

## Nancy's First General Aviation Flight September 2011

Some weeks ago, a lady started working in our building. She was sitting in an area where I could see her as I walked to my office. I could see that she brought her own chair to work every day, a wheelchair. As lousy as I am in social skills, it was several weeks before I introduced myself to her and learned that she was Nancy. A couple of weeks later, I asked her if she would like to go flying with me, she said yes. She wanted a short flight for her first time aloft so I chose to fly us down to the Temecula area. It takes me roughly 20 minutes to get there. Weather forecasts all week were OK.

We worked out what we could, and could not do, as we are both slightly disabled physically but we had a workable plan. We met at 10 AM this morning. The sky was still overcast. Grrr.



Sorry, I just could not help noticing how attractive she was. The sun was behind her so I had to do some tweaking to make this picture usable. She rolled all around my Mooney and said good things about how she perceived my flying machine. She was impressed that it appeared immaculate during her inspection. It was an approved airplane to her now, Next up, we had neighbors to meet.

John and Little John from the next hangar were planning to also go out flying. When they saw Nancy, they came over and a great four way conversation started. They explained their airplanes and how they were different from my Mooney. As it relates to cars, they have jeeps or dune buggies and I have a highway car. We each can do things that the other cannot do with our airplanes.

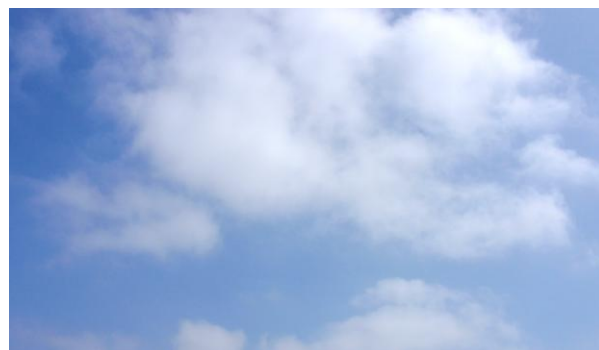


John taxied off while Little John gave us a posed picture before he got in and taxied to run up area



Little John took off first with his wife onboard then John popped up as he flew by us

Notice the sky is still solid overcast? Not Mooney time yet. I drove Nancy over to the fuel FBO so we could both use their restrooms. Back at my hangar, we talked some more. Then I looked up. See?





The overcast had finally burned off at 11:30 so Nancy asked - - -. I instantly got up and got my butt in gear and pulled the Mooney out on the ramp myself this time. We both parked inside then Nancy came out with her 'walker' and I shut the hangar and locked it. I set up for a picture of us.



Actually I liked both of these pictures because it shows that Nancy was having fun before we even left the ground. Then she helped me get into my airplane and she did not need my help at all.

Engine run-up was perfect and so I looked at her and asked if she was emotionally comfortable to go. She smiled at me and I think I heard "Wu-HOO" over the intercom so I eased the throttle forward while turning onto the runway, then I slid the throttle all the way forward. The airplane came alive and rolled faster and faster. I called out "60, 65, 70, and rotate" as I gently pulled the yoke toward my big belly. The moment had arrived and Nancy had automatically become one of us who enjoy some space below us. Flying anywhere is great for many of us pilots as long as we are not on the ground.

I made a couple of smooth and gentle turns to the left and then we angled off to the right to roughly follow I-15 southbound. Mother Nature must have approved as there was no turbulence today. I climbed to 5,500' and leveled off. Nancy was really 'digging it'. Later, "What's this?" she asked and I looked and just had to offer a guess as I have no way to know what all of that stuff is down there. Up here, we are seeing everything. We just kept gliding smoothly toward Temecula.



Absolutely everything is in view to both of us, and I did not crop out my beautiful Mooney's white right wing, as that is what gives us the gift of lift above the ground in the first place.

I started to let down gently by pulling back in the throttle as we were over the city of Temecula. Then I popped the question. "Would you like to turn us to the left?". An unexpected smile greeted me as Nancy reached forward for the right side yoke. I turned off the autopilot. With her at the controls, she carved a beautiful left curve in the sky behind us. Then a right turn. She was literally hollering with glee! It went on until I saw us starting to go to where we do not want to be for safety so I took over then. If she wants to learn someday, I can teach her. But not today, today was all for fun.



I kept descending to set up for a landing at the neighboring French Valley airport. I got us down to pattern altitude for Rwy 18 and then she let me know that she would really rather avoid an airport café stop. She explained that she had more commitments later in the afternoon. Plan B came alive.

Throttle slid slowly to full power, angle of attack automatically adjusted, we started climbing again as I made my final call out to the pilots at French Valley that we would not be landing as previously announced, but instead be leaving to the north. We climbed back up and saw the dense haze that still surrounded the Inland Empire ahead of us. I was trying to position us east of the Elsinore jump zone and west of the March airspace as we headed back home. Nancy was still having a ball.



Housing tracts and Lake Elsinore were right out our windows, Nancy asked me to take a picture of her 'driving' using her cell phone camera. She showed me how, I started to take the picture, she said "no, not that way", I gave it back to her to explain the proper operation. She showed me how, I started to take the picture, she said "no, not that way", I gave it back to her to explain the proper operation. She showed me how, I started to take the picture, she said "no, not that way", I gave it back to her to explain the proper operation. Yes, it went on that way and we never really did connect. I finally took the picture looking into what she said was her viewfinder. I handed the camera back to Nancy and motored back to Corona. I thought everything was fine.

The cockpit decibel level must have hit 100 easy as Nancy erupted in laughter spontaneously. She could not stop laughing. I had still got it backwards and had taken a close up picture of my eye. She threatens to frame it and call it 'her picture of Ed'. It really was funny being up there then.

Getting closer to Corona, I knew that we were still too high so I popped the speed brakes and reduced the throttle to near idle. Then I carved some steep turns in the sky above Corona while my GPS started to display **TERRAIN WARNING** as my inside alarm horn went off. No big deal as I explained it all. Landing time was coming up and so I said I was going to be busy and please do not distract me. Nancy fell silent for a while and I was thankful.

On a 1.5 mile final, I was still too high and had thoughts of a go-around in my mind if things did not settle down. A few S-Turns fixed that. We gently squeaked onto the first 1/4 of Rwy 25. A squeaker for a change! Back at the hangar, the fuel guy showed up before I could get out of my aluminum cocoon. He delivered 30 gallons for tomorrow's fun. Then he did something extra. Cody took these pictures of us.

Nancy had never been flying in a General Aviation airplane in her life. So I presented her with an official AOPA First Flight Certificate. I just love to be able to do this when I can have the opportunity.



I love this picture because it does show Nancy's aluminum walker and that it does not matter a bit to either of us. When we are aloft, we leave all of our personal 'baggage' on the ground and we are free. In this case, her walker was along with us in the baggage compartment behind the back seats.

The concept is true however. Some people call it their worries, some call it their problems, some call it their garbage, and some call it their baggage. Whatever the label, there is one constant that I have observed. It stays on the ground. We all just have fun aloft.





Now, I would call that a happy lady

So it was time for her to go on to another planned activity and after a warm hug she went off in her sleek black Chrysler 300 and left us. The fuel guy was still there and when I asked him what was that over on the ramp between us and his fuel truck, he walked over and brought it to me. It was Nancy's cell phone! We guessed she left it on the roof of her car. I found a way to contact her and 3 hours later she was aware that she would again see it Monday at work.

Oh, almost forgot, Nancy definitely wants to do this again. Now, that is a fitting end to any story.

Ed Shreffler  
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