

Saturday August 28, 2010
329th Cobra flight, 339th PIC, 4 landings
Cruise up and down the Rio Grande

330th Cobra flight, 340th PIC, 1 landing

We were up early and in the car for Cielo Dorado at 5:30am. High altitude clouds had rolled in last night, obscuring any hint of dawn. It was a very dark morning.

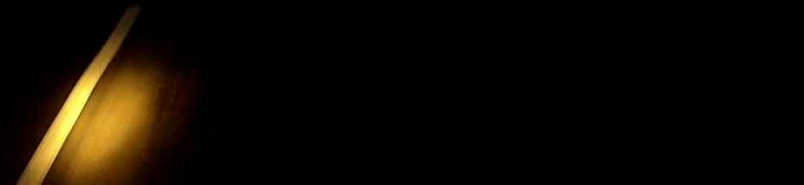
Mark opened the hangar and we quickly packed up and got ready for departure. After starting my engine, I noticed the daughter of the hanger owner watching from behind a fence. Her dad must had instilled the fear of turning props into her from an early age. I was in the air first and turned back for my usual pre XC touch and go.

Cielo Dorado Takeoff: 6:20am Dell City Landing: 8:15am
Dell City Takeoff: 8:45am Carlsbad Landing: 10:09am
Carlsbad Takeoff: 10:52am Lonny's Landing: 12:20pm

Lonny's Takeoff: 5:37pm Lonny's Landing: 6:27pm

Today's Airtime 5.6hrs

Total PIC Time: 873.2 Total Logged Time: 894.4



Upper right: View from my Aiptek video on my touch and go. The bright yellow spot on the right side is the open hangar. It really wasn't that dark.

Lower left: I turned east and saw the Franklin Mountains silhouetted against the morning skies.



My temps were hot again, about where they were yesterday. When I throttled back they dropped to tolerable levels. I flew south a few miles to overfly the cemetery where my parents are buried.

I babied my engine in a slow climb to the top of the Franklin Mountains. As long as we stayed on the west side of the mountain, we would be well clear of ELP Class C airspace. I looked down on Trans-Mountain road (right) which cross the Franklin Mountains.



Upper right: Looking south along the Franklins past El Paso and into Old Mexico.

We flew north to the NM/TX state line then turned east. This put us in a corridor between a restricted area to the north and ELP class C airspace. We dropped down low to 100AGL to stay below any traffic that might be flying this morning.

I diverted to the south a few miles to fly over Hueco Tanks (lower left).

I was surprised how green it was out here (lower right). Instead of the usual mesquite or creosote bushes there were green pastures that extended forever.





Ahead of us were the Cornudas Mountains, a series of conical shaped mountains on the NM/TX state line. From the road between El Paso to the Guadalupe Mountains, they looked like great pyramids on the horizon. I wanted to take a closer look at them and we flew between them.

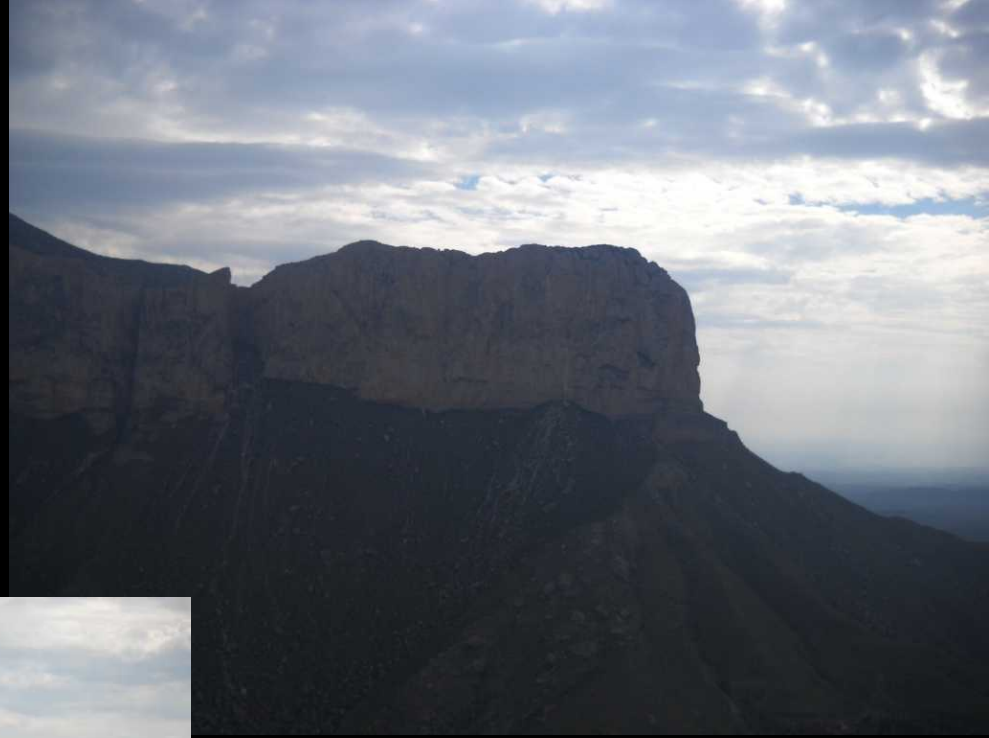
Beyond the Cornudas was Dell City, TX. It had the only paved runway between El Paso and Carlsbad. We took a break here so Paul and Rick could top off their gas tanks with the fuel cans they carried in their back seats.



There wasn't much out here, except for the Salt Flats and a huge wall of rock to the east.



The *Guadalupe Mountains* form a wedge pointing south. Fortunately for us, the wind was blowing out of the south today. That put both sides of the wedge on the windward side. We headed to El Capitan, the cliff face at the southern tip of the *Guadalupe*.





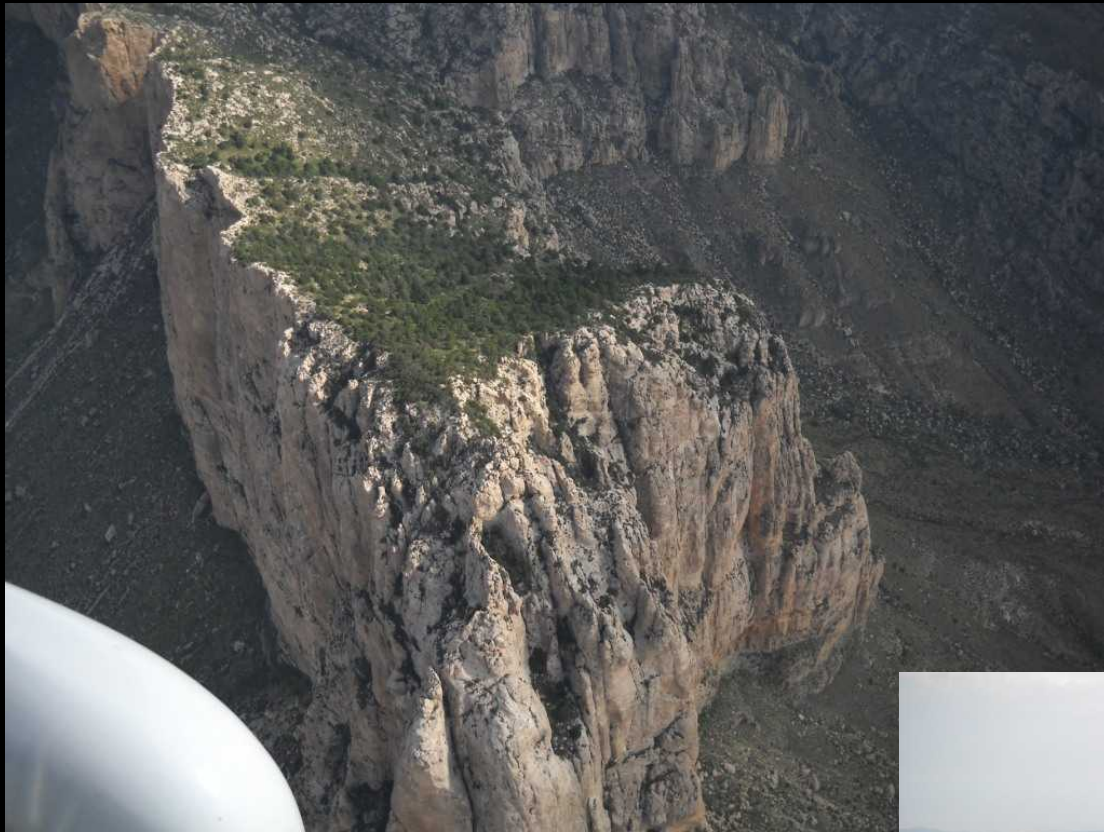
I flew along the western ridge at the edge of a thick pine forest. Paul and Rick came out to join me.



Upper left: Flying next to Rick's Astra trike with the forest on the background.

Lower left, right: Following Rick out to El Capitan at the tip of the wedge.

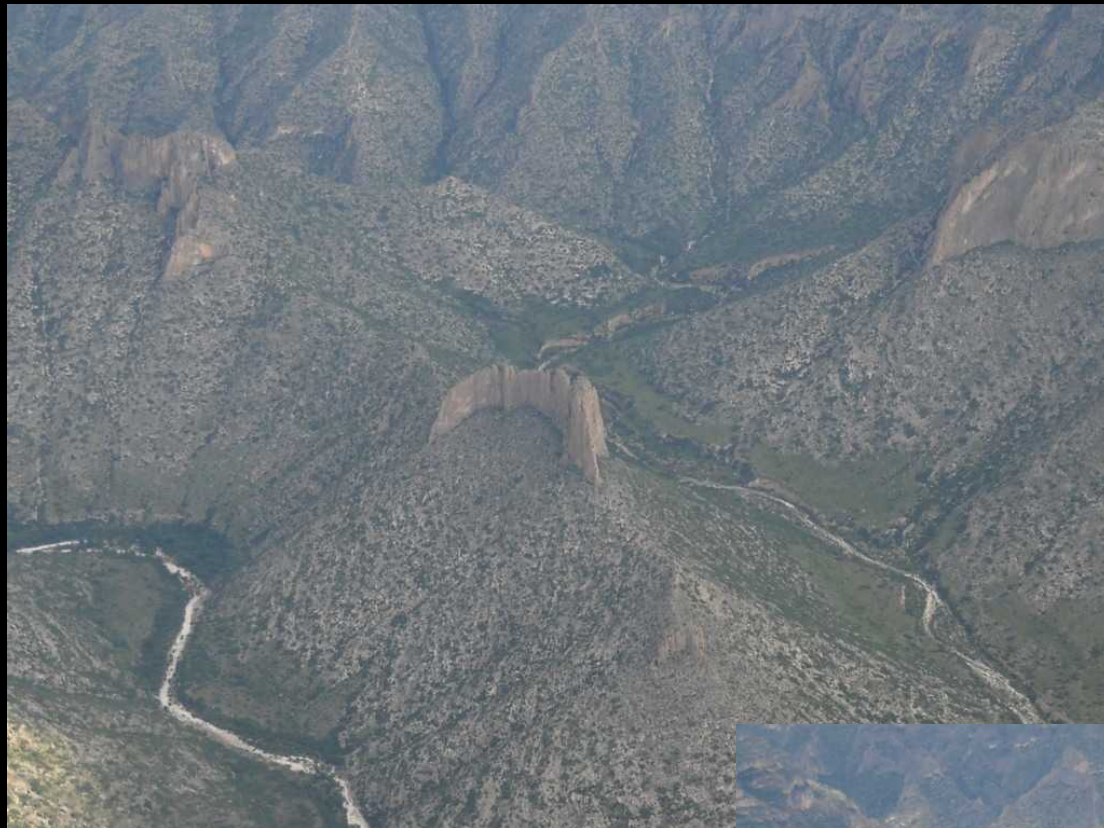




Upper left: Rounding the point above the thousand foot cliffs of El Capitan. We headed east now towards Carlsbad.



Lower right: It was too windy to get a close look at the strangely eroded canyons that emptied out of the southeast side of the Guadalupe. The Guadalupe are made of limestone. Weathering has produced a maze of intricate fractal canyons. I would like to return on a sunny day in still air to get a better look.



Upper left: A wall of rock protruded out of a foothill.

While the three of us cruised to the NE towards Carlsbad, a RANS (RV4?) flew under us. We had at least 1000 ft of clearance, but it was a bit of a surprise for everyone.

Lower right: Everywhere I looked were huge overhanging caves. I bet there are thousands of caves back in the mountains. We flew past Carlsbad Caverns National Park and on to the Carlsbad Airport.





Upper left: At the airport we met the guy who flew under us. He was amazed that we had flown our trikes all the way from Cielo Dorado, near Santa Teresa, NM.

He took the pictures on this page and posted them on an RV messageboard. From left to right are myself, Paul and Rick. I look exhausted in that picture.

Denise met us here and she brought some gas for Rick and Paul.

Lower right: The RANS and our trikes at the Carlsbad airport.



We departed Carlsbad on the final leg of our trip to Lonny's farm outside of Roswell. I had heard of a sinkhole near Artesia, and found it on Google Earth and entered the coordinates into my GPS. It had rings of cracks that extended quite a ways beyond the actual hole. It looked like a meteor crater.



We headed west and met up with the Pecos River. It was a bit windy now, probably blowing around 15mph across our path. We followed the winding course of the river north towards Roswell.





The three of us arrived at Lonny's at the perfect time, just before lunch. A crowd had collected and watched us land.

Upper left: Rick's landing.

Lower right: My trike on final at Lonny's airstrip.





I saw Mike Marker standing by the side of the field with his camera. He never disappoints.

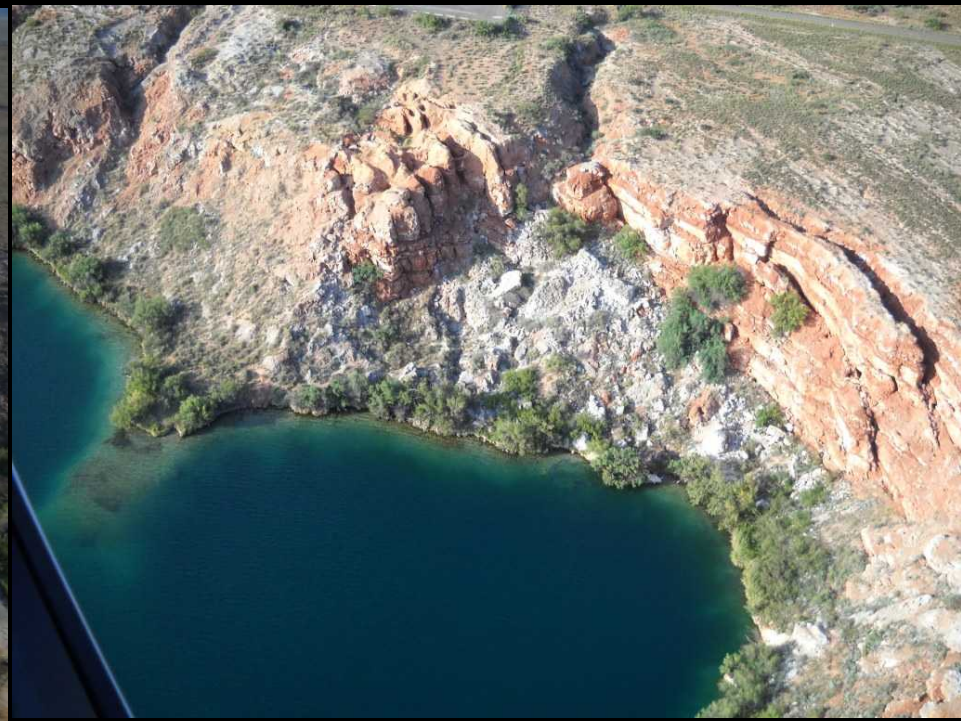
Lunch was fantastic. Burgers and hot dogs, green chile, the whole spread. There was a keg of beer on tap, but I deferred, hoping to get in a sunset flight. While the wind blew all afternoon, I took a closer look at my engine and soon found my problem. I had a coolant leak and was low on radiator fluid. I borrowed Denise's car and got some Dexcool to match what was in my radiator. I was down by 1/3. I found the leaky joint, a clamp that I had loosened a couple weeks ago. I had noticed rising temps this summer, but I had thought this due to covering my radiator, which I had done to intentionally raise temps. I was relieved to find the problem and just hoped my engine had escaped unscathed.

Later in the afternoon, we were rewarded for passing on the beer with light winds. Paul, Dennis, Mike and myself took off for flight to Bottomless Lakes. Rick had a broken spring on his exhaust system and could not join us. Below: my trike with Dennis's Kolb and Mike's S-18, photo by Paul.



I led everyone on a wild goose chase, looking for Bottomless Lakes State Park. They are a series of deep sinkholes, filled with water. Eventually I found them about 5 miles south of where I originally thought they were. I flew over the big one (upper right) and watched someone in a kayak waving enthusiastically at me, tipping back into the water as I flew overhead.

Meanwhile, my engine temps were back to normal.

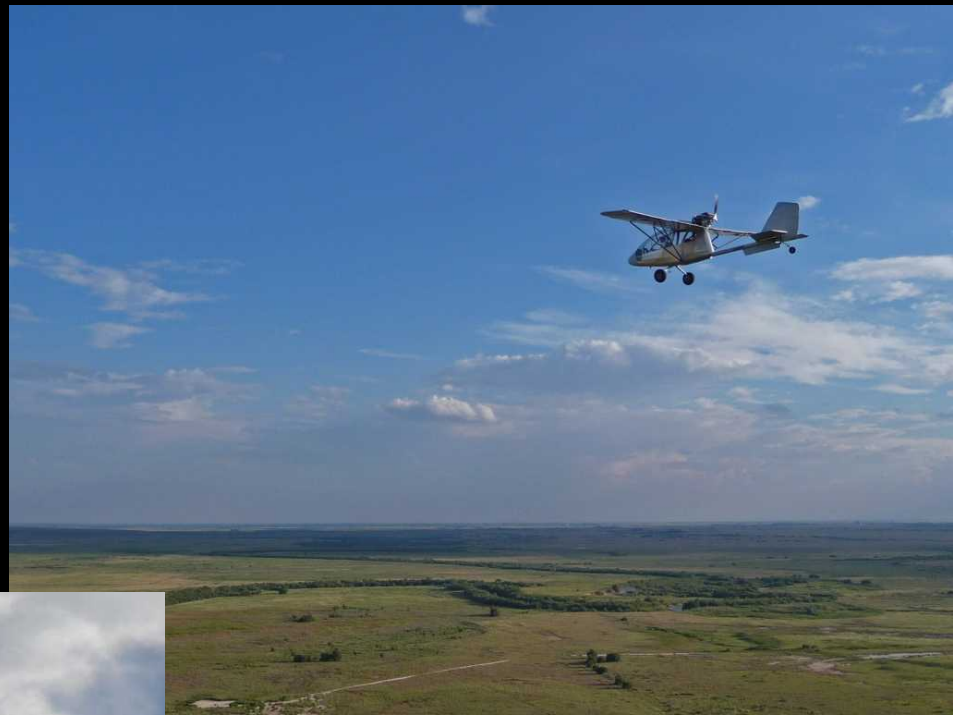




Right: My Cobra over a shallow lake.
Upper left: Paul's trike.
Lower left: Dennis' Kolb. All picts by Mike.

Right: Mike's S-18, photo by Paul.

Lower left: We did a lot of formation that afternoon. I got this close picture of Mike's S-18.



We landed and moved our trikes into the pecan orchard where they would be sheltered from any winds during the night. Then we settled into the best barbeque dinner I have had.

Here is my GPS tracklog.

