

Sedona Revisited - 2008

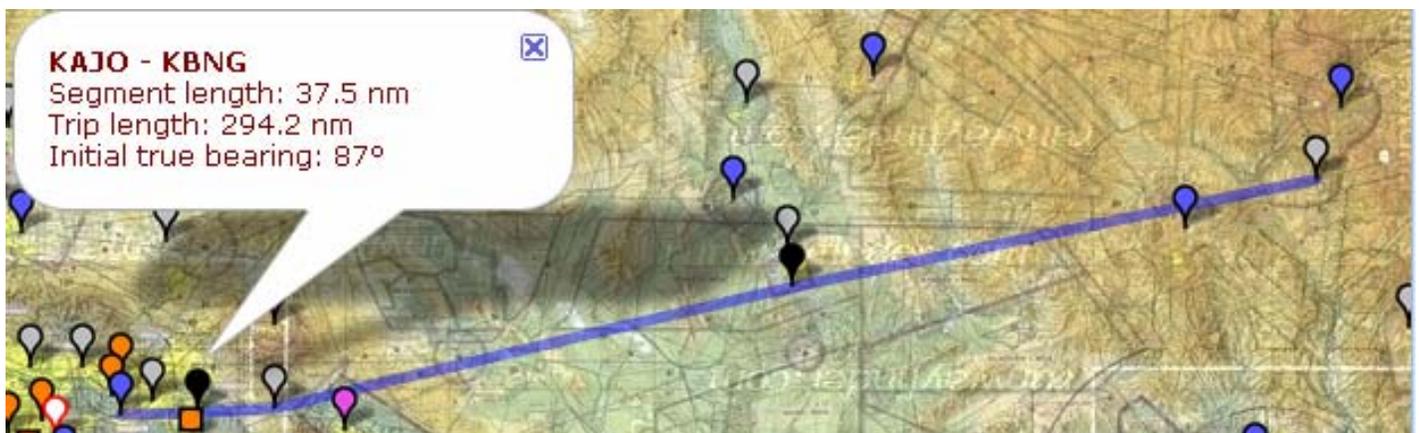
Sometimes I start my stories before I actually go flying, and this is one of those times, for an altogether new reason, because this is the first time that I didn't really have to type this story, I am just speaking into a microphone and a program called Dragon Naturally Speaking is doing all of the typing for me. Best thing I ever did, because I don't touch type.

The last time I actually flew 07T into a Vintage Mooney Group fly-in was November 10, 2007, when I had the privilege of taking Valerie to Temple Bar Arizona. I did get to go to the Ramona CA fly-in, in December 07, thanks to John Elwell and his awesome M20E, because my airplane was undergoing an annual inspection at the time. Then I totally missed the January fly-in to Lake Havasu, because my airplane was getting the JPI EDM-800 installed. The February trip was in Mexico, and that was beyond my means. There was no March trip, and here it was April 26, 2008. I was way beyond ready!

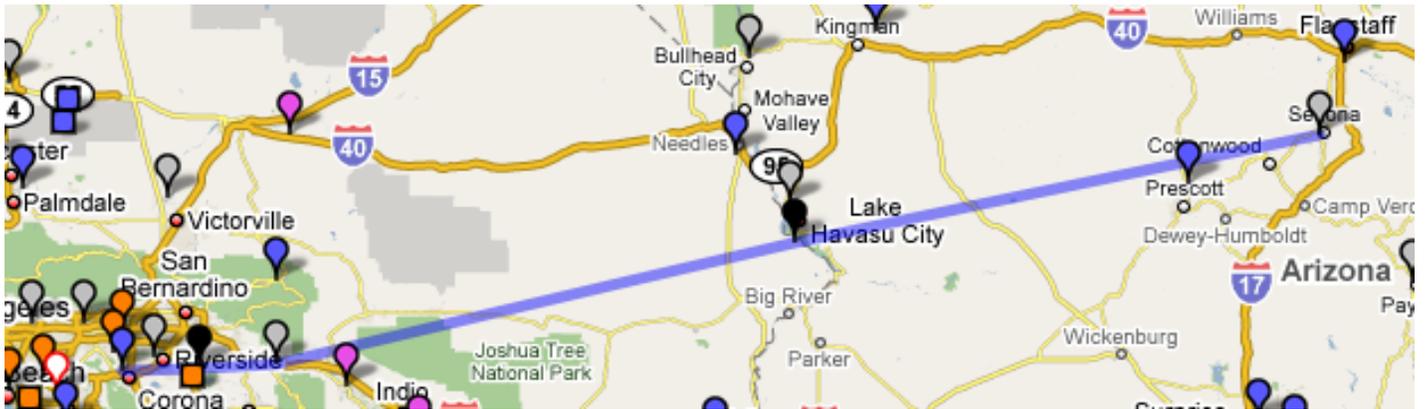
I woke up early Saturday looked out the window, and it was beautiful. All blue sky. I called Sofie and told her I was already up, so I didn't need a wake-up call. After I showered and shaved, I called flight service and he told me about an airmet (airmen meteorology information) about turbulence along my route of flight but nothing else. I gathered up my flight plan paperwork, gave my wife Susie a kiss and a hug goodbye, and I was off to the airport.

This story is going to take a decided turn from my previous stories, because this time it was not all about the airplane and the flying, it was all about the people. And I am so grateful that these people are a part of my life. Sure, we still flew in an airplane, went somewhere, and saw beautiful sights but it is the people that I am thinking about. There are also lots and lots of pictures for you.

Sofie and I met at the hangar around eight o'clock in the morning. I already had almost everything ready to go when she arrived, so I pulled the airplane out, we drove our cars in, locked up the hangar doors, jumped in the plane, and taxied over to get fuel. After that little \$200+ chore, I taxied to the run-up area. I loaded the flight plan, Corona (KAJO), direct Banning (KBNG), and direct Sedona (KSEZ) into both Garmins. Banning is very important on this route of flight, because it keeps the autopilot from flying us into a mountain, and it also keeps us clear of a restricted area. The Banning pass is usually full of turbulence. Turbulence, what turbulence? There was none. It was a piece of cake.



This was my flight plan, 294.2 nm = 338 miles to go to lunch. Why? Because we can!
Images from runwayfinder.com thanks to Dave Parsons



This is the same thing showing a highway map for non-pilots - push pins are airports

We had the usual LA smog in the LA basin, but I expected it to clear out once we passed Banning. It didn't happen. It was hazy all the way and it made my pictures come out worse than I expected. We went right over Lake Havasu City but it was too hazy to get a clear picture for you.

I played some music from my MP3 player into our headsets for awhile and Sofie was surprised that I could do that. It mutes automatically when ATC talks to me. Not much else to talk about until we got to the Sedona area, which was hazy, but beautiful anyway. Now if you have never landed at Sedona in a small airplane, I've got to explain this experience. The airport sits just outside of town, on top of a 500 foot high Mesa. Some pilots like to call Sedona's airport the USS Sedona. It's not quite the aircraft carrier landing appearance that you get when you land at Catalina Island, but it is close. ☺



Before entering the pattern, looking out at the Sedona airport on top of that hill, at the edge of town



On final approach to the USS Sedona. Photo courtesy of (I'm guessing) Linda Corman.

The gentleman manning the Unicom microphone told us exactly where to taxi and so I turned off on taxiway A-6 and right into my parking area. VMG board member Phil Corman, bless him, not only waved at me, but gave me a deep bow as I taxied by. We got the airplane parked just fine and Sofie, bless her, knelt down and secured the wings with the chains provided on the ramp.

Once I was out of the plane, and had everything secured, I walked over to Phil to say hello and shake his hand. He would have none of that, and gave me a great big welcome hug. I don't care if it's politically correct or not to say this, but I love that guy. Well, if that was the cake, the frosting came next. Three or four of the gals from the Vintage Mooney Group also gave me hugs when they greeted me. Now, they don't know it, but they really helped make my day.

I greeted my friend Joe Aldendifer and then gave the customized VMG name tags that I had worked on during the previous week to Anita Palmer and Linda Corman, and they gave them out to the members as they met them. I walked around the ramp greeting other members of the Vintage Mooney Group and I was so happy about the cortisone shots that my doctor had injected into my knees the previous week. I could walk without pain. Thanks Alan, you helped make my day.

Ding, Ding, Ding, it was time for lunch, and so we all walked over to the restaurant, maybe a block away, but right on the airport. I had to look around and find Sofie, because she was off doing her own thing. The lunch on the outdoor patio was excellent, and we got to sit with Dave Morris and his fly buddy Heather. They had flown up from Texas together in his Mooney to join us.





Relaxing after lunch



Phil Corman explaining The Meaning of Life to us

After lunch, Sofie and I went outside and had a cigarette and met some more people as they were coming out of the restaurant. She asked me to take her picture under a beautiful red leafed tree and then we walked over to my Mooney.



The weather was perfect, and so we sat on the wing of the Mooney chatting. Paul and his wife Gina came by and we all talked for another 10 minutes or more, and took a couple of pictures.



Paul and his lovely wife Gina, both pilots



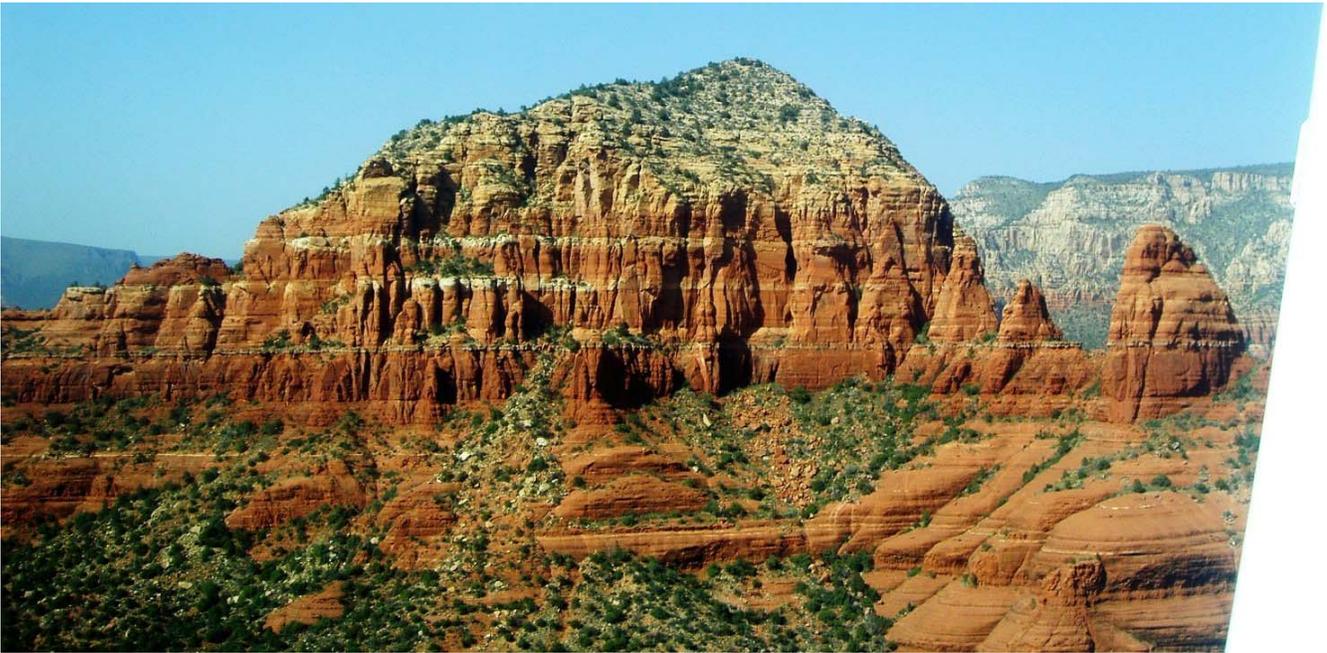
How does a guy get so lucky?

It was time to launch, and I flew the airplane close by some of the beautiful red rock formations that were five or 10 miles away from the airport so Sofie could snap these pictures. It was so choppy in that immediate area that I had to fly the airplane with both hands on the yoke.





Only by General Aviation could we ever see this awesome sight



The structure in the upper right area is a church. I know, I've been there.



Sofie suggested that I let George (the autopilot) fly the airplane, so I did. Right around then, she told me that her favorite name for the autopilot is Joe. I don't know why, but she wants to call the autopilot Joe. OK with me. Then we headed south for Phoenix, and Deer Valley Airport. We were given a right base entry for runway 25 left. It is an interesting approach, because you have to overfly a hill close enough to count the birds on the towers and then pop and drop in a hurry.

Darrin, my daughter's husband, was right there to give me a hug. I love this guy too. He drove us home, about 4 miles away. I gave my daughter Teresa a hug and I hugged my grandkids when we got to the house. This was a big **HUG** day for me and I never felt better. Hugs are awesome. I think everyone should get some.



Darrin just had shoulder surgery

Darrin and I usually hang out in the garage swapping stories when I am in Phoenix. He is my drinking buddy, and we act like a couple of kids, and we don't care. He had his Budweiser long necks (there's a couple right there on his workbench) and my Blue Cans all chilled in the garage fridge. This weekend was no exception, except for the fact that he had set the garage up special this time. You see, grandpa's chair (mine) is always waiting for me in the garage. But this time it was different. The chair had a set of 5 shiny new casters and to my right - next to my chair was a handy table for my Blue Cans and my ashtray, and next to that was a chair set up for Sofie. Darren always stands across on the other side of the garage facing me, telling me his funny stories, and so with Sofie sitting 3 feet to my right, we were both his audience and the hours passed by. Time goes by so fast when he is telling stories. Somewhere in the middle, we did take a break and go inside for dinner. But then we came right back out for more fun stories from Darrin.

In the corporate world, we are taught that we should not create even the perception of impropriety. I know this story certainly will, but it is only your perception.

Somewhere around 11 Sofie left us and went off to my granddaughter's bedroom which was provided to her for the night as Melissa was staying over with a friend and her room was empty. An hour later, Darrin and I called it a night, he went to bed and I flopped on the living room couch. I told you that this story was all about the people. You ain't heard nothing yet.

Sunday morning, when I awoke, the coffee was ready and Darren and Sofie were already chatting with each other out in the garage. I grabbed a cup and joined them. And so the morning went on, much like the previous evening minus the Blue Cans. Unfortunately, my daughter was at work, and I couldn't enjoy her company on Sunday morning.



The Band-Aid twins on Sunday morning – notice cell phone clipped to his sling strap

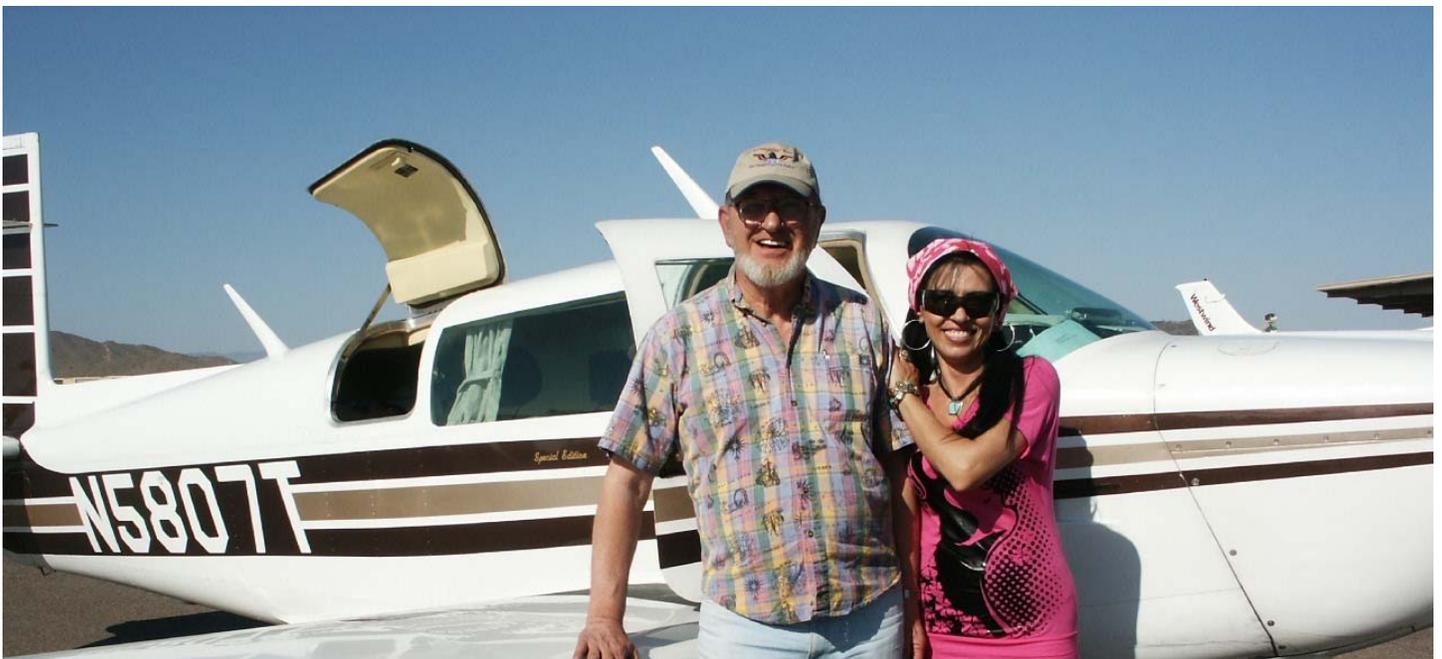
Vacations never go on forever, and neither was this weekend going to go on forever, and so around three o'clock on Sunday afternoon, I called flight service, and got my weather briefing. The prediction was choppy around Phoenix, smooth in the middle and choppy in the LA basin.



Darrin removing the tie-down down chains for me at Phoenix

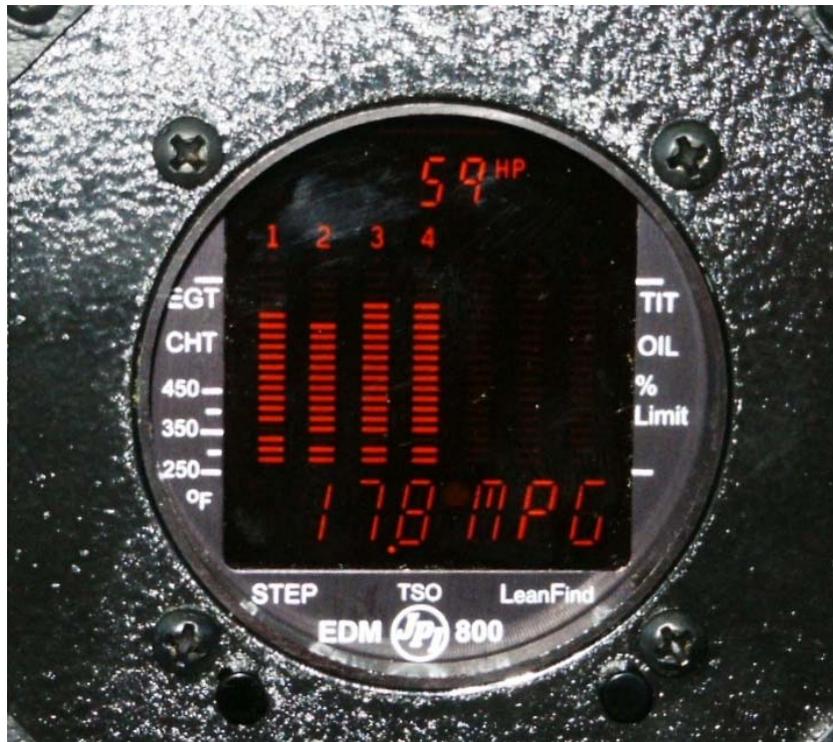


Checking the prop – he does the entire pre-flight - the small door is where I check the oil level



I told Darrin to get closer (with my camera) – Sofie thought I was talking to her 😊

After we got up to cruise altitude, I took this picture. It displays much more than one picture shows.



My new 'toy' the JPI EDM-800 which shows exhaust temps, and cylinder head temps as a bar graph, and in this shot, that I am using 59% of my 200 horsepower and getting 17.8 MPG



The GPS moving map shows we are 19.7 nautical miles from my next waypoint at the Colorado River, that our ground speed is 158 knots (182 mph) and the radio below it shows I am talking with Los Angeles Center (ZLA) Air Traffic Control (ATC) on 128.15 MHz - all in a 'little' airplane.

The only part that worked out as predicted was the middle. It was smooth all of the way, just like most of the day before. An hour after departure, about 2 miles up, and right over the Colorado River, Sofie and I each had one of Darrin's fantastic sausage and meatball sandwiches with his awesome Dago red sauce. She looked at me with a big grin and said that she had never had any sauce anywhere near this good before. If you fly with me, you fly First Class!



Sofie took these two pictures but I don't know where

Pretty soon, we could see the outline of the mountains that create the Banning Pass. All we had to do is pop over a couple of more little mountain ranges and we were home free.



So hazy coming into Corona, my airport goes left to right at the top of the picture

My approach into Corona was perfect as always. ☺ Altitude, nailed. Speed, nailed. Configuration, nailed. Wow, I should be a carpenter. On final, the VASI showed red over white and the airspeed indicated between 70 and 80 knots. What could possibly go wrong? Well, it did after touchdown. First, a little bounce, then a bigger, higher, weird, loopy one, and I knew that the **third time would be the charm** for my maintenance facility, become a prop-strike, and cost me around \$15,000. No way was that going to happen, so full throttle, yoke forward after rotation, reconfigure, and go back up. Naturally, I was concerned about putting Sophie through this, but she was concerned about putting me at ease and said it was nothing, with a smile on her face. Maybe it is because she didn't know anything about the \$15,000. Maybe not. She is not only a lot of fun to fly with, but she is so reassuring at just the right time. Anyway, I did a go-around, and the next time I landed, it was so smooth, you would think I was a professional pilot. Go figure.



After the go-around, now heading east with the sun behind us, the haze seemed to disappear

We pulled into the fuel pit, and I showed Sofie how to fuel up my airplane. She really wants to learn how to pitch in and help. It came to \$229.95 exactly like the day before. K. A-Z., are you listening?



Sofie spending my money – (Just kidding Sofie ☺)

We taxied back to the hangar, pulled the cars out, pushed the plane in, and sat on my RAV4 tailgate while each of us had a Blue Can and talked about the day, and the weekend. Sofie told me how the weekend had turned out to be so much more like a vacation from her life than just a weekend for her, and that she was so grateful to all of the people who made it possible. Then she said it was time for her to go, gave me a quick thank you hug and a smile and she was gone. This is just about where my story ends every time except for this time.

***** Now, for a Paul Harvey style "The Rest of the Story" *****

Note: If a couple hundred of you e-mail me and tell me to take you off of my 'stories' e-mail distribution list, I will understand, and do so. But be assured, this is the only time I ever expect to write an ending to my story that goes anywhere near like this - - -

Did you ever wake up in the morning with a cold, a headache, or the flu and wonder “Where did this come from” after being just fine the day before? If you have, you might understand where I am coming from here.

I woke up Monday morning with a full-blown **crush** on Sofie. It was awesome, it was amazing, and it was totally unreal in a sense, but it was totally real to me. I had gone flying with Sofie three times before over the past year and also with other gals, and nothing nutty-cuckoo had ever happened to my mind then. Why now?

I didn't know this could happen to a guy my age, but it did. Yipes. The last time I had a crush on gal was when I was dating Susie, my wife, some 20 years ago, but there it was, right in my face and I couldn't shake it.

I went to work and walked around thinking like a lovesick cow, whatever that means. I didn't know what anything meant at the time. Talk about it being difficult to concentrate on my projects at work! I

let another day go by, and things did not get better. I was becoming way too introspective and pensive, and I knew that I had to fix things and get on with my life.

In the middle of the week I shipped a quick e-mail off to Sofie about this. Thank goodness she replied with an email that stated '- - - sorry to tell you it's not going to work between us, no match at all'. At first I felt the *crush* of rejection. I also felt some relief. She likes me as a purely platonic (her word) friend, but nothing more. In retrospect, thank God for that, I think I was on the verge of maybe doing something really dumb. A day went by, and I still had a crush on a gal who had no feelings for me except for *plane* friendship.

I thought about my options. I know that time heals all wounds, so I could just wait it out, but that would take too long. I knew I had to get my mind on somebody else to quit thinking about Sofie. I could just get another fly buddy, but then I might be trading in one name for another and still have the same problem.

Then I had an epiphany, and it made perfect sense to me. In fact it was the only answer that would solve my problems and be socially acceptable at the same time. I started to concentrate on my wife, over and over. Miracles, it worked! It worked better than I thought it could possibly have ever worked. I started to think about Susie and Susie and Susie all day long. I was smiling, and it was fun. I am in love with my wife all over again. I think about her more than anybody else. That is not to say that I don't think about you, all of you in this story. It is just to say that I think about Susie most of the time and with a smile on my face.

Even though the Sedona trip was many days ago, I couldn't finish this part of the story until I had come to terms with peace in my mind and in my heart. Now that I am there, I can write this part of the story comfortably.

The Mooney Mite's Porterville fly-in is coming up and I know that Sofie will be busy at work. I will be taking Sandy and we will have a great day. Then coming up in June, there is a Vintage Mooney Group fly-in to Lake Tahoe, and if Sofie happens to go with me, I know that this stupid crush thing will not pop up again.

Looking back on that weekend, I did not do anything, and Sofie did not do anything. The crush just happened to me. Maybe this will help you with your own personal experiences. It turns out that Sofie was not the girlfriend who ruined a marriage; she is not my girlfriend at all, she is the gal that helped my marriage, (even though she really didn't *do* anything except to write me the 'There is no match' email).

If you really like fly-in stories, there is much more to be seen at Phil Corman's write up with pictures of the same day, at:

<http://www.vintagemooneygroup.com/Sedona2008.htm>

Phil Corman also produced a nice, no a really great video of the day's activities, available to you at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVNsNKp1L60>

It makes me wonder about Phil. Just who is this man, this myth, and this legend?

Ed Shreffler

May 11, 2008

Photography by Sofie, Darrin, and Ed

If you are reading this on the Internet, I can be reached at eshreffler@sbcglobal.net