

Wednesday, November 3, 2004
15th Cobra flight, 25th solo
Evening Manzanos, 6 Landings

Launched 3:45 pm, Landing 5:40pm
Flight time: 1:55 Total logged time: 53:50
Launch: Dead calm 03 Landing: Dead calm, night, 03

Left early from work. Launch Code was predicting light winds in the afternoon. Met Frank and drove down to Belen at 3:15. Launched at 3:45. The plan to fly along the Manzano foothills, then head back and land a little after sunset. I took off first, followed by Frank. I was a little bumpy (thermally), but ok. I heard Frank radio that he was landing, his exhaust gas temps were unbalanced. I told him I would follow the Puerco south, then meet him later. Near the observatory, and I heard him launch and land again. He was still having problems.

Black Butte



I told Frank I was heading for Black Butte and the Manzanos, I would meet in the valley later on. I crossed over the to Rio Grande and flew down the valley for a while.

Rio Grande Valley



It was calm, smooth, and peaceful as I cruised over the farms in the valley. You can see the low flow of the Rio Grande in the right side of this picture.



Rio Grande Bosque.

I headed east and passed over this small church, crosses lined up facing the afternoon sun.





Black Butte, with Pinos Mountains in background. Caught a lot of lift as I flew over the top of Black Butte.



The Pinos mountains had these cool looking red cliffs.



Turned north
towards Abo Gap
and the
Manzanos.

As I passed Abo
Gap, I saw these
two railroad
bridges, snaking
up the canyon.

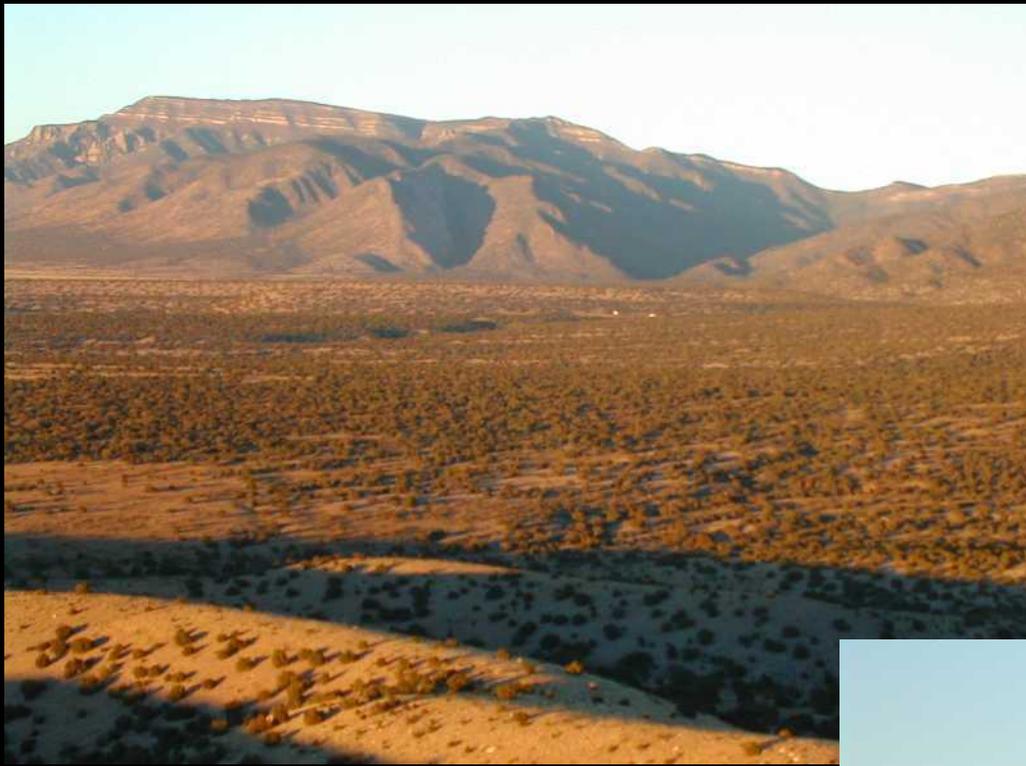


I continued north over the foothills. Frank radioed that he was up in the air again. The problem may have been that he had cleaned his air filters last weekend and one of them had too much oil, restricting the air supply. Everything was ok now.

It was too late for him to come over. I was watching the sun angle and clock carefully. You can fly 30 min after sunset, then the FAA regulations require ultralights to land. You don't want to be up flying at night anyway.



Far to the north I could see the Sandia Mountains. I went around this corner and saw . . .



I cruised over this juniper tree forest, then realized there was no place to land. I took one last look at the ranch house ahead then turned towards clear ground.

The Manzanos are split into a northern and southern range by this canyon (right).

You can cross over here to the other side at the low spot at the rear of the canyon.





Snow from the morning was on the north facing slopes.



Time to head home. The Belen airport was right under the setting sun. Ladron Peak on the horizon.

It was a lot easier on the eyes after sunset. Now I had 30 minutes of airtime left. The airport was 10 minutes away.





Met Frank near the airport. We followed each other in the pattern and I made 3 touch and goes until 5:38pm, 30 minutes after sunset. The air was glassy smooth. I had my top and bottom strobes and landing light on. The landing light made a nice cone on the runway that helped me with depth perception as a touched down. Frank saw me several miles away.

Very mellow enjoyable flight. The only downside was being on the clock and having to land because of darkness.

