

Toys for Tots, Oceano, and Love

My dear friends, I am in love again. In love with life, with liberty, and with the people who are so special in my life. In love with sharing, giving and caring for those who are dear to me. You know who you are. Thanksgiving is past on the calendar but it is a constant in my life.

I first heard about the Vintage Mooney Group's planned Toys for Tots fly-in to Oceano CA two months previous at a frigid (weather-wise) VMG fly-in to Tehachapi CA when Jolie Lucas stood up in front of us and told us of her plans. She sparked with enthusiasm and I was hooked. This was going to be our fourth Toys for Tots fly-in event. The first three made me feel all warm and happy inside and I was enthusiastic.



Enter Krystal. She wrote a sincere email about wanting to fly with me. I shared a short flight with her and she loved it. It was her first flight in a private plane, she enjoyed herself, and she received an AOPA First Flight certificate that afternoon after a round trip to Big Bear in my Mooney.



She signed onto the Toys for Tots fly-in and I knew it was a good thing. The following weekend I flew to Phoenix for Thanksgiving and then a week later it was show time! Oceano, here we come!



The drive to the airport indicated severe clear air, as opposed to the same drive on the following day

I kissed my wife goodbye and headed out. Krystal and I met at the airport shortly after seven. She had done my toy shopping for me and she also presented me with a surprise teddy bear. What a super gal. Shortly after our departure, we saw the aftermath of the Corona fire from a month ago.



Miles of burned devastation were below us



An hour later, we were getting close and closer



A right turn right over the water's edge let Krystal snap the beautiful beach and surf below us. This airport (L52) runway is only 2325 feet long and the consequences of any Mooney coming in too fast on final would not be pretty. I had studied and planned for a precision landing at an airport only 2/3 as long as my home base back at Corona. I also briefed Krystal on the possibility of a go-around in the event that I was too fast coming over the airport fence. He-he, I nailed it on the numbers. 'Ya gotta' win a few'. I smiled.

My good friend Phil was on the ramp and he guided me to my parking space and hugged the heck out of me as soon as we got out of 07T. He truly is my brother. Then he hugged Krystal. We were all grinning. We were there. We had arrived! The love was building.

Part Two, fun on the ground at Oceano

I cannot describe in words the fun, the warmth, the new friends, and the hugs from super gals who seem so much like family to me. Robbie, you top the list this month. Hey, the "Hello's", the smiles, the "Hi Ed's and the handshakes from all of the VMG guys are not to be dismissed or ignored here, but it is the gals' hugs that top my list any day. I tried my best to remember to introduce Krystal to all of my VMG friends and I hope I hit at least 80%. I also met new friends. We all brought Toys for Tots as requested and filled up the Marines' boxes to the top.

OK, I have tons more pictures for you this time. Jolie organized this event like no other before her. Her husband Mitch did also. The results were spectacular. Here we go.



The Marine Color Guard was organized - we were not - we all had a great time though



Bi-plane rides were available for those who love to fly upside down, I passed on that



We, as always, had a ramp full of good looking Mooney airplanes.



I was wearing my official FAA Port and Starboard socks.



The lunch tables were dressed better than we were and our chef was working his magic in back



Antlers were in abundance that day, thanks to our Jolie



A cameo of Krystal, taking it all in on her first VMG trip



... and of our volunteer treasurer for the day, Linda



Phil and Jolie, both hard workers and wonderful people



Lunch line and lunchtime - the chef served food was superb!



Candid picture of our picture taker



Fun, food, antlers, and color



It was Jolie's day to shine, and she certainly did



Mr. C was trying his hand at public speaking and attention getting, and getting no attention in public



He is much better at taking pictures than speaking, thanks Phil, she makes me look good



Our host and hostess, Mitch and Jolie, with many Mooneys looking on



Talk about a professional job, it was all cupcakes below that perfect bed of frosting



The sky changed while we were lovin' life below - then a Mooney departed for home



Getting ready to go ourselves, and hamming' it up for the camera - really

Part Three, homeward bound



I did a low pass over the runway - ZOOM



Yes, a very different look enroute back with lower clouds but a clear path
The mild peak in the distance is the Santa Ana Mountains 100 miles away



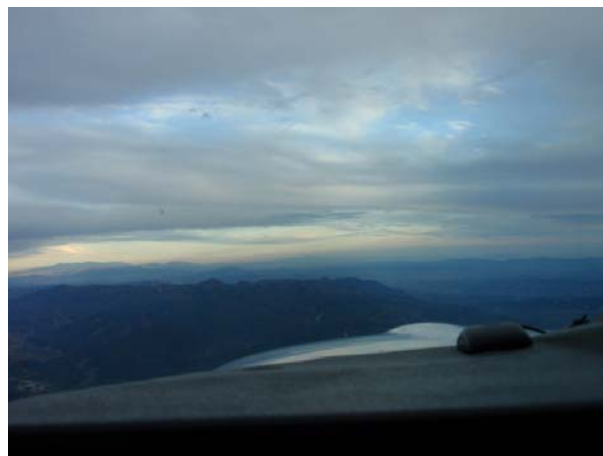
The Channel Islands



The hidden sun's reflection, a striking picture, only visible from up here



A bit later, it was all different looking over there



Motoring home and getting close

After takeoff, I came around and made a low pass over the runway without busting part 91.117. Phil taped it and it should be on the Vintage Mooney Group website and on YouTube.com in a day or two.

On the way back, George flew the airplane, Krystal worked the transponder and took pictures, and I blabbed on the radio, all in concert. This flying stuff is so darned much fun. I made my second great landing of the day at Corona after sunset, but well before dark. We gathered up our stuff and Krystal helped push the Mooney into the hangar, ready for next time. I popped a Blue Can and *she* opened up and started talking. We enjoyed reminiscing about the day for a while, and then it was time for us to part our ways. After a hug, she was gone.

Yes in one day, I truly experienced toys, Oceano, antlers, handouts, and love. I may be a programmer / analyst by profession, but I am one lucky dude on the weekends. May it never end.

Ed Shreffler
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Photos by Krystal, Phil, and me

Feel free to contact me at
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The 'official' VMG write up is at
<http://www.vintagemooneygroup.com/Oceano2008.htm>