

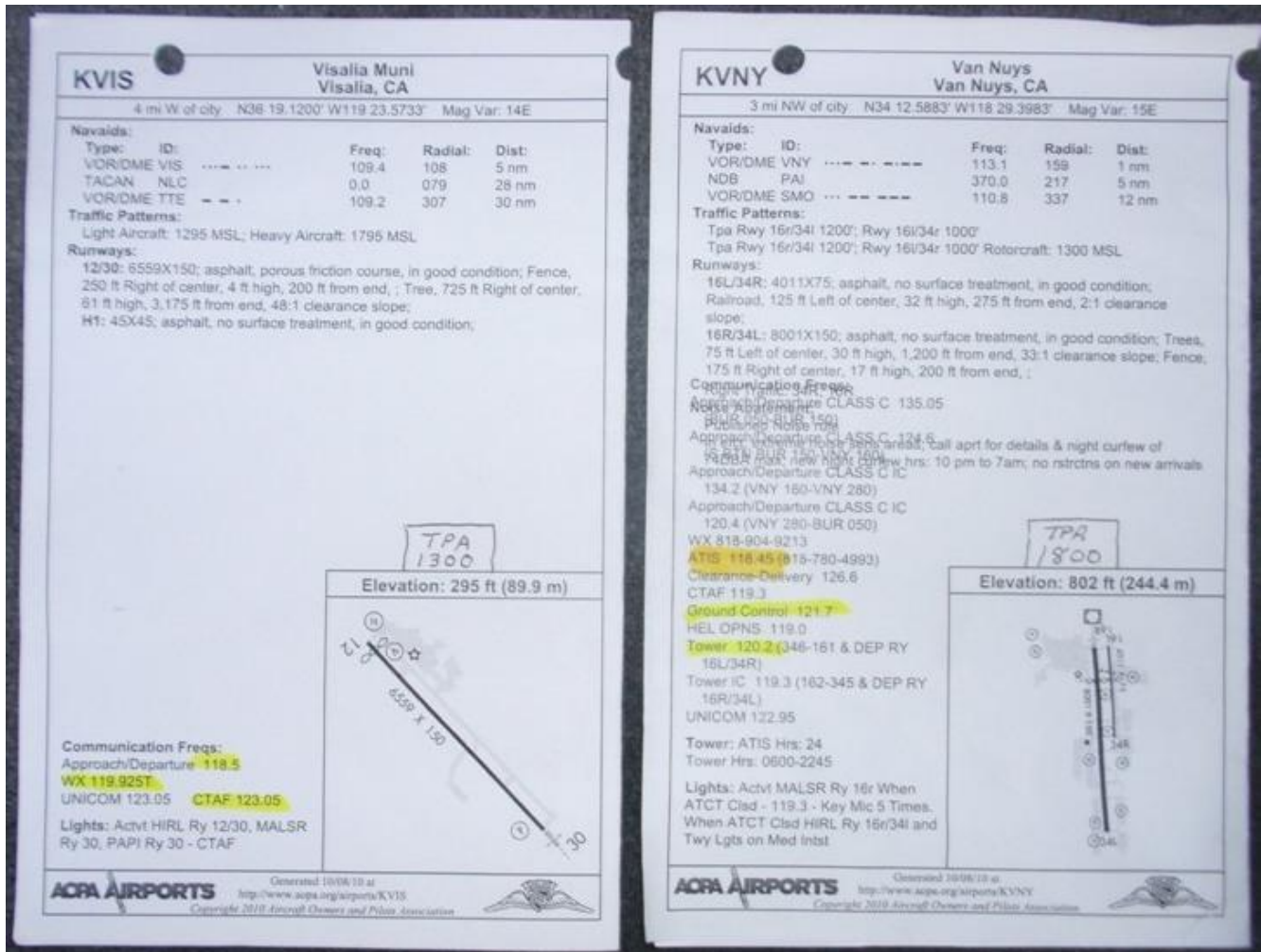
## How An Angel Flight Became Two Other Angel Flights

It was Wednesday afternoon and I was outside thinking about the Angel Flight I had scheduled for Saturday. It was a gray, overcast, rainy, Chicago type of day, just like yesterday and the day before that. The air was still and I saw no one smiling. The promise of hope was not just around the corner. The change that had been forecast refused to materialize. It just went on and on, and my mood reflected the current conditions. It was supposed to be nice weather by now, that's what they said...

By Thursday, the weather was somewhat better in California. I had all of my flight plans and airport data sheets ready to go and knew what else had to be done before the flight could take place. It was to be a two leg flight for Lori, an Angel Flight passenger, from northern California to Fresno by Marc who is another AFW pilot, and then from Fresno to El Monte by me. I communicated with the pilot and the passenger and I thought all was good to go. Then the phone rang.

It was Josh Olson from Angel Flight West who is now the Director of Mission Operations there. Due to a misunderstanding, I would not be flying that Saturday Angel Flight Mission for Lori after all, but he suggested a replacement flight for Sunday. I checked my schedule and Sunday's weather and then I emailed him that I would be happy to take that flight.

This was also to be a two leg flight, now for Candace my new Angel Flight passenger, this time from Sacramento to Visalia by another AFW pilot named Thomas Daniel, and then from Visalia to Van Nuys in my Mooney. I needed to plan it all over again. Thomas and I shot a couple of emails back and forth and arranged for a time to meet in Visalia. He had talked to Candice on the phone as well.



It was Saturday morning. There is a lot of planning, communication, and coordination that goes on behind the scenes to make these flights seem so easy. "Anything worth doing, is worth doing well." So again I worked up my flight plans and airport data sheets with the runway layouts for the Corona to Visalia to Van Nuys to home routes. I thought all was locked in cement. *Then the phone rang.*

It was not a familiar voice, so I interjected "Who is this". It was Thomas, the other pilot, and it was the first phone call between us. Seems no one had signed up to fly Candice back home on Monday and could I help? The prospect of being stuck indefinitely in a Van Nuys hotel was a bit much for her.

Thanks to Christopher Columbus, Monday is a holiday for me. Thomas and I worked out a plan for Monday on the phone in a short amount of time. I would meet Candace at Van Nuys on Monday afternoon, and fly her to Santa Barbara. Thomas already had a reason to be there on Monday. We would again rendezvous and he would wing her home to Sacramento. I got an email from Thomas shortly thereafter - ["She was really very, very happy, because she thought she would have to miss the doctor appointment. This is why we are doing this, after all. Looking forward to meet you tomorrow. Thomas "](#) The phone was quiet.



I went to the airport and looked for the 'Fly Corona' fuel truck, as I needed some. I found it and the fuel guy was nearby. He had fueled my Mooney before. I asked him to come by my hangar in 10 minutes. That gave me a few minutes to chat with Jesse, our hangar maintenance guy.

I drove over and opened the hangar. I wasn't going to fly on Saturday, so I popped a [Blue Can](#) and then the fuel truck pulled up. \$222 later, I was ready for Sunday, almost. I also added a quart of Aeroshell 100W weight ashless dispersant aircraft engine oil. Now, I was ready for Sunday. I kicked back and enjoyed a conversation with my hangar neighbor John for a while, then went home.

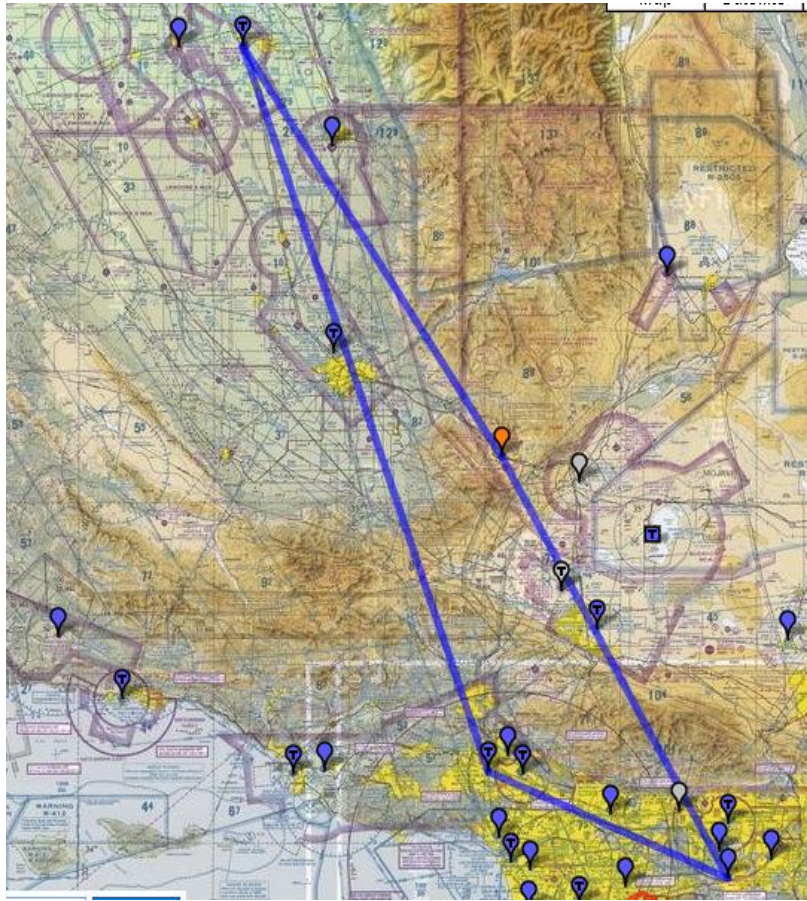




Sunday: At the last minute, my fly-buddy Krystal was able to go along, she is great at spotting traffic



Looking west. North of Rowland Heights on the left, flanked by Hwy 60 and Valley Blvd., and south of South San Jose Hills on the right, was this huge industrial area with residential neighborhoods on both sides. The dark green area in the upper right corner is the Dwight D. Eisenhower Golf Course.



We departed Corona at the lower right of this triangular route shown on a Sectional Chart background at around 9:55 and headed first to Tehachapi, depicted by the orange push pin at about the half way point. The air was super clean and the ride was smooth. We smiled. After climbing to 9,500' we again topped the San Gabriels. Crossing the High Desert was unexpectedly smooth. Joshua Approach handed us off to Bakersfield Approach on 118.8. Just north of there, I wanted to show her the Tehachapi Loop. Railroad track loops are a rare thing in America,



The tracks loop over / under themselves next to Hwy 58 then go through another tunnel

Headwinds plagued us all of the way and I was seeing ground speeds of only 130 to 135 knots. This added a good 15 minutes to our travel time. We were running late, and the closer we got, the thicker the haze became. We were only 2 to 3 miles away when I spotted the airport because of the haze. I didn't know where to meet them so we taxied along until we noticed a likely area. There they were. Introductions and handshakes all around. Thomas had to get going, so I was left with the ladies. ☺



Picture time: Candace said she wanted to give me her 'Angel Flight hug' - we had just met 10 min ago



Then we did a 'proper' one for the folks in the Angel Flight headquarters

We took off on runway 12 in that haze and turned slightly to the right. The true bearing was 160° - the magnetic bearing was 147°. This points us exactly at Van Nuys, some 150 miles away. I love modern avionics. The GPS tells me the bearing is 147°, I set the course indicator to 147° on the HSI, activated the auto pilot, pressed the NAV button, and George keeps us flying on course. After we got to around 4,000', we were at the top of the haze layer and we could see forever. We had headwinds.

Redundancy is key in aviation. It seems we have two of almost everything important. Collision avoidance is very important and the three of us were looking out the window for airplanes as well as enjoying the scenery. But I want more, and so I went and got more a year ago. An Avidyne 600.



This display fed by the 600, will show us whenever there are airplanes within 7 miles of us

But I want more, so I dialed up Bakersfield approach for Flight Following again and we now had another pair of eyes watching over us. We motored on aiming right for Van Nuys. Headwinds.



Looking west, Pyramid Lake slid by bounded on the east by I-5 in the Grapevine area

I started my descent 40 miles out, and found the airport 12 miles away in much cleaner air. SoCal approach told us to expect left traffic for runway 34 Left, and handed us off to the control tower. "Van Nuys tower, this is Angel Flight 07Tango with you." She surprised me and said "Angel Flight 07Tango, turn 30° left and make right traffic for runway 34 Right." As we were southbound, 34L was on the right and 34R was on the left from our point of view. I could picture what we were going to do and was comfortable with things. We taxied up to the Van Nuys Airtel Plaza Hotel & Conference Center which has its own airplane parking area just on the other side of the fence from car parking.



There must have been a Cirrus airplane conference going on as those critters were all over the place



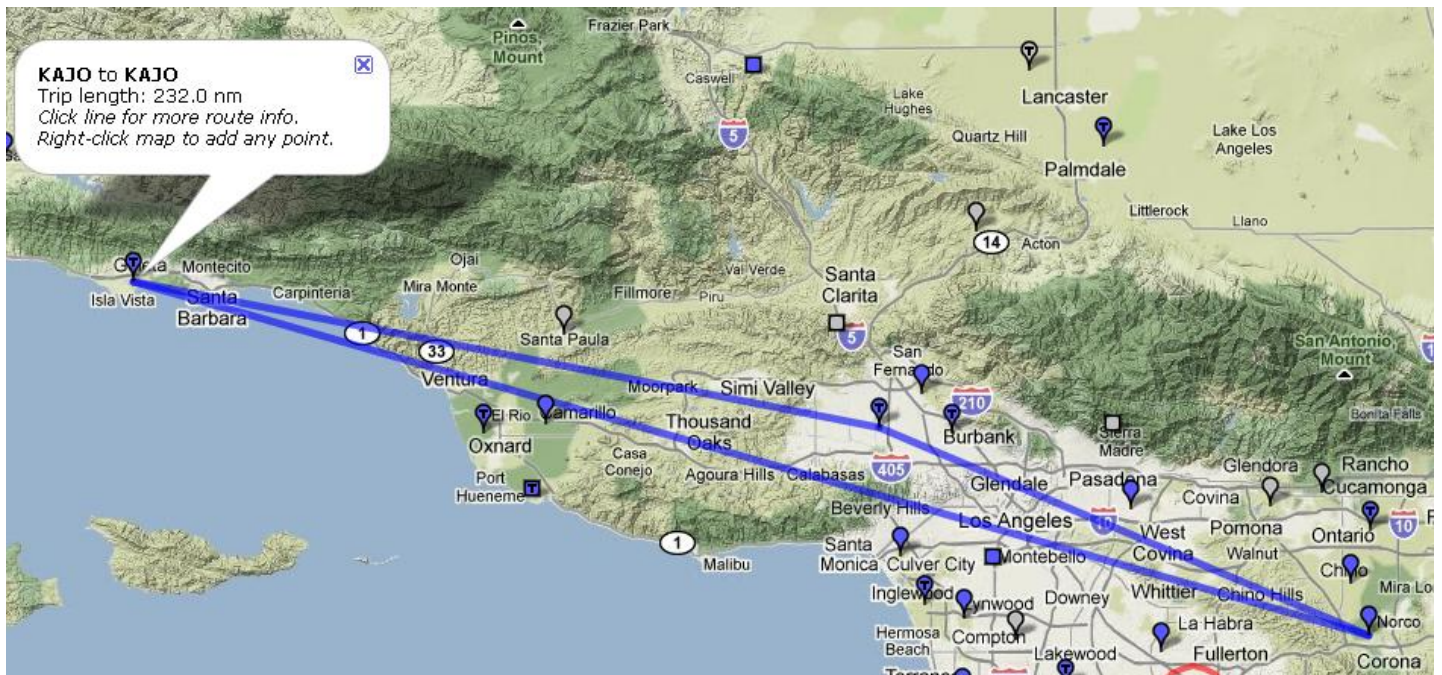
Candice hugged me goodbye, and I hung out by the planes while the gals went inside the hotel.

It was 97° in the shade but there was none. Krystal came back out and we climbed aboard again for the third time today. I got a safe departure route from Clearance Delivery on 126.6, then switched to Ground Control on 121.7 for taxi to Rwy 34 Left this time, then switched to Tower Control on 119.3 for my takeoff clearance, and 30 seconds later was switched to SoCal Departure on 120.4. Working the radios is just as much activity as actually flying the airplane at a busy airport and I think this is the busiest GA airport in America. It was much nicer (cooler) at 5,500' on the way home. I throttled back for economy and enjoyed the slower pace at 115 MPH. It was only a 20 minute ride back to Corona even at that slower speed. Krystal got out and opened up the hangar while I tidied up the plane for the Monday flight. I *thought* I had enough fuel left for Monday.

Doug, my hangar neighbor on the other side from John, was out talking to a couple of other pilots in front of his hangar. He walked over and I introduced him to Krystal. He was impressed that we had done another Angel Flight, and complemented me for doing that sort of thing. He plans to also become a volunteer Angel Flight Mission Pilot when he retires and has more time available. Then the guys closed up and waved at us as they drove past my hanger on the way home.



I got a [Blue Can](#) and hung out on the back of my RAV4 and teased her about something which caused her to give me 'that look'. It's all good fun, but soon it was time to say goodbye. I had flight plans to check over for Monday, and she had a truck to fix. She is one unique gal.



I slept in Monday and I had the coffee going around 9 as I had a much later schedule. I was going to depart Corona around 2:30 and pick up Candace at the Van Nuys Airtel again. The weather was blue skies and sunshine all over for hundreds of miles. I would be departing Corona alone as Krystal had a truck to fix. I kicked back and worked on developing this story. The hours flew by. Around 1:00 I checked the weather again and Santa Barbara was reporting a few clouds just 100 feet above the ground. **Red Flag Alert!**

I started checking other weather sites and found that a massive low cloud area (the Marine Layer) had developed and was touching the coast from Oxnard up and past Santa Barbara. I called Thomas and he suggested Santa Inez as an alternate but he was going to fly into Santa Barbara to meet his daughter anyway. He is IFR rated and he can fly through the Marine Layer, but I can't. Santa Inez was close and over the hills in sunshine. I called him back and we agreed that I would at least look at the Santa Barbara area when we got there before diverting, to save him from making another stop.

Charles! Of course. Why didn't I think of him earlier? I called him just after 1:30 but no answer. I left a message about him flying with me on short notice. Then I went back to checking weather and the marine layer had continued to develop. More than a few clouds now. Then the phone rang.

It was Charles! He was available. By 2:15 we were both at my hangar and soon the plane was outside and our cars were secured inside. We were off by 2:30 and landed before 3. It was a smooth and easy flight over. ATC was doing a great job in sorting all of us out, coming up on Burbank's Bob Hope airport then on west to Van Nuys. We had a clearance to land on 16 Left, and later amended to 16 Right, the big one. We pulled off on the 'high speed' 45° taxiway and then I totally blew it by rolling about two blocks too far before I realized that I had missed my Airtel parking area.

I sheepishly turned around and looked for that red tiled roof and pulled in. I am sure the guys in the tower were chuckling at the 'rookie' while offering me no help on the radio. We had the whole Airtel parking lot to ourselves. After introductions, I got another great Angel Flight hug, and Charles got one too. Candace said she was watching us taxi right past the Airtel parking lot and Charles explained that we were just doing a 'Victory Lap'. I explained the Santa Barbara weather situation to both of them, and that I had a plan B to Santa Inez, and they were comfortable with my flight plans.



Charles, Candace, and me ready to go somewhere, just not sure where yet, in Van Nuys sunshine

Soon it was 3:30 and we taxied to Rwy 16 Left, I had another good engine run-up and was cleared for takeoff southbound with the restriction to not turn until arriving at the 'drainage channel'. Note to all new pilots - I was unfamiliar with the local area and 'fessed up'. Tower said he would call my turn. See how easy that is? ATC works for you and don't forget it. Charles is a student pilot and he was driving again. I was watching and giving him guidance, as well as doing all of the radio communication, checking the gauges, and checking my GPS for possible Special Use Airspace, TFRs and weather. The ride was smooth, the engine was smooth, the visibility was good, and the Mooney's cabin temperature was great. I relaxed and took pictures.

Candace, in back was 'going along for the ride' and boy oh boy, she knew every city, lake, valley, and whatever down there. We motored along northwest bound past Simi Valley until approaching the Oxnard area. It was just past 4 and the weather I saw depicted on my PC at home, took on a whole new meaning from the air. We pilots know that we get a whole different perspective on things.



The marine layer extending miles out to sea with an unusual area that looked much like a waterfall



I asked Charles to bank the airplane over to the left so I could show you the edge of the Marine Layer

That is a city down there with the light colored building roofs and a park or golf course just right of center. I was talking to Santa Barbara Approach Control at the time and he offered to call Santa Barbara tower for us to get the current weather conditions. That was a nice unexpected favor. He came back saying that the tower said it was clear to the north and I could go north, turn around, and slip under the clouds to land. (Could I also take off safely a half hour later, would we be stuck there?)

I expressed my appreciation and said I would divert to Santa Inez instead. It wasn't far, and didn't take long. Candace kept us up on what we were looking at down there including not being far from Neverland. Charles' comments were funny. Over the ridge and time to start down, down, down.



Santa Inez airport from 1 - 2 miles out, not a cloud in their sky as I took over the hands on flying duties



Short final for Rwy 26 at Santa Inez, speed down to 70 knots indicated, as it is a shorter runway



At the far end of the runway, we stopped for this picture, as this was just too great to let it pass by



We taxied to transient parking, stopped, got out, pushed 07T into an open slot, and walked up to the building with the open door. Beautiful weather and a nice breeze. No one was inside. I walked past the counter and through another open door to the back office which had a big laptop sitting on a desk, but no one was around. Trusting souls. On the whole, airplane people are really good people. There were cups and bottled water, so we took advantage of that. Note: my door is wide open too.

I wanted a cigarette so I walked back out the front door and was surprised by how much better that breeze felt so I hollered in to them , and soon we were all out at the airport picnic area.



Candace was relaxing out in the breeze and here comes Charles, with a bag of spicy chips to share

I called and left a message for Thomas about where we were. He was still flying at the time. Then Candace left a message on his cell so he would have her number. Then the phone rang.

This time it was Thomas calling Candace. He would be there shortly to pick her up and take her back home to Sacramento. I felt a big relief and got back to thinking about my own plans.

We discussed our current fuel supply. We had left Corona with 32 gallons and had used less than half of it getting there - with a calculated 5 to 7 gallons remaining in the tanks by the time we got back to Corona. Not good enough for me. Sure, it was almost 25 cents cheaper at Corona, but airplanes hit the newspapers for exactly that reason. We picked up another 10 gallons as a prudent safety margin.

Candace hugged us goodbye and we also said goodbye for now to the beautiful Santa Inez area. In his climbing left turn, I grabbed the camera to show everyone the beautiful valley that laid ahead.





The Lake Cachuma Recreational area. How about this for a retirement neighborhood?



Los Padres colors and shadows in the afternoon, a million miles away from all of our earthly cares



That marine layer was hugging the hills by Santa Barbara with the city and airport somewhere below

So we flew along in the beautiful California autumn weather well above the low clouds in that area knowing that the folks living down there were experiencing an overcast again. That engine just kept humming along as steady as a sewing machine. A high peak on one of the Channel Islands was all that rose above the cloud tops way out there. I was again experiencing what I call 'A Natural High'.

We were handed off to the Point Magu Approach controller who kept her eyes on us for a while. Then over to SoCal Approach once again. We flew over Santa Paula, through the Simi Valley, then right next to the Van Nuys airport area once again. The sun was very low as we flew by.



We passed by high over Van Nuys airport, then we were vectored slightly (OK, 30°) to the left to pass directly over Bob Hope airport for flight safety. Soon, "Angel Flight 07T, resume own navigation.", came over the radio so we turned back to pointing the nose at El Monte, my next waypoint to keep us clear of the LAX class Bravo airspace just south of us, right out the right window, if airspace was visible. Coming up, the cities of Glendale, Alhambra, and then El Monte's airport slid by below. We were already coming down. As expected, it was getting warmer again.

Once over El Monte's airport, we turned slightly to the right and zoomed back to Corona. It was just past sunset. We landed, taxied back to the hangar, and drove our cars back outside. Over a few [Blue Cans](#) we had lots to talk about. Then Charles pushed the plane back in the hangar for me. Thanks buddy! I took 5 pictures and none of them were in focus - maybe the beer? Who knows...

