

The Corona Pilots Association Fly-in to Sun Valley AZ October 8, 2011



I am a member of the Corona Pilots Association, and so is Fred Claxton. He has a second home at an airpark named Sun Valley (A20). An airpark is a private community where the homeowners jointly own their own airport. He generously invited all of us there for a BBQ / house party. I wanted to go.



The black area at the bottom is the road & taxiway in front of his home and the next one is the runway

Sun Valley is located just 3 miles east of the Colorado River between Laughlin / Bullhead City and Needles. People tell me it takes 4 to 5 hours to drive there so 1 hour and 20 minutes in my Mooney sounds pretty good in comparison. I asked around at work and Jenny, Nancy, and Rebecca all had one thing in common, they had other commitments for the day. What a shame as today was a blast.

I remembered Cody, a lineman for Fly Corona, our local flight school and FBO. He had fuelled up my Mooney the time I flew with Nancy. He is also a student pilot with 95% of his lessons behind him. He had not been off of the ground in a month. Good choice. I asked and he jumped at the chance.

We soon were off and after two climbing left turns, we were headed east towards Banning at 75° on the compass. The compass does not give exact directions in most parts of the world. There is a 13° difference around here. Modern flight planning software and our on board GPS displays take all of that into consideration relieving us from that work. It is my job to know this stuff.

Cody had already punched KBNG in the Garmin 430 GPS while I showed him the steps to do it. It is intuitive once you get used to it. I later learned that the C-172 that he flies at the flight school also has a Garmin 430, so I set out to make sure he went home having mastered this lesson.

I activated the autopilot and we climbed to 9,500' on the way. Traffic Alert. ATC and my Avidyne traffic both told me I had traffic (another airplane) 5 miles away, same altitude, and opposite direction of course. There is just no sense in looking for a private airplane coming at you, head on, five miles away. There is no dot that small, it is invisible. I started a 30° right turn for spacing. We saw the white diamond symbol go by 2 miles over to the left on my display but we never did see that aircraft out our windows. Soon after I resumed normal navigation. Standard practice for me.

There were some jiggles from turbulence in the air there, so after Banning we diverted northeast over Morongo Valley and Yucca Valley to stay in smooth air by keeping away from higher terrain. Each time we had a new waypoint to go to, Cody punched it in my 430 and it got really easy for him.

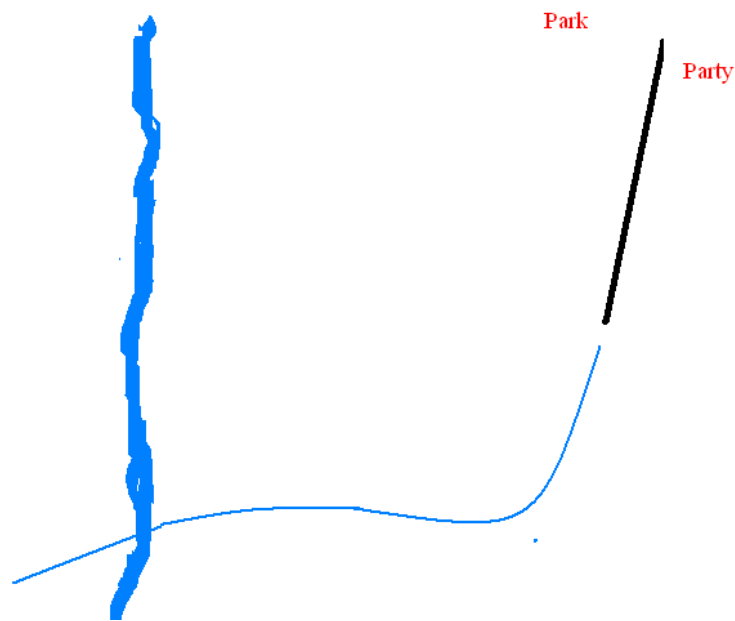
Next up, a right turn to the east until past Twentynine Palms, to clear a Restricted Area, and then a left turn to point us straight to our destination. Only 92 more miles to go, for lunch. We were styling.

Nothing interesting to look at down there but tan desert, darker craggy hills of varying elevations, an occasional lonely dirt road, and a couple of canals that carry water to various communities.

Up ahead, punctuating the light blue sky were a few clouds. They were small harmless cumulous white puffys but they were at around 11,000 feet and all lined up in a straight row. Kinda unusual. Yep we got some bumps going under them for a minute. Out my left window their shadows were all lined up in a straight row on the desert floor extending for many miles.

Around 35 miles out, my GPS reminded me it was time to start heading down if I wanted to make a standard 500 feet per minute descent. I advised LA Center on the radio. The green colored patches of agriculture ahead and off to the sides were so different from the past 45 minutes of desolation on the earth's surface. ZLA released us, Cody dialed in 1200 on the squawk box, I rotated the tuning knobs on my King KY-165 Nav Com radio to the Common traffic advisory freq (CTAF) of 122.975 MHz so I would be connected to the other pilots flying in or out of Sun Valley.

Just fine! As MGR used to say. I have all of the radio gear set up but do I know where the airport is? On my GPS, yes. Out the window, no. I had work to do as I was less than 10 miles out and that is only a few minutes in a Mooney. We kept looking. There it is over there! As no other traffic was on the radio I set us up for a 'straight in' based on my GPS and soon the runway was a couple of miles straight ahead of us. Not a bad landing but not my best. It was on the centerline if there was one.



Not to scale!

We crossed over the Colorado River, turned east, made a left turn and lined up with the runway.

By the time I got out of the airplane Mike was there in Fred's Expedition to pick us up and take us to the BBQ. What service! There were people everywhere. We went through Fred's garage which is a hangar, and his red and white Piper Comanche was inside. I circumvented the tip tank and went in.



I soon had a CPA nametag stuck to my shirt so I could remember who I was.

Besides the people hanging out in the hangar / garage facing the runway, there were over a dozen people in the kitchen and family room area. Pilot talk was abundant. A lady was tending to the BBQ cooking about 15 feet away, just outside the open patio door. Fred was there in his kitchen and I introduced Cody to him and a few others.



My friend Bill

The hot wings were ready and then hamburgers and hot dogs were in the BBQ. Ahh, it smelled good. Cody and I were hanging out in the backyard where another 15 or 20 people had congregated. Glenn, the CPA president, and his wife Denise walked up and I introduced Cody while Denise gave me a CPA hug. As we were sitting around a table munching on chips and dip, we got to meet some more CPA pilots, whoever walked by. I finished my Coke, Blue Cans can wait for later. Lunch time!



The goodies were laid out and the people behind the bar served up burgers and dogs with or without chili. Cody got a plate and went back to the patio table, I chose to sit at the end of the bar right there.



These two ladies in the kitchen did a superb job of serving and the line moved quickly



Beyond the patio table, was another group enjoying the fun, the food, and the day.

We were all asked to gather in front for a group picture. Many times.

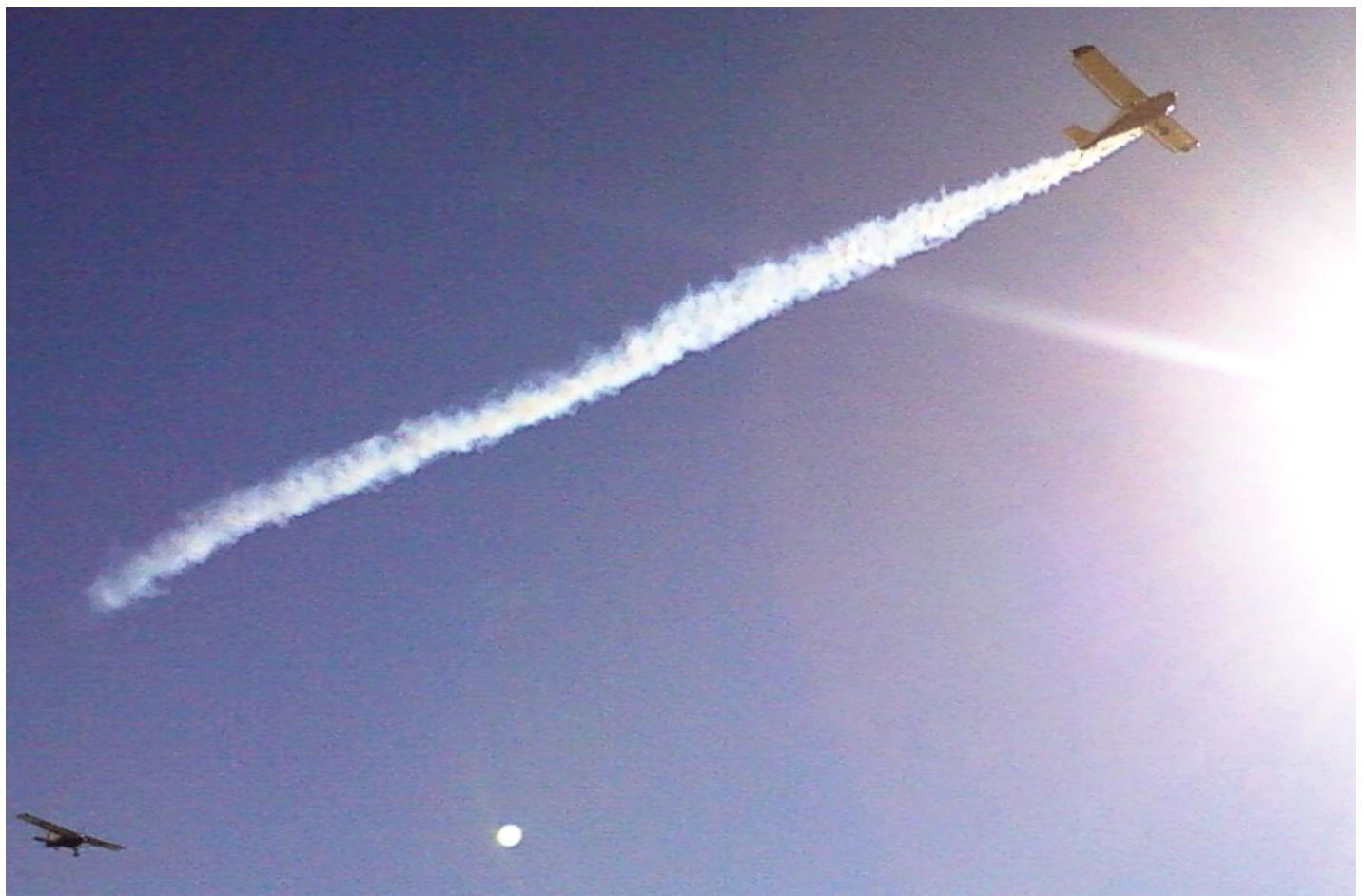


The next task was to try to organize this group of 40 independent thinkers for a group photo

Fred set up his tripod in the driveway and set his camera on it. Then he got us all organized left to right, just in front of his airplane. When he got us all quieted down so we could hear him, he set his timer so he could be in the picture too. The orange light blinked and he had about 15 seconds to blend right in with the rest of us. He became 7th from the left in the dark blue CPA T-shirt.



John Miller (Little John to his friends) is one of my hangar neighbors in Corona. When he announced that he was leaving, I piped up that I would be there to guide him in when he got to Corona. All of those inside the house laughed, as it was evident that I was not ready to leave yet. There is always the thought / hope among pilots that my airplane is faster than your airplane.



Little John took off and turned his smoke on as he flew by the front yard.

It was time to leave and we were chauffeured back over to our ride with a bottle of cold water to go.



Cody showing Mooney pride

We took off around 4:30 and it was windy! Out of the NNE at 17 with some wind gusts up to 32 MPH. Then I had the idea to circle around the pattern and give everyone still in the front yard a view of a Mooney going by in a high speed pass. The surface winds were so knarly, I stayed a bit higher off of the deck and held my freshly powder coated black yoke with two hands for positive control. It is a surreal feeling doing that as the speed becomes apparent out the window once close to the surface.

Then I smoothly brought the nose up high and laid the airplane gently over on her left side as we departed the area in an exhilarating climbing left turn. I asked Cody if he wanted to drive but he said he was OK, maybe when we get up to cruise altitude, so I turned on the autopilot. We observed the outside air temp change from around 80 on the ground to 40 at 8,500'. The ride smoothed out.



The landscape below was so foreign from my daily life on the ground

Up to and at 8,500', there was no steering to do as it was again 92 miles in a straight line to get to our next turn. Just before we got to that turn, I told him that there was a new heading coming up and he said he was ready to hand fly for a while. He pressed the square white button labeled AP and the autopilot beeped as it turned off. I gave him our new heading.

Cody turned us to the right and then held a steady altitude while following a straight course line. 35 miles later a left turn was needed. We could see the LA Basin haze up ahead. We would be going that way. Another 15 miles, a right turn pointed us west through the Banning Pass and the nose was pointed directly at Corona just 60 miles ahead. He flew us most of the way home and did a great job.

Cody is used to flying a Cessna 172. While he was hand flying, I asked him to explain the difference in the feel from the pilot's point of view, he immediately said my Mooney drives like a Lexus. ☺

I had planned our departure time so as not to arrive at Corona shortly before sunset. As it was close to the September 22 autumnal equinox, the sun would be setting almost directly lined up with the runway heading. We heard the sweet sound of the stall warning signal 2 feet off of the runway yet those blessed Mooney wings still had enough lift energy to give us a 2 second bounce after initial contact. We taxied down the ramp and rolled to a stop in front of my hangar. It was quiet again.

Before I could climb out, John Elwell had come over from his hangar in his golf cart and was standing behind my right wing and asking me a question. I could not hear him as my ears were plugged up from the descent. I cleared them in time to hear that John had to leave for a few minutes. I got my car out and sat down on the back after giving Cody a Blue Can.

Both of us thought we heard John Elwell's golf cart returning but when we looked up it was Little John taxiing up. He has a Jabiru engine in his airplane and it sounds different. Then John's golf cart pulled up and soon all 4 of us were enjoying Blue Cans and doing the pilot talk thing.

Glenn's pictures are here:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/110618546484167225960/CPABullheadCityBBQFlyout10811?feat=email>

Additional pictures were from Fred, Cody, and myself.

Ed Shreffler

10/8/2011

Feel free to email me at: eshreffler@sbcglobal.net

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

To everyone I send this to, *"Thanks for your time"*

