that 2009 overcast day

The next year in 2010, the VMG had decided to go to another Lake Tahoe airport at Minden NV some 15 miles east and down in a beautiful valley. This time the weather was good, we made it, and we had a great time. We saw lots of new things, he got in some casino time, and he decided he would love to live there. It was to be our last flight together as he passed away around four months later. God bless you Kent, you smart, so quick, and very silly friend of mine.

Back to this Year

Jenny and I both got Friday off from work and we met at my hangar around 9:00 in the morning. No surprises, so we were 'wheels in the well'* in a reasonable amount of time. We climbed up over the LA Basin and then cleared the San Gabriels. The usual jiggles arrived from mountain turbulence but it lasted only 5 minutes. We gently descended over the High Desert and landed at Tehachapi for low priced \$5.05/gal. for fuel there. It was warm, at a high altitude, and we were in the direct sun. It didn't take much physical exertion to get to me and soon I felt totally overcome. Jenny could easily tell and she was concerned. I had to settle down in the shade and drink some water before I felt it was safe to go on. Once back in my plane, I strapped on O2*, drank some more water, and soon I was feeling even better and could safely decide to go back up in the sky. We did and flew to straight to TVL.

It was fun to make a 10 mile straight in from over the lake to Rwy 18 while talking to the temporary tower that the FAA set up for the 2 days of the airshow activities. We taxied off and headed for 'Mooney Row' but before we got to a parking spot, I had to stop and wait for an unattended police car to get out of our way. No one was around to assist us as everyone was extremely busy. Jenny helped me with push back and secured the tie down straps as soon as I figured out how to work the adjustment mechanism again. Mountain West was at the other end of the airport so she called and we got a ride to check in and get our rental car. The bubbly young lady who picked us up in a blue van was so nice and smiling that Jenny referred to her as 'my girlfriend' for the rest of the weekend.

Jenny's driver's license was left back home, so I got to drive a new Chevy Impala. We drove to the Lakeside Inn in Stateline NV and checked in. Jenny's driver's license became an issue again so I got to use my credit card for the rooms even though she had made the reservations. They wanted ID.

Because I had to show my ID, the desk clerk noticed that it was my birthday month. Bells, lights, and whistles! I was surprised to get a free T-shirt, \$5 slot card, and a page of great coupons worth \$50.

My room was nearby and on the first floor. There was a catered BBQ dinner back at the airport but someone changed the time from 6 PM to 5 PM so we missed it when we drove back.



These Mooney people evidently did not miss dinner and they look happy and satisfied



They were back outside the BBQ dinner hangar when we drove up. From left is Paul holding onto his rambunctious wife Gina in pink again, Mitch wearing two choices of sunglasses, Mary and Mike Jacobs, Jenny and me, and of course Gabe with the best smile in the bunch. We were too late for BBQ but then Michael drove up and greeted us warmly. OK, no chow so far, but great times.

We were on 'vacation' so we just laughed it off, went back to the Lakeside and had an excellent dinner in their great restaurant. Liver and onions was a rare treat for me. And I had a \$10 coupon for that to boot. We were both very tired and we didn't want to stay up late. Just 2 Blue Cans* for me as I recall. Zzzzzzzzzzzzzs happened so easily.

Saturday morning, I met Jenny's cousin Judy who drove over from her home near Reno. The plan was for the 3 of us to go out to breakfast together. That turned out to be a fiasco as all of the places we found were packed. Time for Plan B again. We split up, I drove to the airport while the gals found a place to eat and have girl talk. I got to spend some fun time with the Mooney Ambassadors people and enjoy a hosted BBQ lunch with them. My special thanks to Michael and Jolie who assisted me there. Later, Jenny just magically appeared and we enjoyed the afternoon watching the airshow together. She was so much fun to be with, I am so glad she chose to come with me.



My little camera is too small to catch this Pitts going straight up



Mitch with Jolie showing off his flashy Mooney Ovation



But I sure got some of those beautiful Mooney tails to show you! We had fun talking to strangers and Mooney people alike. It was very warm for being up there. The Mooney Ambassadors had set up a covered area to meet and greet everyone walking by and introduce anyone interested to a General Aviation airplane, specifically a Mooney. They also had candy and fun activities for all of the children.



Michael and Mitch who each did a ton of things for others, stopped for a quick pose

I was sitting on the wing of my Mooney when a couple walked by and I greeted them. Turns out she was raised in Kerrville!* When people were thinning out, I learned that Jolie's daughter was in the hospital* and that was their next stop. It was in Portland OR but she said only 2½ hours away and they flew off to the north. We had time to look around before driving back to the Lakeside Inn again.



This C-17 is so huge - that is a man walking under the nearest jet engine

I must have overdone it because Sunday morning I felt like trash. I think the heat, altitude, and some dehydration did me in big time. I was 'out of it' or 'spaced out', and couldn't concentrate. No way I would turn the key in my Mooney in that condition. I drank water. We drove back to the airport with our bags in the trunk but I still couldn't shake it. More water. We went to the airport restaurant but I had no appetite. I had two glasses of milk. I called in sick for the first time in 11 years and we left to find a place to sleep in town. Motel 6 was cheaper but lacking. Jenny came over from her room to talk for a bit but I was so tired that we said goodbye early and I was zonked out in 5 minutes. Zzzzzz.

Monday morning, I was myself again and got a hot shower, more water, and a bite to eat. Back to the airport again. I smiled as the wind was favoring a north departure, over flat terrain and out over the lake beyond. I could not dare put on a lot of fuel due to the density altitude which was approaching 9,000'. I asked for 10 gallons. Then the fuel truck drove back to the FBO and so did we. All paid up, we got a ride back to the Mooney. Surprise, we could not open the door. Yes, I unlocked it. Jenny called Mountain West and soon 2 young guys drove up to help. They couldn't open it either, so one crawled in the small baggage door, over and between the seats, and started pushing hard from the inside. When he found the right spot, it popped open. I gave them an appreciated tip.

Oh crap. The wind had changed and we had to take off southbound into rising terrain which looked foreboding. We were surrounded by tall pine trees and knew my climb rate would be meager. I was again wearing my oxygen cannula and after a good run-up, leaned for max RPM and released the brakes. We were wheels up midfield and soon above the trees. I continued straight for 3 miles for more altitude before turning left crosswind and then back north to the lake. 1000' AGL* now. Over the shoreline at 2000' AGL. A right turn to give Jenny a scenic view of the city, and then a gentle left climbing turn over the lake to the west. Now 3000 feet above the surface and more 'up' to go with mountains to clear ahead. At a little over 10,000 MSL*, I changed my mind and headed for a different pass over 'there' and I had a warm fuzzy feeling for what now laid ahead. We went that way. ☺

I aimed for a low saddle between two peaks still covered with large areas of snow and once past the highest point, the ride smoothed out. Throttle way back, next stop Placerville for more fuel in their much lower elevation. My first time there. While approaching, it was evident that there was a severe drop off at the west end. We landed from the east and stopped with lots of runway still ahead of us.

We got enough fuel to get home with an hour's reserve, some more cold water, a bit of relaxing in the shade, and then we were back at it again. This take off was really fun. Just past the runway, the ground dropped way off into a low spot and I could immediately turn left and aim for Corona. NorCal, Oakland, Fresno, Bakersfield, Joshua, and SoCal watched us and kept us aware with Flight Following as we sat there watching 140 Kts* GS* thanks to a headwind. This would be a 2½ hour flight to Corona. When SoCal turned us loose, we made a normal pattern entry to Rwy 25 and faced directly into a setting sun 5 - 10 minutes before sunset. The trees just ahead on a ½ mile final are invisible under those conditions. Next time, I will just fly around for 10 minutes before landing. Not worth it.

Yes, we did kick back sitting side by side on the back of my RAV4 and we each had a Blue Can. Then a nice hug, and it was again time for each of us to leave for home. We both had a wonderful weekend. I want to thank Michael Golden, his Mountain West Aviation FBO staff, the city, the airport, and the Mooney Ambassadors group for making us feel so welcome. We are all invited back next year. We will return soon!

*Acronyms and additional related information for non-pilots

AGL is Above Ground Level, my height above the ground or water directly below me.

MSL is Mean Sea Level, my height above average sea level which remains constant.

GS is Ground Speed, usually different than my speed through the air due to winds.

Kts is knots, a measure of speed based on Nautical Miles. 100 Kts is 115 MPH.

TVL is the FAA airport identifier for the Lake Tahoe airport, like LAX is for Los Angeles.

O2 is oxygen. I have a pressurized aluminum tank on board to assist getting enough O2 at altitude.

FBO is Fixed Base Operator, an airplane related business located on an airport.

VFR is Visual Flight Rules, the rules non instrument rated pilots must follow. No flying into a cloud.

NorCal, Oakland, Fresno, Bakersfield, Joshua, and SoCal are ATC facilities that watch us on radar. Wheels in the well is pilot talk for when we take off and retract our landing gear into the wheel wells. Kerrville is a city in Texas where all Mooneys are built.

Jolie's daughter is out of the hospital and doing much better now!

and **Blue Can**, is Anheuser-Busch's Natural Ice lager beer that comes in a dark blue colored can.

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More of my adventures are on my Flying Stories Webpage at: <http://www.mooneyevents.com/shreffler.html>