

Friday, December 3, 2004
21th Cobra flight, 31th solo
Grand Canyon of the Rio Puerco,
Caldron of Ice, 7 landings

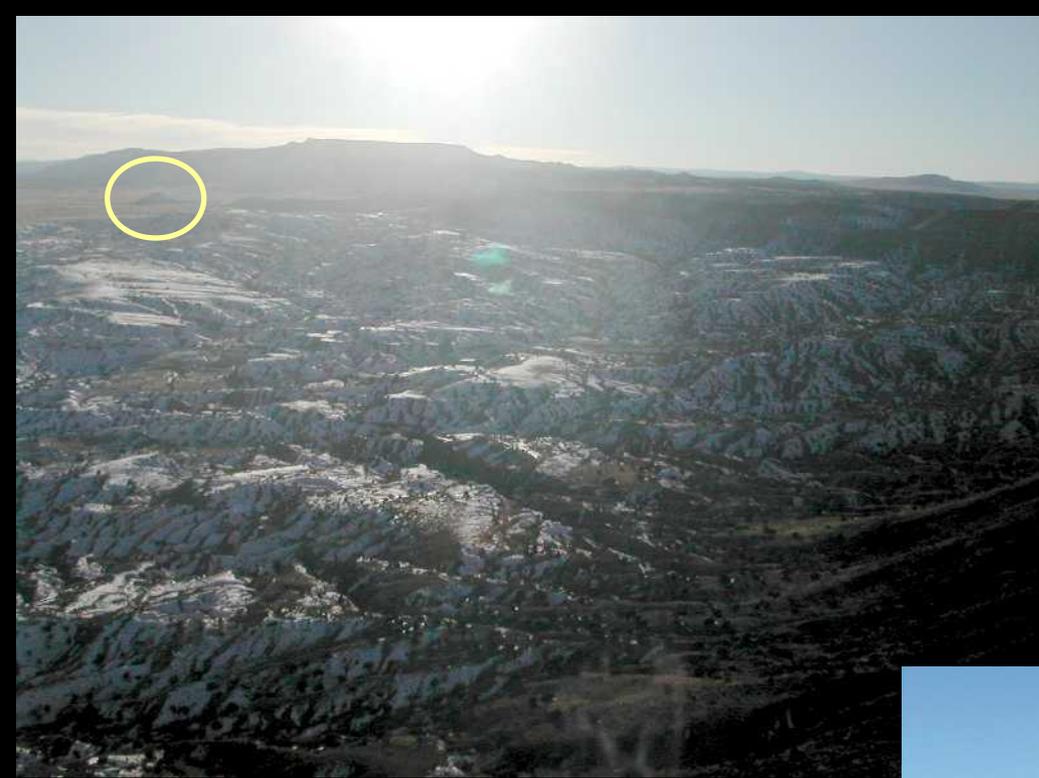
Launched 3:20pm, Landing 5:10pm
Flight time: 1:50 Total logged time: 67:25
Launch: 2 mph on runway 3
Landing: 5 mph on runway 3

I have been anxious to return to the Caldron since last week's flight. Unfortunately, a cold front entered New Mexico, bringing snow and bitter cold temperatures. This afternoon is the first time the temps have reached the mid 40's. Launch Code predicted light winds so I got to Belen early and installed my BRS canister in the trike while it warmed up outside. Not enough time to set up the activation handle or connect the riser to the carriage, but the hard part is done.

Frank arrived later and we launched at 3:20pm to explore the Caldron area. I did two touch and goes to make sure there were no issues with the BRS, then headed out after Frank into the Rio Puerco Valley. The approach was from the south over the flats this time. Frank headed to the west towards the small butte in the center of the pict below. I stayed east and flew up onto the mesa.



Mt
Taylor



The Caldron of Hell had been transformed into a Caldron of Ice.

Frank was far to the west raving about the scenery as he looked down into the icy basin. Click the mouse to find the small butte Frank flew by in the distance (upper right). It would be a while before I flew over there to appreciate his view.

I crossed the gap and followed the narrow bridge mesa around to the left to the upper mesa.





I met up with Frank on the upper mesa. He was having radio problems, the batteries dying in the cold temperatures. His transmitter was only good for one word messages.

Assuming he could hear me, I told him to cross the bridge mesa so I would follow him and capture him on video.





Frank got down low over the bridge, checking it out for a future landing area and camping site.

Here we are heading south, approaching the gap. Look hard and you can find Frank's trike in the pict. Click the mouse for help.





After crossing the gap, we headed out to "The Wall" that forms the eastern boundary of one of the basins. Frank continued over to the butte on the right and on to Belen.

Looking back I took in this spectacular view of the gap and the "Grand Canyon". I wasn't ready to leave just yet.

Plenty of daylight remained, so I turned back and crossed over the gap one last time, then circled around to the west by the route Frank took on the way in.





From the upper mesa looking NW I could see the wide valley I crossed to reach Acoma Pueblo two months ago.

Mt Taylor is on the horizon on the right side.

I approached the small butte that Frank flew over on the way in, then looked back . . .



... into the basin and took in the view Frank saw earlier. The colors were much stronger with the sun behind me. The Sandia Mountains are on the horizon.



With the shadows
were growing longer it
was time to head home.
Flew across the Rio
Puerco valley, checked
out this kiva in sunset.



