

## LAX Adventure Redux 2008.

I was asked to bring my Ercoupe back into LAX for the '40s-themed FedEx Family Day again this year.

Yesterday was indeed an adventure! LAX Tower gave me a whole different approach than what was done last year. I was told to go right over the top of LAX and maintain 2000'. When I was somewhere between the dead center of the airport and mid-field 24L, they suddenly said to "enter base for 24L if able, cleared to land 24L."

I had to fly a tight u-turn of a L-base-to-final while dropping 2000' fast; that turn was at maybe 3/8 of the way down 24L already. My airspeed was over 100 on the descent, even with the power cut, so I was momentarily worried about being able to slow down fast enough to make the landing (would have \*hated\* to have to go-around at LAX!!) But my 'Coupe did its thing of dropping like a rock when I pulled the nose up, and slowed down enough. So while the landing was a touch faster than I prefer, it was smooth, and even the last 1/4 of LAX's huge runway was enough.

The event site (FedEx maintenance hanger) was near the west end of 24L, so it was pretty convenient, and landing 24L avoided having to taxi all across the airport around jumbo jets like we did last year.

Overall, I rather like that way of getting in; but, if I had it to do over again, I would have preferred to start from nearer to the numbers &/or lower altitude!

In addition to the Stearman, my 'Coupe, and FedEx's own planes, 4 Thunder Delfin experimental jets flew in to display, piloted by Doug Gillis, Mike Mangold (2007 Red Bull champion: <http://video.aol.com/video-detail/red-bull-air-race-pilot-mike-mangold/392683932>), Don\_\_\_\_, and another pilot whose name I didn't get.

In fact, 1.3 hrs. of our pilots' conference call with LAX Tower on Friday morning included several FAA officials and revolved around whether the experimentals would be allowed at LAX, and if so, where to route them to best "avoid populated areas." Interesting listening to the bureaucrats on that one. The decision was for them to fly to the Malibu area and come in from Santa Monica. However, what actually happened threw all that out: Mike Mangold told me at the event that they were told at the last minute to extend downwind...and went almost to the 710 Fwy. before being cleared to land! (BTW, Mangold was a total gentleman in approaching me & the Stearman pilot at the event and apologizing very nicely for the conference call having dragged on so long while we two smaller planes just waited.)

The Delfins are Czeck-made, from the 1960s, and were fighter planes for Russia and most of the Eastern bloc; however, he said the hassle of certification in the U.S. makes them all choose to fly as "experimental" here.

The FedEx people at the event were wonderful, as before, and again one of them was sent to help guard my 'Coupe. He happened to be a senior mechanic, and taught me a lot while looking over my plane. FedEx gave the pilots souvenir jackets before leaving, and a lot of fun memories. It was a good day.

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