

# YAKIMA VALLEY WPA NEWSLETTER

NOV, 2006

This is Thanksgiving eve and a light rain is falling in the cool of the late afternoon. Not too long from now Christmas will be upon us, and sooner than that, our annual Christmas meeting (party) will be here. This letter is getting to you late in Nov with the hopes that you won't forget to attend. This issue also contains a rather long article written by Uncle Bob on his summer flight to Mexico and since this was the longest flight taken in 30 years of flying, the article is long as well. Pretty pictures have been added to break up the monotony. As usual, Dennis Franz has questions for you. All three stumped me. Sadly, Sandy and I won't make the party; gladly, The Caribbean calls!

## DATES

**CHRISTMAS MEETING**---Dec 8---Howard Johnsons—9<sup>th</sup> St., and Yakima Ave.

6PM Drinks, 7PM Dinner

Only \$10 per plate—WPA pays the rest!

\$20 gift or less and please—no “raunchy” gifts.

**CHRISTMAS**-----DEC 25 -- I just love the idea that Santa is a pilot too; and IFR qualified to boot.

## QUESTIONS

1. A helicopter has been built and flown with blades powered by a ram jet installed at each blade tip. The force of rotation for these blades is described by Newton's third law of motion.(of course, you know his third law, right? Here's a little

hint---it comes just after his 2<sup>nd</sup> and a little while after his first—Uncle Bob) What other two force mechanisms describe the torque on the rotor in an axial flow turbine?

2. Of the six JP jet fuels, which are kerosene based and which are naphtha based? (I thought there was only one)

3. While flying, why do jet fuel tanks need to be circulation vented whereas gasoline tanks need only to be passively vented?(have there been times when your spouse wished you were “vented”?)

# HELLO MEXICO



As I start to write this, an old song starts winding its way through my head—"It's a Long Way to Tipperary--." I'm not sure where Tipperary is, but I'll guess Ireland and surely that is indeed a long, long way from Yakima town. Well for me, the first ever flight to Mexico from here was plenty long enough (it's equivalent to flying halfway across the U.S.) and well worth the flight hours it took to get there. Almost since the time that I started flying, which was around 1976, I've heard pilots rave about flying down to Mexico, and for the same amount of time, I have pondered flying there as well. Several of our members fly there at least once a year. Jim Bell and his wife, Lupe, tour Baja in the Cessna 140 there yearly, and

Lee Peterson and his wife Kay fly there and beyond in their 182 more than once a year. In fact, as I write this, the Peterson's are enjoying the Copper Canyon area of Mexico. And so, after all the years of thinking about it, I finally launched south this summer. It wasn't the best time of the year to fly to sunny, **hot**, Mexico, but work-wise and people-wise, the timing couldn't have been better.

As with most longer flights, the destination was only part of the fun. The first leg of the journey took me and my friend, Jerry Schultz, to Napa, Calif, with a stop for lunch, etc. at Red Bluff. A flight of RV 6s, and 4s and? had landed there ahead of us and were all on display in all their shiny paint job glory. The food at the airport cafe was first rate. The RVs departed while we were still eating and it was fun watching them take off with a little extra thrown in in the way of steep climb outs, or low, high speed runs followed by an even steeper climb out and of course nosing over before Mr. Stall got them. After lunch and potty time it was off to Napa where we mooched off Jerry's brother for food and lodging before departing the next morning for the San Diego area where we were to pick up my oldest son, Sean, and his girlfriend, Gabriella, as well as to visit my two sisters and mother who live in Escondido. The flight from Yakima to Napa, was aided by a light tailwind, making my GPS tell me that my ship was indeed a rocket. But the god of winds had different plans as we headed south from Napa. Climbing out over the bay area, the ground speed was quite low, but that was to be expected. I usually try to maintain at least 100mph on climb out, and then expect higher ground speeds when I level off. On this flight, that was not to be. Once leveled off at 9,500 or so, I was seeing speeds in the 90 mph range. Norcal approach, informed me that the unusual head winds persisted all the way down the coast. I finally tried a descent somewhere over the San Joaquin Valley and finally found lesser headwinds at 3,500 feet. Still, it was pretty slow going. Then, as we approached the mountains forming the LA basin, I had to climb to 10,500, thereby eliminating the LA Class B. I expected, and I heard an airplane report more than moderate turbulence over the San Gabriel's in the vicinity of the Grapevine, but as luck would have it, we experienced a pretty smooth ride. The descent into Ramona, however, tipped us around a bit what with the multitude of boulder and sage brush covered hills heating up in the morning summer sun. Once upon the ground, it was once again "mooch time", compliments of my sister Carol, who put us up for a couple of days while my son finished up his work for the week. Then it was off from the Ramona airport, south, to sunny, San Felipe, Mexico. This leg was the

shortest and, with Mr. Headwind being kind, in something less than an hour and a half, we were listening to the “tower controller” talking to a Cessna 30 miles ahead of us. This turned out to be a good drill, for we experienced the very same conversation with the



controller as did the Cessna. It went something like this: “Beech 28 Echo state your position.” I had already done so on my initial transmission, but I complied none the less. Then it was “Beech 28 Echo, report 10 miles out,” and then “Beech 28 Echo, report 3 miles out on final, winds blah blah blah,” and then it was Beech 28 Echo, cleared to land”. While I was tying down, I noticed the “controller” scurrying out of the tower and heading for us. At first I thought that perhaps I had screwed up, because I also noticed a young man with an M14 along with an older man, both in army garb, approaching us from my left. I tried to act nonchalant about these proceedings by slowly hooking the plane up to

the awaiting chains. As it turned out, the “controller” was now the baggage handler and the army guys were the plane and baggage inspectors. We opened up the suitcases right there on the tarmac and soon it was smiles all around. However, we weren’t finished. The baggage handler scurried off into the terminal where he became one of the four “custom” officers. Meanwhile a very nice Mooney caught my eye as we were walking toward the terminal, and I stopped to have a look-see at the ship. All of a sudden I heard this command in Mexican English “sir, step away from that airplane.” Alarmed that once again I might have screwed up, I complied. Looking over at the source of this command I saw the old guy in the uniform laughing, and then he said with a giggle, “just joking---I’ve always wanted to say that.” We then proceeded into the terminal where I sat down at four different desks while two different officials manned the chairs. All went smoothly until the final chair, where I handed over my wallet replete with my pilot’s license and noticed that the official had screwed up his face into something resembling a confused frown. He apparently was trying to decipher my broker’s license instead of my pilot’s license, but we soon got things straightened out and we were on our way in a “taxi” to San Felipe, while the officials were once again resuming their card game. Once there, Jerry and I let the local motel manager screw us out of \$65 a night for a very bare bones room. It did have a window-mounted air conditioner however, which turned out to be a godsend, what with the 100 plus degree, humid, humid, and more humid conditions we experienced. In desperation, I gave up my Levis for a pair of polyester swimming trunks, a pair of flip flops and a white straw hat that I purchased from one of the many concessions gracing the streets adjacent to the waterfront. Sean and Gabby stayed at a small house that her mother owned there. We enjoyed several nights of great Mexican food (that is almost redundant isn't it), and Mariachi music in the many restaurants that also graced the waterfront,



while watching the parade of cars, pickups and motorcycles that cruised the main each evening. We even did a bit of dancing at one of the bars apparently owned by a “gringo” because all he played in the joint was American music out of the 30s and 40s. We also tried our hand at fishing in the bay by making arrangements via “front men” who roamed the beach in search of someone to sell a fishing excursion to. We were assured that the “panga” was seaworthy and that the captain was very experienced, and so parted with a \$30 earnest money to reserve the boat for fishing the following morning. Wondering if we would ever see these guys again, we showed



up bright and early; beer, water and deli sandwiches in hand ,and lo, there appeared one nasty looking Chevy 4x4 with exhaust stacks jutting up behind the cab and fitted with a set of huge knobby tires. The guy driving the machine scrambled out to attach a tow rope to the trucks hitch and to

the bow of the panga. Did I mention that the pangas were lined up in the sand a good hundred yards from the waters edge? We were motioned to jump into the boat and hang on. And with that ,the exhaust stacks roared and the lot of us were dragged right out into the lapping waves of the Sea of Cortes while the men

unhitched us from the truck which then spun around in the water and roared back to the solid sand. The driver then got out leaving the rig idling, hiked up his pants and waded out to our panga. In a minute the 115 horse outboard came to life and we were headed out into the far reaches of the bay. The captain hummed Mexican tunes (there I go being redundant again) while he got the bait and rods ready for the four of us. Soon we were catching fish. Not big ones, but fish none the less. Problem was I was catching most of the critters while the rest of the stalwart “fishermen” annoyingly observed my continued joy. Soon the captain was hauling anchor to look for a better place with the hopes of making the other fishermen happy. That was not to be however, because after an hour or two of searching, my friend Jerry started to get sea sick and held out until he was pitching over the side. This being most unappetizing to the rest of us who were soon to join him, we requested a hasty retreat back to the beach. And hasty it was. The captain headed the panga full throttle toward the beach and never let up until we had slid as far as possible up the sandy bottom. That being done, he jumped out of the boat and into the waiting 4x4 and back out into the drink he went. The “front men” re-attached us to the truck hitch and then with a roar and a shake, we were propelled out of the water and up the up-sloping beach to the point from where we had begun. By then, Jerry had finished retching and we all jumped out leaving the fish behind in the cooler. The beer went with us with a “muchos gracias senior—adios.” Jerry and I were soon back in the “luxury accommodation's” with the air conditioner going full blast.

The following morning we headed back to the airport with plans to fly further south to depart from the somewhat border atmosphere that is in San Felipe. The av-gas at the airport was only 2.50 a gallon and so the plan was a fill up and have one fun, long flight exploring to the south along the Sea Of Cortes. However the god of gas had other plans with a “very sorry senior, seniorita, but the pumps she is no working today” Thank God my ship holds near 60 gallons and I had less than 15 gallons of fuel burn Escondido to San Felipe. This meant that I could safely fly, lets say, a half hour down the coast for a look see. That put us in reach of Rancho Grande and so it was Rancho Grande here we come. The runway at San Felipe is 4,900 feet long and 149 feet above sea level. I was heavy, and the temp, according to the outside temperature

guage, was 118 degrees. I have never been in temperatures that high, let alone in an airplane, and the words “density altitude” kept wandering around in my head. Consequently I picked out a spot halfway down the runway and told everyone that if I wasn't in the air or damn close to it, at that point, I would abort. There are things I just don't comprehend about this flying game.



We were in the air not much more than halfway to the halfway point and climbing at at least 500 ft per minute up. I'll leave it up to you brainchilds to tell me why. Could it be my brand new, not rebuilt, propeller? As we flew down the coast at about 3,500 ft, the water became more and more crystalline



and the coastline less and less populated. The only annoyance to the flight were the thousands of

Cormorants that seemed to like flying at our altitude, but miss them we did, or they did us, and soon the beautiful bay at Rancho Grande loomed in front of us. The main strip -there is a short crossing runway- is some 5,000 feet long, paved in gravel and sloping slightly up hill if one lands to the west with a final over the water. Mountains form a barrier west of the strip. Landing in that direction meant that I would have a significant tail wind, but with everything described above, I went for it. It was a non event and I

was stopped in less than half of the runway. Rancho Grande also has a north-south strip just a few hundred yards north of it called Alfonsina's, and at the north end of it is a restaurant by the same name. The young man in the black truck who came out to greet us and our ten dollar bill was more than happy to give us a ride to the restaurant where we enjoyed some fine fish tacos. Alfonsina's strip, by the way, is under water at some high tides, and we were able to see the whole thing flood over while we ate. Up and down that pristine beach were all sorts of rustic buildings, most of which were some sort of conversions of single wifes. The two I walked by while walking a short distance up the beach were owned by



“gringos.” One owned a Cherokee 6 and the other a 182. The 6 owner lived in Sacramento and had made the trip there more than 160 times. The other fella used to teach sky diving and had held the world record for number of jumps in one day for several years. The number was something over 200 if memory serves. Both guys were very content and pleased with their lot, which appeared to me to be a state of semi boredom and extreme relaxation. The water, which they bobbed up and down in several times a day was perfectly clear and over 80 degrees. Jerry and I did a little bobbing of our own. After the pleasant visit, we were off in another pickup, this time in the salt water that had now come inland, and soon we were back to the plane. I was concerned about density altitude. I had four people in the plane and near 40 gallons of fuel and it was 100 plus degrees. The 6 owner said to me that in Baja there is no such thing as density altitude, and I don't think that he was joking. That set me a little more at ease, even if I didn't believe it. Mine is a 180 HP airplane and his is 230 HP, or better, with a three

blade constant speed prop. Big good 20 mph headwind right down downslope, well packed gravel, and controls and no obstructions all the made the takeoff a no brainer.--- once again with the Cormorants at 3 to have some fun and fly just off the swoops and swerves of the albeit, not the safest way to fly. But at us as we droned back toward



difference, Jose. Anyway, a the runway, a slight not to forget ,Sky King at the way to mainland Mexico, YEAH. Rather than play to 4 thousand feet, I decided coast at 500ft, following the coastline. This was fun, what the hey, people waved civilization. Jerry flew this

leg and did a great job, especially for a non pilot. He kept altitude to a few feet either way, which is something I find a bit challenging. We went out that evening for a final dinner in San Felipe. The mariachi bands were strolling up and down the strip and we could observe the action from our outside table. I made the mistake of looking at one of the young guitar players, and the next thing we knew, father and his two sons were in front of us singing and playing their hearts out. And I mean exactly that. Soon I was making requests and they knew every one of them. The fee was \$4 per song and feeling good after paying for several, I handed them \$20 hoping for some additional entertainment. But

made the mistake of saying “Buenos Noches,” which I thought meant “isn't it a nice night you guys,” but apparently they thought meant “take a hike and here's a tip.” It was adios muchachos, and I didn't know enough Spanish to call them back. Still, I enjoyed the moment listening to them sing at the next table. The food and drink were first rate. We were probably eating the fish that we had caught the day before.

I must say that I was happy to be heading back home the next morning. The heat and humidity were doing me in, big time. We headed to Calexico where we planned to check with US Customs but also hoped to land at Mexicali to fill up on some cheap fuel. Mexicali fuel was \$2.35, Calexico fuel was \$4.50. However, Sky King managed to blow right by Mexicali and found himself looking straight down on the Calexico strip. We announced and landed. Customs greeted us while taxiing, and we were told to follow the white line and stop directly in front of the Customs Building. We did so, but made the mistake of opening the doors—can you say hot--- and started to get out. We were stopped ,big time. Two well uniformed, armed men came out to greet us and had me unload the baggage. It was inspected and approved and then we were escorted into the building where our passports, etc. were examined. We were told then that they didn't appreciate us starting to deplane and that could have resulted in a \$5,000 fine. Also Jerry didn't have a passport, and they didn't appreciate that either. Unbeknownst to the officer working with me, Jerry had asked permission to step outside for a smoke from the other officer and permission was granted. My guy, upon realizing that one of us wasn't present, went semi ballistic and I was told to go get Jerry, pronto. After getting a short balling, out we were told that that little incident could also have resulted in a \$5,000 fine. Then it was the numbers on my plane. They had to be at least 12 inches on both sides of the fuselage and you guessed it, that could also result in a \$5,000 fine. The Customs office is directly connected to the local FBO via a wide opening in the wall between them. Gabby had wandered over there marking time and looking at curios while the officer finished up with me. Of course ,you already know, this breach could also have resulted in a \$5,000 fine. We were told that Mr. Customs man was in good spirits that day and we were sent on our way unscathed; that is after I parted with \$25 or \$30 for a stamp which had to be affixed to a very specific spot on the baggage door OR ELSE. Please don't be discouraged by this little diatribe. If you play it exactly like the rules say you must, which is something I seem to not be very good at, then all this is no big deal. But I have to say that all the mumbo jumbo I've heard over the years about the crap the Mexican authorities throw at we pilots is just that. Perhaps in an earlier time it was different, but now these people welcome us with open arms while making an attempt to be official. I'm also quite sure that they can be very “official” if we are caught breaking the rules.

The flight back to Ramona where I left off Sean and Gabby, was short with a bit of turbulence over the mountains lying west of Calexico. Soon, Jerry and I were on our way to Napa where Jerry's brother, Jim had arranged for a gourmet dinner and show at the cultural center funded by the Mondavi family. This turned out to be a very nice time. The food was fine, and the wine( Jim had given us a bottle to take to dinner) was fine also, and empty by dinners end. I'll be damned if I can remember the movie we watched, other than it was some artsy type like my wife and I used to see at the Harvard Exit in Seattle.

The flight Napa to Yakima, was a non event for the most part, at least for me. Jerry, on the other hand, really detests being in the air for 5 hours and said that he would not go again if I stayed aloft more than three hours. I must admit that he is right. Being a passenger for three hours is really a long time. To make matters worse, at about Klamath Falls, Jerry started to get sick and by the Columbia River he was filling up one of my barf bags. I was thinking air sickness, or perhaps good old Montezuma's revenge, but he was sure that it was something he had eaten at the Mondavi gourmet meal. Go figure. At Goldendale the wind was blowing pretty strongly and the turbulence over Satus Pass had me calling Seattle Center to report more than moderate turbulence. Man we got bounced around but things calmed down as we passed over the valley. As is always the case with me, it was great to see the good old Yakima Valley come into view and hear the familiar controllers doing their

job. Montezuma did his job too on me a day or two later, but it really wasn't a big deal. I didn't drink the water in Mexico, but I did eat many tacos which have lettuce that I presume is washed in their water, and I did make the mistake of brushing my teeth using the tap water. Sad but true, even Sky King messes up occasionally.

All of this said, I am already making plans to return to sunny old Mexico. This time, however, I'm taking the advice of Lee Peterson as well as Jerry's brother, Jim, and fly farther south to Mulege where you can land right where you are going to stay and enjoy sitting in a hot spring while drinking your favorite beverage and getting another without ever leaving the water. They also barbeque a pig for your eating enjoyment every Thursday, if I remember correctly. My wife, Sandy, wants to go, as well as friends, Marvin Pugh and Jerry Schultz, so we will have a full airplane and a three way split on the gas. Now there's the way to better gas mileage without doing a thing to the plane. I can't wait to say adios.

Cheers,

Uncle Bob