



Carole and Cliff Van Vleet



Larry and Charlotte Portouw



Claire and Terry Karlson



Dave and Sally Luse



Charlotte and Jim Garner



Steve and Shirley Shepherd



Barb and Adrian Geiger



Cindy and Doug Conger (from Grand Canyon: Sorry)



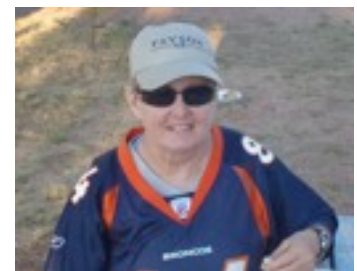
Deborah and Kent O'Kelly



Carolyn and Tom Gifford



Jim and Donna Lambert



Julie Walker

**2011
Southwest
Regional Arizona**

We started in Winslow at the LaPosada Hotel, wonderfully restored hotel designed in 1930 by Mary Colter. It was a Harvey hotel that was built by the railroad as a destination for relaxation, seeing, and being seen. After a successful career, the hotel fell on hard times and was turned into some sort of office building, with the rooms chopped up into small rooms and cubicles. It was bought in the 1990s and restored to its original charm. If you drive Interstate 40 across northern Arizona and have some time to spare, stay there a day or two. You'll be glad you did.

We arrived in Winslow at the moment that the town was celebrating the opening of a new intersection downtown. It was a big event, with the fire department, the mayor, and many towns folks attending the ribbon cutting. Free hot dogs and beans were another attraction. We joined them and had fun doing it.

We then drove/flew to Payson, AZ. More about that on a later page.

A Dilemma

Cliff and Carole Van Vleet organized the regional. Things were going smoothly: the airport at Payson had a good restaurant, an even better campground, a motel nearby and a co-operative attitude. Jim and Charlotte Garner, who live in Payson and have a business on the airport, were our prime movers at the airport and had organized things for us and were ready for our arrival. The LaPosada Hotel in Winslow was set to receive us, and at very reasonable rates, at that.

Then on Monday, before our gathering in Winslow on Wednesday, a dilemma. The airport had contracted for runway work, and had to close the airport on Thursday and Friday. Cliff called around, looking for another location that could work. He considered calling the whole thing off. With good ideas (and some lousy ones) from several of us, he decided that we would go ahead. Those driving, flying in on Wednesday, or flying commercially to Phoenix wouldn't be affected. Our flyers trying to arrive on Thursday or Friday would have to fly to Cottonwood, about an hour's drive away and one of us would pick them up.

And, that's the way it worked out. Two flyers (one airplane) landed in Cottonwood. Two more arrived late Friday evening. More about these later.

The work at the airport consisted of lights at each end of the runway plus some work between the runway and taxiway about halfway down the runway. This latter task is probably what shut the place down. Maybe they could stand to have airplanes land and take off over the work at the ends of the runway, but couldn't chance someone veering off the runway at its midpoint...???

Jim and Donna Lambert

Jim and Donna thought they were going to arrive at Payson on Thursday. They didn't. With the airport closed, they put down at Cottonwood. Jim Garner drove over to collect them. The airplane arrived later, as we'll see.

In the middle of Friday night, Jim became quite ill. Fortunately, Claire Karlson was there and, without going into detail, she, Donna, and Terry took Jim to the hospital. Turns out that Jim had a gall stone literally the size of a golf ball. An operation on Sunday removed the gall stone. Everyone was helpful, of course.



Shortening the story a bit, on Tuesday Jim and Donna Lambert flew their airplane to Las Vegas.

Wait a minute...thought the airplane was in Cottonwood. It was. Jim Garner flew Tom Gifford, Terry Karlson, and Steve Shepherd to Cottonwood. Tom and Terry flew the Warrior to Payson. We gave Tom a 10 for the landing and a 10 for length of float down the runway. Not bad for a first landing in an airplane.

Steve and Shirley Shepherd

Steve and Shirley spent more time in Santa Rosa, New Mexico than they did in Payson. They thought they would arrive in Payson on Thursday. They made a weather stop in Santa Rosa, and it took two days to get out of town. They flew to St. John, Arizona and had to sit down again. Seems that the Payson airport still wasn't open. We were all at dinner Friday evening and watched them land. Nice landing, Steve. They were with us Friday night and Saturday. Everybody split on Sunday morning.

The Crater

The airport re-opened Saturday morning. Work was still going on at both ends of the runway, but they displaced the threshold, allowing more or less normal operations to resume. We had planned a flight to the meteor crater just southwest of Winslow, so three airplanes took off. Jim Garner flew with Dave Luse in his Cessna 206. Cliff Van Vleet and Terry Karlson flew in Cliff's pretty red and white Tripacer, and Larry Portouw flew his Tripacer with Kent O'Kelly. We flew north over what is said to be the largest continuous ponderosa pine forest in the world...and this in Arizona. It extends east to New Mexico.

As we flew north, the forest returned to desert and, as we passed Winslow, we flew over the Painted Desert (to the right, more or less). It didn't look painted to us with the light we had that day. It just looked like more desert.

We turned southwest and flew toward the meteor crater near Winslow. The crater was formed about 50,000 years ago when a 54 yard (50 m) diameter iron-nickel meteor hit the plain at something like 28,600 mph (12.8 km/sec). That's moving. The meteor weighed about 300,000 metric tons, but the bulk was vaporized before it hit the ground.

The crater is about 4,000 feet (1,200 m) in diameter and 570 feet (170 m) deep, so there was a lot of the meteor left when it hit the ground.



The Dedication

As we pulled into Winslow, we came upon a town celebration. The celebration? They had built a new intersection with a traffic light. The mayor was there, along with a fire truck and some of their police force. They had a free food buffet. Free food? That's what we're all about. So we joined them. We love small towns. Things that we take for granted are important and fun for them. So we joined the fun and helped them celebrate.



LaPosada

Claire Karlson sent out her special newsletter describing the LaPosada Hotel in Winslow. If you missed it, go to the Arizona chapter section of the SWPC website. I won't repeat what she wrote, but here's a small addition.

The hotel was a Harvey House hotel, built in 1930. Winslow was the Arizona headquarters of the Santa Fe railroad, hence the choice of Winslow for the site. The elegant ceilings and arches were fortunately covered over rather than totally destroyed when they later turned it into an office building.

La Posada opened May 15, 1930, just after the stock market crash of 1929, and remained open for just 27 years. In 1957, the hotel closed to the public. The museum-quality furnishings were auctioned off in 1959. In the early 1960s, much of the building was gutted and transformed into offices for the Santa Fe Railway. Several times over the ensuing 40 years, the building was nearly demolished, as recently as 1994 when the railway announced its plans to move out for good.

Enter Allen Affeldt and his wife Tina Mion. With another partner, they restored the hotel to its former elegance at room rates equal to those charged by the national motel chains which I often say are designed by accountants, not interior designers. If you drive across northern AZ on I-40, stop for a day or two at the hotel.

Business Meeting

Our "business meeting" found all of us who were there standing around a picnic table in the camping area. The agenda? One item: where do we go next year? We had two suggested venues: Denver and Silver City, New Mexico. Denver narrowly won, so we decided to select the next two years: 2012 in Denver, 2013 in Silver City. We decided to stay with September for the regional, at least for 2012. April and May are very "iffy" weather-wise in Denver. We could do it in August, but it's hot and bumpy in August. An earlier month might compete with our annual International SWPC convention, something we're not about to do. So, we're on a path to get together in Denver, September 12-15, 2012...or whatever part of that time you can spare.

We'll likely use Centennial Airport and the Holiday Inn there. Remember our international convention in 1999? The "problem" with Denver is that there are too many things to do. So, we'll likely do two events away from the hotel/airport, leaving us time for our favorite pastime: being with and talking to friends. Examples of things we can do (and none of these have been coordinated with anyone as of this writing).

- 1) Tour of Univair (I've done this many times and never tire of it)
- 2) Lowry Aircraft Museum, which has many aircraft: from a Kitfox to a B-1 bomber
- 3) Platte Valley airport museum, which has the largest collection of World War I uniforms in the world + many newer things, such as Jimmy Doolittle's uniform and medal of honor
- 4) An afternoon or evening program featuring a video of a talk by Bill Bowers that I made at an EAA meeting. Bill piloted bomber 12 off the Hornet on his way to Tokyo. Bill left us last year.
- 5) 1800s narrow gauge railroad and gold mine in the mountains at Georgetown. (My grandfather had a gold mine in Georgetown in the 1880s.) Maybe some gold panning, Cliff. As a bonus, depending on whether we have a freeze in the mountains before our gathering, we'll see some of the aspen colors.

6) As an additional bonus, we'll have an optional evening of dixieland on Sunday. The Queen City Jazz Band is featured on the third Sunday of each month. There's none better in the US that I've heard, including New Orleans. Deborah and I have been listening to them off and on since 1957.



Under the trees at Payson. Our "meeting" was held at a picnic table vaguely visible in the background.

Pictures below:

- Our four Tripacers plus some us looking them over. Jim Lambert's warrior and Jim Garner's 206 are parked elsewhere. Tom and Carolyn Gifford's RV is parked above the Tripacer. Was great to see both of them again.
- Our meeting. Democracy in action.
- The cowboy western band. Many thanks to Jim and Charlotte for bringing us the band and for so many other things.



