

Aria Yow

Jon Pittman Makes an Angel Flight

On June 16, 2007 Jon Pittman and I flew on a four-hour, three-leg journey between Petaluma, Fresno and Sacramento. While I acted as the “mission assistant,” Jon piloted his own 2002 Cirrus SR-22. We were on a mission for [Angel Flight West](#) bringing two girls home to Sacramento from summer camp in Fresno. The girls, Lacrosha (10 years old) and Erin (17 years old) had just attended [Champ Camp](#), a camp specifically for young burn survivors.

Angel Flight arranges free air transportation for low-income individuals for medical treatment and other events. Angel Flight makes these arrangements when the individuals can not afford to purchase commercial tickets or when ground travel would present a hardship for them. Jon is a frequent “angel” for Angel Flight. Previously, Jon has flown with two other ‘Desker “mission assistants:” Anne Marie Reidel and Bill Rus.

Anne Marie has gone on four Angel Flights with Jon, including missions to both Champ Camp and [Camp Pacifica](#), for hearing impaired children. She says, “It’s amazing to be able to fly with Jon, and to do something good at the same time.” In the first photo, she is with Eric, whom Jon and Anne Marie took home after his Camp Pacifica session. In the second photo, she is shown with cancer survivor David and his mother Linda, before they dropped David off for treatment at Children’s Hospital Oakland. This mission took place in December of 2006, which explains Anne Marie’s headwear.

Anne Marie says some of her Angel Flight missions have been “bittersweet.” On one mission, Jon and Anne Marie transported a 17-year old cancer survivor who had recently been declared cancer free. Despite this excellent news, the experience was tinged with a little sadness. The young man wanted to be a pilot, but had had part of his leg amputated because of the cancer.

Jon is an experienced, instrument-rated pilot with a commercial license. Jon has had many other kinds of training, including high-performance aircraft, mountain and seaplane. Jon enjoys flying missions for Angel Flight because he “gets to do what he likes to do and help people at the same time. Having a ‘mission’ is better than just flying recreationally.” Jon adds that his passengers are “always really grateful.”

I myself was grateful for our mission for two reasons: Lacrosha and Erin were very sweet and their families were thrilled to have them home again. I was also grateful to have the chance be in a small plane again, after an absence of exactly 15 years. On July 29, I will fly with Jon on another Angel Flight mission, to [Camp Pacifica](#) near Yosemite. Serving as a mission assistant has truly been a rewarding experience. Anne Marie advised me not to “get too used to it.” I’ll try not to, but the feeling was pretty compelling.

