

## Borrego Springs Airport, February 21, 2009

Open house with fuel @ \$2.50 per gallon (Acrobatic flying)

Saturday morning was hazy, so I dawdled a bit, awaiting more clearing. While doing pre-flight at TOA around 11:30, Ed Solbach came over and introduced himself. We had talked on the phone briefly last summer, but not met. Ed is with the Army Corps of Engineers, and bought an Ercoupe in the Northwest a couple of years ago, while home on leave from Iraq. He & his wife Susie were transferred to L.A. last August, and Ed is awaiting completion of his Ercoupe's restoration before it comes down to L.A., so Ed can start flight lessons. Our conversation revealed that his Ercoupe's N-number and serial number are one digit off from mine: they were assembly-line siblings!! So of course I invited Ed to ride along on the flight out to Borrego Valley (L08). It was the first flight he's had in the L.A. area.

We flew the shoreline until just past SNA, then inland toward French Valley, passing south of it, and almost directly East from there up into the mountains. That was a very pretty area, with some snow-topped peaks at about our level. Then with GPS & charts, we found which valley descended from there toward Borrego Springs, and followed it down, hugging the hills on the West side, as Dan had suggested, to avoid the aerobatic box active to the north of Borrego Valley airport, and approached it from the South.

It was a VERY busy little airport, out there in the middle of nowhere, due to the offer of self-serve avgas for \$2.50/gal., and the aerobatic displays plus a few vintage autos. Doubtless due to the late hour, we didn't see any other Ercoupes, but there was still plenty to look at, and a pleasant cafe/bar with a front-row window on the aerobatic box. When it became time to go, the line of airplanes awaiting the fuel pump took 30 minutes -- and this was when the attendants said "this has quieted-down, you should have seen it earlier!" The Cherokee ahead of me brought fuel cans to fill up, in addition to the plane, and I began to be concerned about getting back to TOA before end-of-civil-twilight. We finally got out about 4 p.m., departing in-between the stream of aircraft still arriving.

The flight home was smooth and pleasant, under high overcast, with the setting sun occasionally reflecting off the ocean, and we made it back to TOA with 35 min. to spare. That Borrego Springs area of mountains & valleys surrounding the Salton Sea looks worth further exploring.

Linda Abrams