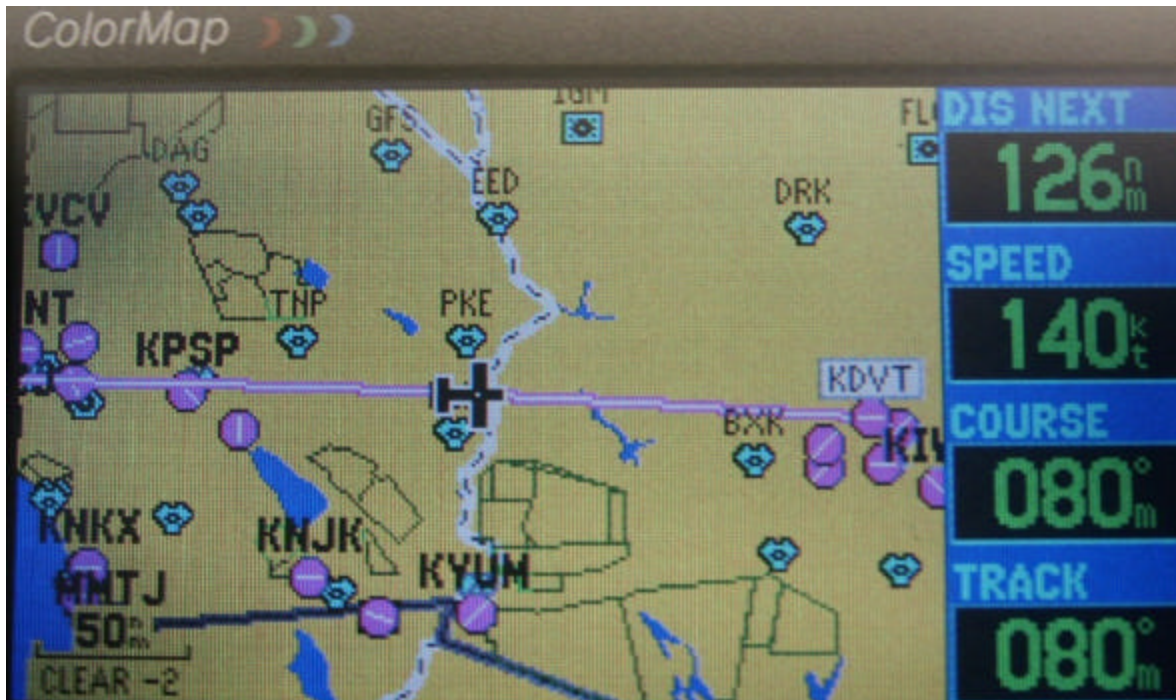


The Seasoning

Chapter 2: The Phoenix Trip

I lifted out of Corona on Wednesday 7/19 late in the morning under clear skies, visibilities 6 miles in haze, and temps in the 90's. All I had to do was fly east following a pink line on my moving map GPS for 275nm or 315 statute miles.



What it looks like half way there - following the pink line.

Radio communication is an important facet of piloting, and to some student pilots, one of the hardest to learn. Before I taxied onto runway 25 at Corona, I announced on 122.7 MHz, the common traffic advisory frequency (CTAF), "Corona traffic, Mooney 6827V (always pronounced "Six Eight Two Seven Victor), taking runway two five for an east departure". We do not have a control tower so we all announce our position. If another pilot in the area wants to know just where I am during my departure, he/she will request on 122.7 and I will respond. Works quite well.

Once clear of the airport area (about a 3 mile radius), I want to get "in the system". I want to be identified and tracked on ATC radar all of the way to my destination. As a VFR pilot, I have the option to request "Flight Following" from the ATC that is in charge of the airspace that I happen to be occupying at any given moment. I have been told that the phrases "Flight Following", "Radar Services", and "Class C Service" are equivalent. This next part is going to be

somewhat lengthy with detail information. Some of the non-pilots love to read about this stuff.

I switched my communication radio over to 135.4 and called up. In the Corona area, that frequency belongs to a portion of So Cal Approach, a Terminal Control Center, or TRACON. It is the largest TRACON in the world. It services 62 airports and is located in San Diego California. This huge facility utilizes 10 radar sites and is soon to expand to 11.

The person on 135.4 monitors the airspace for aircraft in the airspace south of Ontario's airport. I love these ATC guys. They watch me on their radar displays and, occasionally, give me an alert when there is another airplane that might come close to me in the next 2 – 3 minutes. That is the whole purpose of the flight following program, to keep separation between airplanes. These guys also do other things, particularly for airliners and other IFR traffic, on departure or arrival, but this is the service that I appreciate. As So Cal is the largest TRACON in the world, their airspace is divided into many sectors. Each sector is manned by a controller and each sector has its own radio frequency.

The initial call up sounds like this. " So Cal Approach, this is Mooney Six Eight Two Seven Victor." When the controller has time, often immediately, he responds with " So Cal Approach, Mooney Six Eight Two Seven Victor, go ahead." I reply "Mooney Six Eight Two Seven Victor is a Mike Two Zero Papa slash Uniform, three south of Paradise, climbing through two thousand six hundred, for niner thousand five hundred, requesting flight following to Deer Valley, identifier Delta Victor Tango." He replies with " Mooney Six Eight Two Seven Victor, Ontario altimeter two niner one three, stand by for squawk code."

A minute or two goes by and then I hear " Mooney Six Eight Two Seven Victor, squawk zero two three three." I reply by repeating what he said and then set 0233 into my transponder. This allows him to identify my 0233 on his screen with N6827V my plane. Shortly I hear "Mooney Six Eight Two Seven Victor, radar contact, six southeast of paradise, three thousand eight hundred, verify altitude." I reply with the current reading on my altimeter and I am now "in the system."

Ten minutes later I was climbing through 6000' msl (above mean sea level) and the haze was all below me and the visibility ahead was awesome. As I am about to fly out of my controller's sector, he "hands me off" to the guy covering the next sector. I hear "Mooney Six Eight Two Seven Victor, contact So Cal Approach on 119.65." I change the frequency in my com radio to 119.65, and say " So Cal Approach, Mooney Six Eight Two Seven Victor with you". He acknowledges and on we go. He covers the area as far east as Banning.

Once I am over the Banning area, looking down at those tiny windmills that generate power on the hills on the side of interstate 10, the hand off takes

Per Wikipedia.org, In air traffic control, an Area Control Center (ACC), also known as a Center, is a facility responsible for controlling instrument flight rules aircraft en route in a particular volume of airspace (a Flight Information Region) at high altitudes between airport approaches and departures. In the United States, such a Center is referred to as an Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC).

This must be the tenth time that I have flown my Mooney from Corona to Phoenix. From my point of view (pun intended) it is just as boring as it is to the people on interstate 10 below. It is just boring for a shorter amount of time. There is little to do during cruise except monitor on the radio and make slight corrections to the directions of the flight. At least as long as there are no clouds or airplanes in my way. I noticed some clouds off to my left, but so far it was clear ahead.



L A Center hands me off to Albuquerque Center (ZAB) on 126.45 and later another ZAB sector on 125.25. The engine drones on and on, never skipping a beat. About now I could really go for a cigarette, but I never smoke while flying so on we go.

About 50 miles out, it is time to start coming down. I like to descend at 500 feet per minute so my ears do not get too plugged up. This is the time to slightly loosen the cap of the water bottle so it can breathe, otherwise it will be all squinched in upon landing due to the increased outside air pressure.

I listen to the Automated Terminal Information Service (ATIS) recording on 126.5 to get the airport weather at Deer Valley. Winds from the west, landing on 25.



Some more clouds drift by but they're harmless.

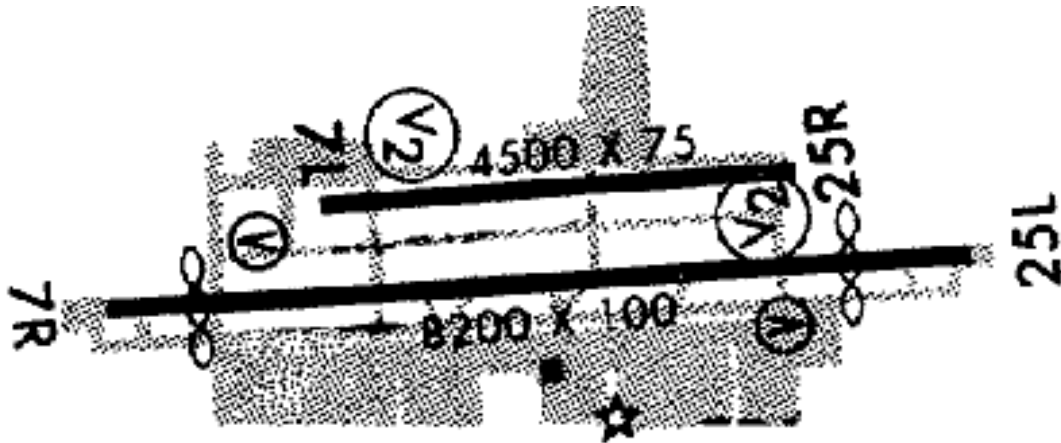


These guys ahead are not bad either.

It starts to get hazy ahead and I'm glad I'm in the system as seeing another airplane is difficult enough when the air is clean. Albuquerque Center

will hand me off to Luke Approach, at Luke AFB, on 120.5 during the week but when they are closed on the weekend, I get handed off to Phoenix approach on 120.7 I didn't know the U S Air Force took weekends off.

Approach hands me off to Deer Valley Tower on 120.2 as I am slightly north of the airport and the controller on 120.2 handles runway 7L/25R, the north runway.



I usually ask for 7R/25L, the south runway because I park on the south side. If they approve, I am asked to switch to 118.4 on my radio for the south runway controller. I looped around the east end and landed westbound on runway 25L. The L stands for left because it is on the left when on final looking west. I'm not done yet. I still have to talk to Deer Valley Ground on 121.8 to get clearance to taxi to transient parking.

If you can talk on the radio, you can probably fly an airplane!

I stayed in Phoenix for two days with my daughter Teresa, her husband Darrin, and the family. Darren picks me up usually and is quite experienced at attending to an airplane. He really helps me a lot. We had a lot of fun.

On Friday, I met Craig...