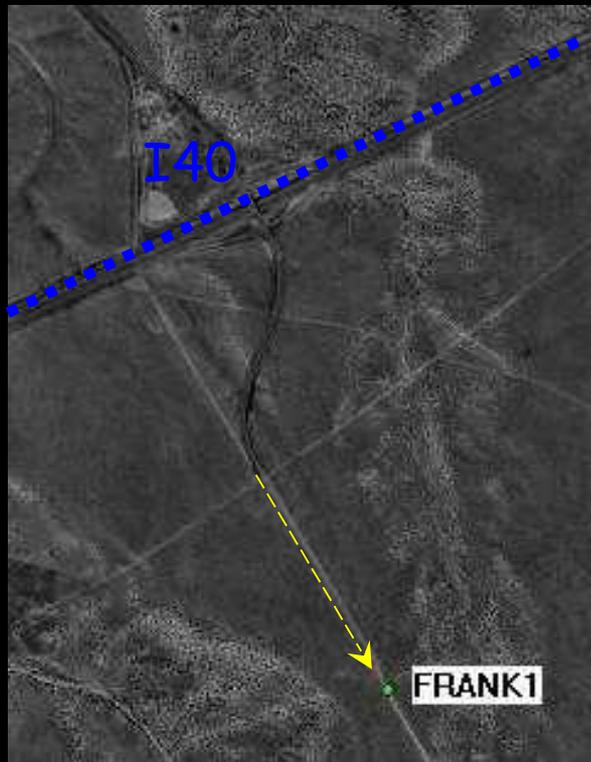


Sunday, October 24, 2004  
13th Cobra flight, 23th solo  
Half way to Taos, 4 Landings

Launched 7:30 am, Landing 11:30am, XC distance 170 miles  
Flight time: 3:40 Total logged time: 48:25  
Launch: Dead calm Landing: Light down 03, thermally

I figure I can comfortably reach Taos (200 miles XC from Belen) without refueling. I have been using the SmartSingle FF1 fuel flow meter to monitor my fuel consumption and have been averaging 2.5 gals/hr. The FF1 uses a small propeller in the fuel line to count every drop that is burned. I have noticed how a small change in throttle setting will drop my burn rate several tenths of gal/hour with a small loss of airspeed. Last week I solved the mystery of the large fuel tank by draining the tank dry and refilling it, discovering that the Cobra has a 20 gal fuel tank, not 14 as expected. Nice. Assuming a 2 gallon reserve, that gives me an endurance of 7.2 hours. With a cruise speed of 50 mph, I can go 360 miles!



Frank needs a refueling stop (not to mention a pit-stop or two) to get to Taos. His trike has a 10 gallon tank, and he is burning between 2.5 and 3 gals/hr, giving him a range of  $(10-2)/3*50 = 133$  miles. For a comfortable margin, he would like to refuel about every 100 miles. When I first pitched the Taos trip to Frank, he mentioned a possible refueling stop, on the east side I-25, at the Santa Domingo Pueblo exit. It's one of those typical New Mexico off ramps to nowhere. I called this spot (conveniently located about the halfway point to Taos), the Frank Demsey Airport. About a month ago, I drove to the "runway" and checked it out. It's a smooth, hard packed stretch of dirt road, with a gentle up hill slope, and no fences or signs on the side of the road.

This flight we would check out Dempsey Airport, and if we had time, make a short hop to Tetilla, a favorite hanggliding site I flew 15 years ago (now closed).

Launch Code Double Eagle predicted 3 or 4 mph the night before. Frank came by my house at 5:30AM. We loaded my old Sensor510B hangglider on his truck. Amy has wanted me to get rid of my old hangglider for years, she wants the storage space in the garage. I told her I would move the Sensor to the museum (hanger). I worry now that she has discovered the storage capacity of the hanger.

I have noticed that if I do anything new or different, I burn an extra 15 minutes. Well this time, we did three or four different things: met at my house, stopped for snack at the gas station, load and unload the glider. No surprisingly, we didn't get into the air at 6:45 as planned. It took us till 7:25 to launch. The winds were dead calm. Tried the video camera a third time with a gripping pad for the control bar to give the clamp a nice solid attachment. Got some nice video this time.

We flew along the chain of volcanoes again, dipped into the Rio Puerco valley and landed at the PPC field north of I-40. After a pit stop, we headed north up the valley then turned east to Rio Rancho.



PPC field (arrow showing approach)



Frank leaving the PPC site



There were about 7 balloons over in the desert NW of Rio Rancho. I flew by these two in the pict to the left. The other 5 were in a line to the right.

I circled this one then headed on towards the Rio Grande.





Frank was a little disappointed when I told him over the radio Tetilla was that tiny bump in the distance. We flew on to the Coronado ruins, then up the Rio Grande Bosque, with the cottonwoods in full autumn colors.

Santa Ana Resort



Detail of ruins

Coronado State Park





The Santa Ana Casino Resort looked like a castle on the Rio Grande. These fairways were begging to be used as emergency LZs.

Rio Grande with volcanic mesas on the west bank. On my return, I flew over these mesas.



The stretch of dirt road below is the Frank Dempsey Airport. It's was a perfect refueling spot, halfway between Taos from Belen.

We landed and pulled off to the side of the road while Frank refueled. It took us 2 hrs to get here, and it was getting late in the morning (9:30am).



We decided to head on home, skipping a trip further north to Tetilla Peak. We'll do that another day.

Looking north along the Rio Grande towards Santa Domingo Pueblo, Jemez mountains in left background.



I flew over the mesas west of San Felipe Pueblo, and headed towards the Jemez reservoir. Sandia mountains on the horizon, to the left.



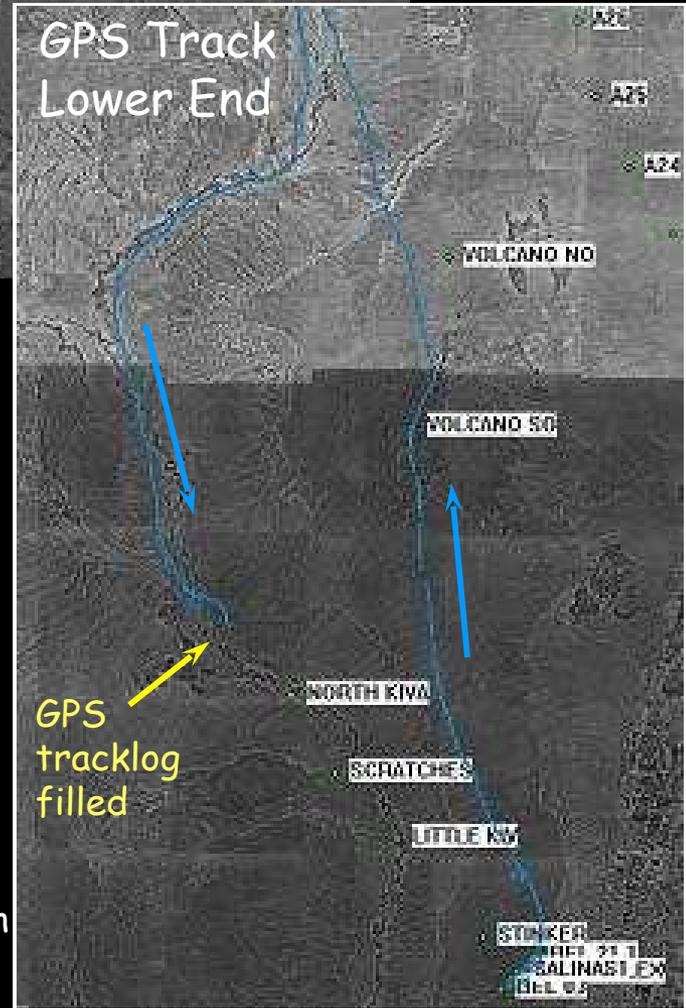
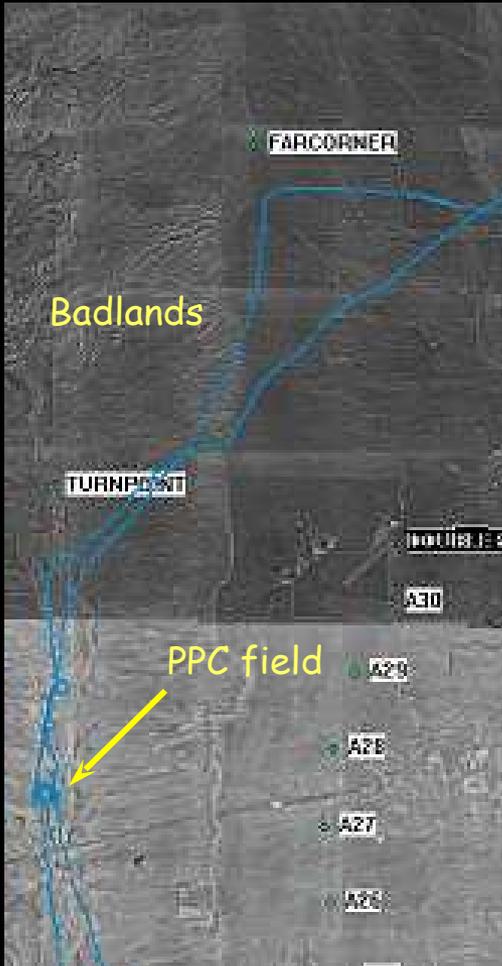
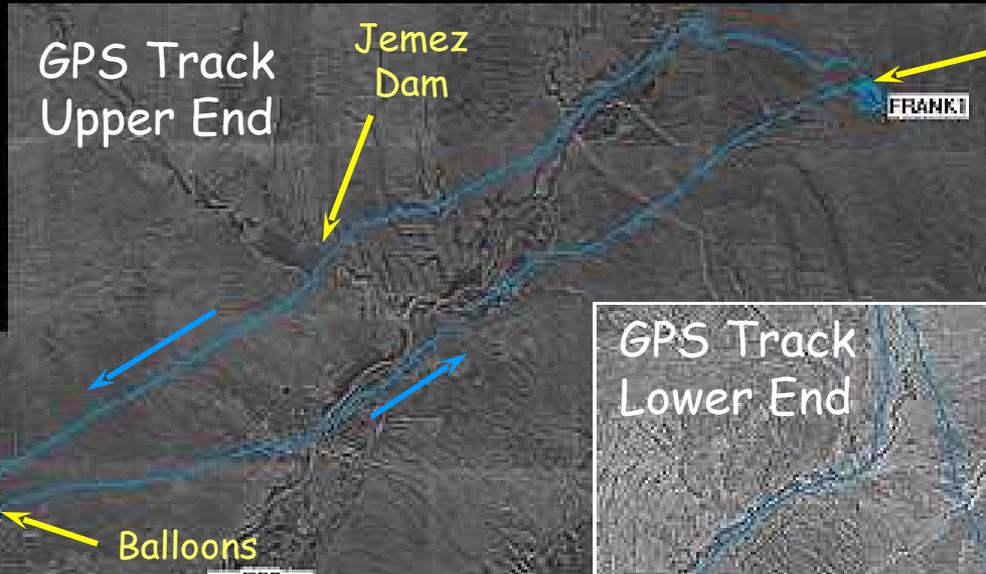
Jemez Reservoir (bone dry empty because of the drought).



I crossed over the desert and entered the Rio Puerco valley over these badlands. I made another landing at the PPC site, then headed on south. Paced a freight train (200 ft over) for a while, then on to the Belen airport.

Robert was in the pattern with a student. The three of us (Robert, Jeff, Frank) landed in a row at Belen.

This is my longest flight to date, so long it filled my track log. The GPS trip odometer logged 194 miles. Nice Long Flight.



GPS wheels up logs

Belen take off	7:24
PPC landing	8:05
PPC takeoff	8:12
Dempsey Field landing	9:18
Dempsey Field takeoff	9:32
PPC landing	10:40
PPC takeoff	10:45
Belen landing	11:30
Total wheels up time	3hrs 40min