

Our Second Encounter

Bettina is another special gal who drifted into my life. It was around 2 ¾ years ago. I no longer remember how we first met each other, but soon it became emails back and forth about us flying with each other. On November 10th, 2006 we met at my airport and a little bit later I took a picture of her enjoying herself pretending to be flying in my red and white 1971 Mooney M20C.



We departed Corona's airport (AJO) and I flew her southwest through Orange County to the Pacific coast and back home. She said she had a blast.

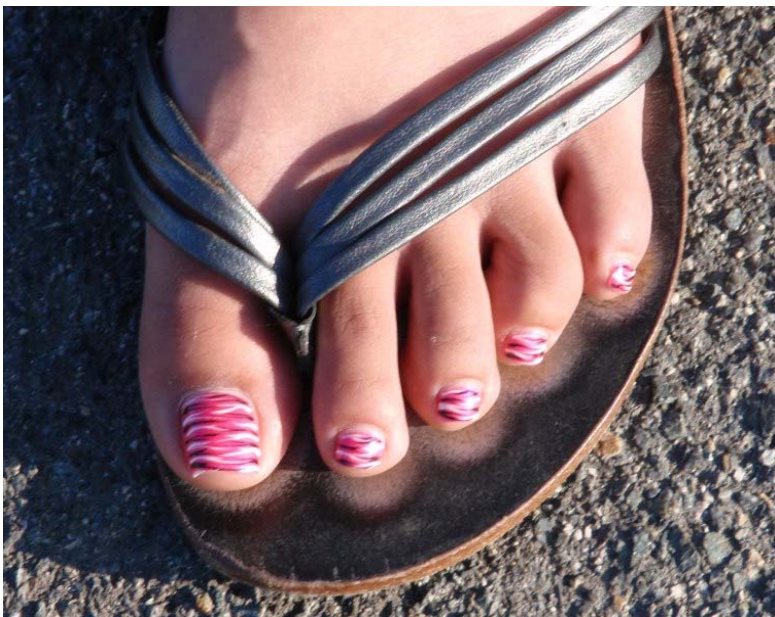


As this was her first ever flight in a private plane, she qualified for one of my AOPA First Flight Certificates. I had one already prepared, and I presented it to her when we returned to Corona.

A few weeks ago I sent an email out to a list of people who like to go flying. She answered and so we set up to fly again. She greeted me with a hug and wanted our picture. I set my camera's timer.



We flew southeast to French Valley (F70) airport by Temecula and we landed there for a while. It was there that I took some more pictures as we looked around. From toenails to windsocks!



Back in the plane, the engine started with my hot start routine but it promptly stopped. On the third attempt I got the mixture in at the right time and we taxied to the run up area for runway 18. Everything checked out fine. As I started my takeoff roll, I pointed to her yoke and said "Grab a hold and steer with me. At 70 Kts the runway started to drift downward leaving us in mid-air. At 80 I raised the landing gear and at 90 I brought the flaps up. I trimmed it for a 100 Kt cruise climb.

As everything was established, I quietly put my hands in my lap. As the airplane gently rolled into a left turn I asked Bettina why she was turning left. It was then that she realized she was driving! I showed her how to pick up that left wing with her yoke, and she was grinning with all the fun she was having. I pointed slightly to the right, around 1 o'clock, and requested that we go over there. She turned us over there then she leveled the wings to go straight again. She was picking up new things quick.

At 2500' I wanted to stop climbing so I asked her to push the yoke forward to lower the nose. She did and we quit climbing. You pilots already know what happened next. The plane started to accelerate. We were now going faster than the trim speed. I knew the yoke was starting to push back at her. The Mooney's wings also responded to the greater airspeed and started generating more lift. The plane started to climb and the nose kept wanting to go up. She wasn't thinking about her fancy toenails or anything else in her life at that point. She was 100% thinking about piloting that airplane. The yoke was pushing back at her harder now. She started to fight to keep that darn airplane down at 2500'. I reached for her left hand, put it on the trim wheel, and explained what to do. She trimmed nose down. Ahh, blessed relief. She quickly got very good at maintaining a constant altitude.



She had it all under control



And she was smiling again

We went southwest then I asked her to turn west. About the time we flew over Oceanside, we got to the edge of the marine layer. It was below us as it is usually low to the ground.



First a few clouds down there but we could still see the buildings, and then it was solid clouds

She had been doing a perfect job of piloting but now she had a new dilemma. Up till now, she had some hills or other ground reference points to use as aiming points to keep our flight on course, as dictated by me telling her which way to go. Now she was heading west out over the Pacific Ocean with nothing but clouds for reference points. Look at this, clouds in every direction.



I knew that there was no point of reference so I turned the CDI (the yellow arrow) on my HSI to the direction we should be going right then. I told her to steer left or right as needed to keep that yellow arrowhead pointed straight up to the top of the instrument. She did. And she maintained the correct altitude concurrently. The instruments are explained below.

Bettina is an unusually gifted gal, I never could have done all of that, early on in my flying lessons. Maybe I am a good mentor.

Here we go, today's airplane lesson. What are those weird instruments, and what do they tell the pilot?



The first instrument at the upper left of the picture shows us our indicated airspeed (IAS). It is indicating roughly 150 Kts. That is 172.5 MPH. The neat colored bands around the edge remind us of important speeds so we don't have to memorize more numbers.

The blue and brown dude next door is the artificial horizon or attitude indicator (AI) and it tells us if we are tipped up or down or banking left or right. Looks good to me. This instrument is really important to instrument rated pilots who fly inside clouds. We VFR pilots just look outside the window for that.

The next instrument is the altimeter with ALT printed on it's face. It was registering 2480 feet above sea level when I snapped the picture. Bettina was only 20 feet below target altitude at that moment.

Bottom Row starting at the left: The turn coordinator (TC) indicates our rate of turn and if we are going straight, slipping, or skidding through the air. The black ball should be parked between the two black vertical lines on the curved white tube. Yeah, Bettina had that nailed too.

The horizontal situation indicator (HSI) is next and it was the only way Bettina knew which way to go over the clouds, over the Pacific Ocean. It rotates when the airplane turns and it was her task to keep the yellow arrow pointed to the top. Based on what I see, she needs to turn left 2 degrees. No big deal.

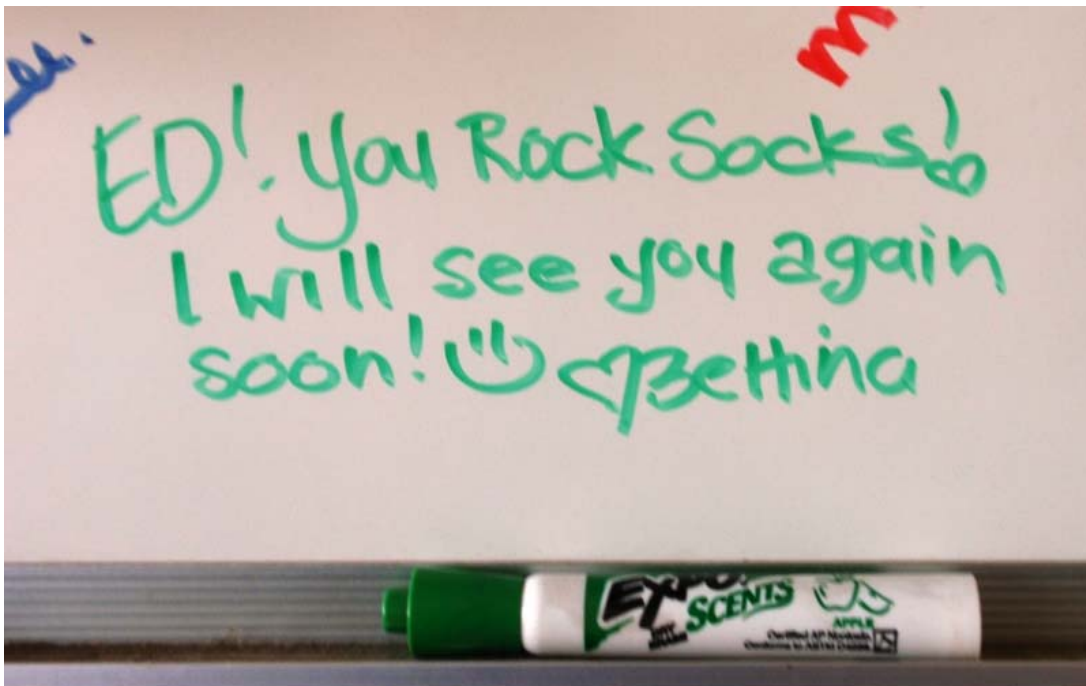
Finally we see the vertical speed indicator (VSI) which lets us know if we are going up or down and at what rate if any. It shows a very slight climb is happening, maybe 20 feet per minute.

Well, there you have it, the six instruments in many airplanes. We call it the 'Six Pack'. Once the airplane companies got together 35 years ago, they standardized the layout so every airplane has the same the six instruments in the same positions. This does not include newer airplanes with the new 'glass cockpits'. Maybe I will explain that later. Enough of this techy talk. We just had fun.

At Dana Point we turned inland and went northwest staying just east of the John Wayne (SNA) class C airspace. Once past the western edge of the Santa Ana Mountains, we made a descending right turn right over highway 91 and headed for Corona again. It was a beautiful scenic loop.



Back at the hangar, she enjoyed a Blue Can



Later I saw what she wrote on my white board

Life is good.