

Sunday, January 20, 2008

189<sup>th</sup> Cobra flight, 199<sup>th</sup> PIC, 8 landings

Double Eagle, Target 6, Chimney Rock, Bell Rock, Caldron

Belen Takeoff: 1:17 pm

DE Landing: 2:12pm

DE Takeoff: 2:39 pm

Belen Landing: 5:08pm

Today's Airtime 3.4

GPS odometer 284 miles

Total PIC Time 471.7

Total Logged Time 492.9



I found another "target circle" in the Rio Puerco Basin on Google Earth, and wanted to check it out today. No need to fly at dawn today. I waited for the warmer afternoon temperatures. First stop was a landing at Double Eagle to check in on Frank and his students. Frank was taking one of his students up for a lesson (an 80 year old man with 10 layers of clothing). He said would following me to the Target6 circle. I taxied out and did some touch and goes while waiting for Frank to take off.

I left the pattern when I saw Frank finally rolled out to the runway. I waited at the edge of the escarpment but never saw or heard from him again. It was cold and I figured his student, froze and had to land.

As it turned out, all the layers of clothes made it impossible for the student to hear anything on his headset, and they had to land because of that. Glad I didn't wait more than 10 minutes.



Target6 was not far away, a few miles west of the "first line of cliffs" that come up to the Puerco. Look carefully and you can see the circle in the upper right picture. The road crosses through the center of the circle. This is the 6th WWII era bombing target circle I have found that is within a 50 mile radius of Belen airport. I remember when I found the first circle, I thought it was Stonehenge.

Lower left: I continued west, past this pond which had a layer of ice on the surface.

Lower right: I followed the dirt roads through a maze of sandstone mesas and cliffs.





I saw a truck at the edge of a small canyon in the middle of nowhere. I circled above and saw some people playing around down there.

I wondered what they were up to? Camping, rock climbing, indian ruins?

It was getting late and I turned south towards Belen.



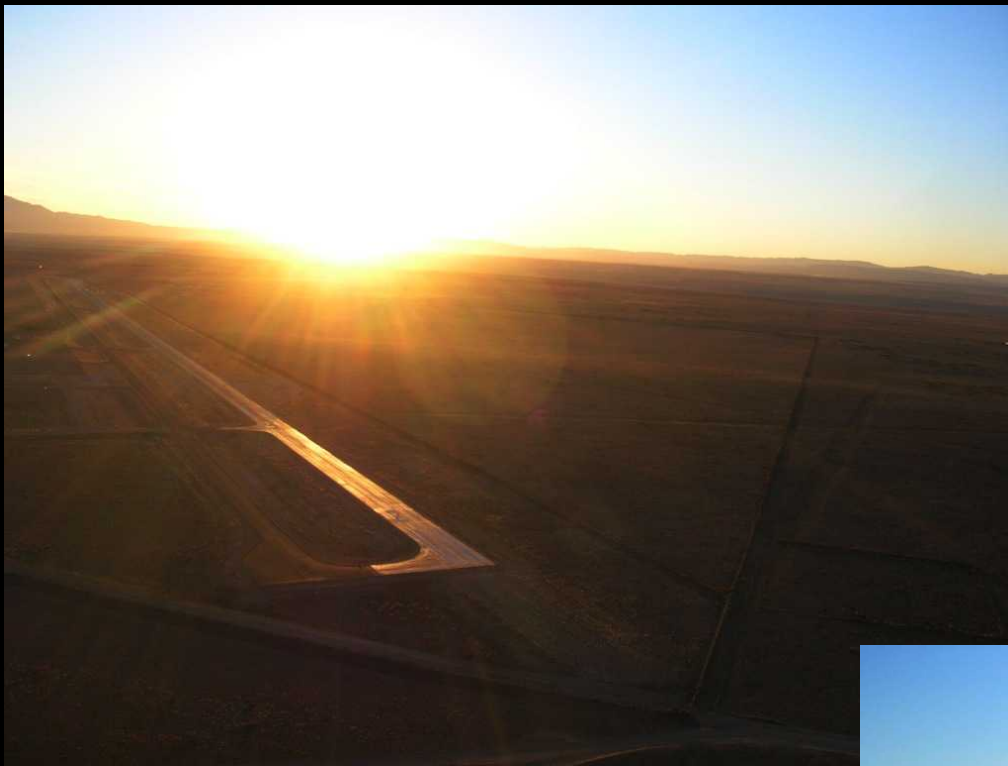
I flew past Chimney Rock and Bell Rock. Bell Rock looks like the Liberty Bell and is visible in the corner of the upper left picture. I continued south to the edge of "Bell Rock Mesa" and flew along the edge. You can see Mt Taylor on the horizon in the upper right picture.

The winds were out of the south, perfect for working the lift. I dropped down and picked up some nice thermals over the lower red sandstone cliffs.

I crossed I-40 and flew along the frozen Rio San Jose (upper right).

Then I climbed the ramping cliffs at the edge of the Caldron of Hell and circled the Caldron for a few times. The conditions were very smooth and mellow today.





I landed at sunset.

It would get very cold soon, so I passed on flying twilight. The two jets on approach to Belen also encouraged me to head back to the hangar and get home at a decent time.



Here is my GPS track. It was a nice long winter flight.

