

The Third Time's The Charm ☺

Yes sometimes it is true. I have been wanting to go to Agua Dulce's (L70) last Sunday of the month Airport Open House and BBQ since they instituted it. I tried with once Charles but the broken clouds near Agua Dulce looked like a sucker hole so we diverted to Fox Field (KWJF) instead. That flight is in a previous story. I tried again with Sofie and she wound up getting involved in a minor auto accident on the way to meet me, and went back home to sleep. Today it was Krystal's turn and it worked for us! But it was not to be all blue skies!

I got up at seven and all was gray above. I went back to sleep. I got up at eight and all was gray above 'cept for one tiny blue hole. I went back to sleep. I got up at 8:30 and it looked sorta?



Damp and overcast - notice that the only bird in the sky is a seagull, an omen?

Well, I wanted it to be promising. By the time Krystal gave me a call I was already drinking coffee, munching on some goodies, checking updates to weather, and doing a few chores.

We met at my hangar and just talked about airplanes and pilot weather stuff while waiting for the blue holes above to get larger. Finally it was 25% blue sky. I called Agua Dulce on the two phone numbers that I had to determine their cloud conditions. I listened to a nice lady's message on one and a nice man's message on the other. I wanted to talk to a human being, but **'You don't' always get what you want'**. I decided to give it a try.

We launched west out of Corona, then we diverted northwest, then north, then northeast, because of all of the clouds in our way. Then a 360 degree turn between clouds for altitude was required. We were in contact with ATC all of the way. We were really up close and personal with Mother Nature. We were still going northeast as we passed over Ontario (KONT). Finally coming up on 10,500' we topped it all and returned on course. It was small breaks in the undercast most of the way. There is no reported weather at Agua Dulce, so I checked the weather at nearby Palmdale (KPMD) on my 496 and the info said no clouds! Hard to believe from looking out the windows. I wondered would this just be another 'Charles trip' to Lancaster repeated? We pressed on.



Looking down, it started to break open for a bit then it closed up again



This hole looked safe enough but there is uneven terrain down there

Shortly thereafter our hole in the clouds opportunity popped up ahead. It was a safe passage down but we were very close to the airport by then. I had to come down quickly. We dropped like a rock because the Garmin GPS calculated the descent rate was 3800 ft / min. After some rock 'n roll turbulence below those clouds, we landed and parked right in front of the picnic area.



This was really a first class BBQ. My choice of hamburger, cheeseburger, hot dog, turkey burger, or turkey cheeseburger including all possible condiments, a variety of chips, soda or water, and plastic silverware colored silver! I was impressed that all this was only \$5.00. Including **Phil's chili!** And dessert! Also worth mentioning was the friendly style of all of the great folks who served us. Note the shadows on my plate? We were in the sun most of the time and we were loving it



Sky, clouds, people, an orange windsock, and my beloved brown and white 07T sweetheart.



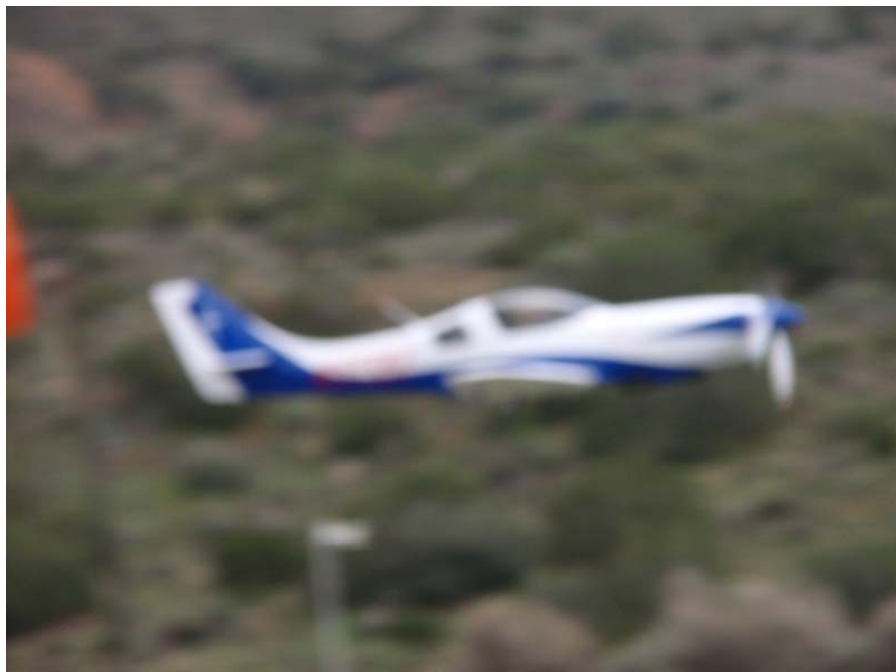
Smooth edged clouds across the way and a big old gnarled tree in the backyard



My self portrait in Krystal's sunglasses



I am fortunate to be able to take my fly-buddies to new destinations where they can have fun



This one is just for Craig, I hope it is a Lanceair, too fast for my camera



I think she is just a natural born airport bum, that's a good thing!

OK, OK, I have fun teasing the people that I like and Krystal knows how to dish it back to me as well as Kim does. We talked to a Socata Rally (sic) owner and learned how it's leading slats work. They are very impressive. I took on some fuel at **\$3.38 a gallon**. Taking note of the huge area of blue sky to the southeast, I planned my departure ideas. But, ***'You don't' always get what you want'***.

We got in and fired that puppy back up. While listening to my step by step, she loaded the (direct to KAJO) flight plan into the 430! She enjoys learning the avionics part also. I enjoy teaching her.

The departure into a healthy headwind in 40's temps was impressive. After climbing to about 3,000 AGL while still orbiting over the airpark, that easy path through the blue sky to the southeast seemed to be hiding and the bases were not too far above me. Looking left and right at the three dimensional experience is awesome. There's blue, white, gray, and all of the multicolors below. This is a place where I do not want freshly minted pilots to be. My head was so busy with the next 15 seconds of navigation opportunities and decisions, and the constant auxiliary plan B ideas, that it was a time where the actual hands on airplane flying should be automatic. The constant "Where do I land if the engine quits?" concept is almost too much to think about at times like these. I am not at all complaining. I love the challenge of working with my airplane in the weather, because it exercises my brain. I think it helps keep the edge sharpened.

At 9,500' we were barely legal above the never ending army of monstrous beauties, so I was thankful to push a few buttons for George to take over for a while so I could finally concentrate on where we were - and just where our course line was, thanks to Krystal's setup. You guys remember before GPS? I would have stayed on the ground, and I used to. Now for some more cloud pictures on our way back home to Corona.



The bulk of the trip home looked just like this, but it is a smooth ride above the clouds compared to the energy stored within them. I do believe that most people will never experience this out of the front window. The people living below us were experiencing a gray overcast and look at what we saw!!



ATC called out **traffic** (another airplane nearby) which I never saw because it was below my right window line but she not only saw it, she captured it in this picture. I first found out at home when I downloaded these to my PC. She must be grinning as she reads this.

Later, I actually had to inform SoCal with an "Unable" for a minute over the Pasadena or El Monte area because of those white puffy formations in his intended vectors for me. That is unusual for me. We finally found the blessed and sought after clearing and I informed SoCal that we could drop like a rock and he approved, and we dropped, and I smiled, and she grinned. It's all good.

Maybe 25 miles out, with all of the remaining clouds above us, and with Corona's airport in sight, I asked Krystal if she wanted to drive. She jumped at the chance. All was great for 10 seconds. Then Mamma Nature decided to communicate with Krystal. Turbulence below cumulous clouds was mama's method and style today. Krystal was working hard holding a level airplane, and on course and doing a great job flying with both hands, and she never said that she had enough.

Then SoCal ATC piped in and said "Mooney Five Eight Zero Seven Tango, radar service terminated, squawk VFR, switch to advisories". I acknowledged and thanked him for his help, as I often do.

Krystal has a lot of what it takes to get it done. I then told her to steer with her left hand and dial One Two Zero Zero into the transponder with her right hand. She did. This is while this gal is still steering my airplane in turbulence! This is very similar to you driving a jeep down a bumpy dirt road and tuning in a radio station with the knob at the same time. We do multi-tasking up there!

I had previously asked her to punch 122.70 into the com radio because I knew we would be using that frequency coming up next for Corona. Now I asked to switch hands and steer with her right hand and push the white com radio flip-flop button with her left so I could talk to Corona Traffic on 122.70. She did. Mother nature gave up! It smoothed out! We must have been over my house by then and I took control but she followed along with her hands on her yoke also. The 45, downwind, base, final, and into the flare, she was right there with me. Then I bounced for the second time today!!! Two out of two landings. Oh, the shame of it all. I need some serious pattern work!

If you expected a happy ending, it was right there in the smile radiating from Krystal's face after all of her experiences of the day. I was the lucky one who got to see it.

I am so proud of that gal and I hope to be side by side with her - up there again - sometime soon.

It is always way more than an airplane ride, or even a trip - with me, it is always an adventure!

Ed Shreffler

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Pictures by ed and Krystal

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