My “MOREY’S WEST COAST ADVENTURES” Adventure
By John Sanders

I had this trip on my radar for quite some time…more than 10 years.

Back when I was in the early days of my flight training, somewhere around 2007, I was always looking for a new and more interesting way to become a better pilot. During my endless hours of browsing the web, I came across a website…Field Morey’s West Coast Adventures. If you want to read about Field Morey, you can search his name and you’ll get tons of information, or his website is www.ifrwest.com.

I would check his website a couple times a year and yearn for the time when I had the time and the funds to partake in one of his flying adventures.

On March 7-11, 2020, I finally took the plunge…yes, right before the wrath of Covid-19 came upon all of us.

I chose the Southwest Mountain Adventure. This adventure is four days of IFR flights in a 2015 Corvalis TTx. We flew about five hours a day, into some challenging airports, both controlled and uncontrolled.

Field’s Corvalis TTx is a FIKI-certified, turbocharged aircraft with a FL250 service ceiling. The avionics include Garmin G2000 flight deck, Garmin GTC 570 TouchPad, and Garmin GFC700 autopilot, along with other bells and whistles. It is a really cool aircraft.

One flight would be in the flight levels; most flights we used oxygen; several flights involve mountain flying; and most of the flights were over some amazing terrain. I purposely chose to fly in March so I could experience some real-world weather flying. The timing for weather was good…there was quite a bit of it on two of the four days.

I arrived on a Saturday at Noon at Medford, OR. Field met me at the airport terminal and took me to his FBO to do some paperwork and an intro to his aircraft.

We spent about an hour inside the cockpit going over the avionics. Fortunately, most of the gear I was very familiar with after having been checked out in a G1000 many years ago and co-owing our beloved C182RG, N756RA, with its Garmin glass cockpit and GTN750 GPS. I found the G2000 and the GTC570 TouchPad very intuitive and was able to navigate it quite easily. The GFC700 autopilot takes a little more time to navigate but becomes second nature after a few flights.

After reviewing the cockpit equipment, we took N241FR for a trip in the pattern at Medford airport. We only did one round in the pattern as Field was confident I could handle his aircraft. We taxied back and parked the aircraft.

He took me to my hotel and later I met up with he and his wife for dinner on Saturday night. Our first day of flying would start early on Sunday.

Field picked me up from my hotel and we went to his FBO where we broke out our IPads and began planning the routes for each of the four flights for the day. When Foreflight provides you with route

options, I would rattle them off to Field and he would advise me on which routes we will be taking…from memory. Field has done these trips many times.

N241FR—2015 Corvalis TTx

On Sunday morning, we filed four IFR flight plans for that days' flying. Here are the Sunday flights:

1. Medford (MFR) to Lake Tahoe (TVL), FL190, LDA/DME-1 18; land and taxi back
2. Lake Tahoe (TVL) to Reno (RNO), 13,000, ILS, missed approach
3. Reno (RNO) to Elko (EKO), 15,000, RNAV 06, land and have lunch
4. Elko (EKO) to Salt Lake City (SLC), 15,000, ILS 17, land and park

We were following a storm which had passed through a day earlier. On the way into SLC, we picked up some trace rime ice as we descended on the approach. No issues…other than seeing it on the wings, the aircraft handled it with ease. We stayed overnight at an SLC airport. We met up for dinner and discussed our next day of flying. I logged 2.5 hours of actual on Sunday.

Monday's flights and approaches were going to be more challenging. We were headed to several mountain airports in the Rockies. As was the usual plan, we met up early to review the routes and weather and to file the IFR flight plans. The storm we were following was well east of our future positions so most of the flying would be VFR although we filed IFR. This gave me a chance to check out some beautiful scenery.

Here are the Monday Flights:

1. Salt Lake City (SLC) to Grand Junction (GJT), 11,000, ILS 11, land and taxi back
2. Grand Junction (GJT) to Aspen (ASE), 15,000, LOC/DME-E, land and lunch
3. Aspen (ASE) to Telluride (TEX), 16,000, RNAV Z 09, land and taxi back
4. Telluride (TEX) to Page (PGA), 14,000, RNAV 15, Missed
5. Page (PGA) to Sedona (SEZ), 16,000, GPS 03, land and park

If you get a chance to do some mountain flying around the Rockies during winter, I highly recommend it. There are some amazing views which you can only get from flying in the mid-teens. Flying in and out of

Aspen was incredible. You come in very high and must chop and drop significantly to make the approach…and they have planes taking off in the same direction in which you are coming in on the approach. It is a well-choreographed process and the tower and ATC make it sound easy. My approach into Aspen was in VFR conditions. I can only imagine how hairy it would be in low IMC conditions… hence why you must brief the chart and know your missed approach point and missed approach procedure like the back of your hand. There's little or no room for error in a fast-moving aircraft. I logged 0.4 of actual on Monday.

Shortly after departing SLC on the way to Grand Junction

Departing Aspen, in the distance, on the way to Telluride

At Telluride Airport

On approach to Sedona Airport, in the distance

Tuesday was going to be our second day of significant weather. The irony is our experience with the most significant weather was going to occur in my home base of flying…Southern California. Many of you may remember the storms which came through SoCal on Tuesday, March 10th…lots of moderate to intense precip, some convective activity, of course, some low-level turbulence and all kinds of LLWS. And because of the storm's path, nearly all the approaches were switched to the east-facing runways.

We woke up to rainy, cold weather in Sedona. The freezing level was right at 10,000 feet. Having a turbocharged aircraft allowed us to fly higher if we needed to, to get above the clouds.

When I asked Field what his most important asset for an aircraft when flying in the weather, he said his number one item was having a turbocharged aircraft to climb above the weather. It has been his experience that icing occurs in 1,000-3,000-foot layers. If he had to request a flight level change to get out of icing, he would request a 4,000-foot flight level change. And he says he would only request it twice. If after climbing a total of 8,000 feet, he was still flying in visible moisture, his plan would be to deviate from his current flight and land somewhere to wait it out.

We chose to fly to our next destination at 10,000 feet. If we needed to climb to 14,000 or 18,000 feet, we could if we needed to.

Here are our Tuesday flights:

1. Sedona (SEZ) to Big Bear (L35), 10,000, RNAV 26 land and taxi back
2. Big Bear (L35) to Camarillo (CMA), 14,000, GPS 08, land and have lunch
3. Camarillo (CMA) to Santa Barbara (SBA), 4,000, GPS 07, land and taxi back
4. Santa Barbara (SBA) to Santa Maria (SMA), 6,000, LOC/DME-BC, land and park

Landing at Big Bear was a bitch. It was very turbulent, as the storm was just coming in over the ridge. We quickly fueled and headed back out on runway 8 in VFR to conditions to pick-up our IFR clearance to Camarillo. If we arrived 30 minutes later, chances are we would have had to go missed there as the weather was going to be worse there as the day went on. It was a very quick IN and OUT of L35.

After Camarillo, we were originally going to do an approach into Catalina. However, due to the low-IFR at AVX and the low-altitude flying over the ocean to get there, we decided to stay closer to land and do two approaches into Santa Barbara…first one would be missed, and then fly the full missed approach and hold procedure, followed by a second approach to a full-stop landing. Unfortunately, SoCal Tracon said they could not comply with our full missed approach and hold procedure request, so we just flew the GPS 07 into SBA for a full stop landing and then continued with our last flight of the day into Santa Maria. I should note after lunch in Camarillo, we stayed grounded for about 90 minutes, as the last storm which passed through was headed to Santa Barbara with intense precip and convective activity between CMA and SBA. Once the severe weather passed, we were on our way…but we still flew in hard IMC, with turbulence, and moderate precip the entire way. Was a great real-world weather flying experience that day. I logged 2.6 hours of actual on Tuesday and I logged three actual instrument approaches into CMA, SBA and SMX.

Departure day from Sedona…cold, rainy and windy

Heading west to begin the approach into Big Bear

Wednesday was our last day of flying. It would take us up the CA coast to NorCal and finally back to Medford. Most of the weather had passed. We had a little bit of it when leaving Santa Maria, but after about 10 min of IFR, we were VFR for remainder of flights.

Here are the Wednesday flights:

1. Santa Maria (SMX) to Monterey, (MRY), 6,000, RNAV-Y 28L, land and taxi back
2. Monterey (MRY) to Half Moon Bay (HAF), 6,000, GPS 30 missed
3. Half Moon Bay (HAF) to Santa Rosa (STS), 6,000, LOC/DME BC-B, land and lunch
4. Santa Rosa (STS) to Arcata (ACV), 10,000, GPS 32, land and taxi back
5. Arcata (ACV) to Medford (MFR), 11,000, LOC/DME-BC-B, land and park

I logged 0.2 hours of actual on the Wednesday flights and I logged one actual instrument approach into ACV. I was told the Arcata airport was built pre- or during WW2 in the location where it is due to it being always covered by low clouds. I guess that would make it hard for our enemies at the time to see what the military was doing underneath them. When I first checked the weather to Arcata that morning, VV was 200 feet…right at minimums. The VV was 300 feet when I did the approach a couple hours later. It was a cool airport to fly into.

We finished the day doing a BC approach into Medford. We arrived about 2pm on Wednesday…in plenty of time to debrief, fill out and sign the logbook, say our goodbye's and catch my flight home at 5:40pm.

On approached into Half Moon Bay

On approach into Arcata

On the way to Medford

This few days of flying around the western US with Field Morey was a bucket list item I was fortunate to fulfill. In the end I logged 22 hours of flying a high-performance, turbocharged, TAA, logged 5.7 hours of actual instrument training and with it, some real-world weather, along with 4 approaches in actual instrument conditions. I could have chosen to do any of the approaches in simulated conditions if I chose to wear my foggles, but there was too much to look at outside, and I didn't want to miss it 😊!!

I was Field Morey's 457th trip of his West Coast Adventures. He is 84 years old and has amassed over 40,000 hours of flying How many chances may one get to fly with a legendary flight instructor such as Field? I'm certainly happy I did.