

Sunday, December 5, 2010

346th Cobra flight, 356th PIC, 2 landings
Flight to Double Eagle to pick up Jane

347th Cobra flight, 357th PIC, 1 landings
Return via windmills, the gate

Belen Takeoff: 2:01pm DE Landing: 2:53pm
Airtime 0.9

DE Takeoff: 3:37pm Belen Landing: 5:23pm
Airtime 1.8

Today's Airtime 2.7

Total PIC Time: 907.8 Total Logged Time: 929.0

I invited Paul to join me on a flight up to Double Eagle to meet Steve and Jane. We would fly up to Double Eagle and land, then I would give Jane a trike ride back to Belen. We left Belen around 2pm and turned north.



I think I have made this flight from Belen to Double Eagle about 100 times now, the last time just 2 days ago. For a slight change of scenery, I followed the edge of the western escarpment from the cinder cones to I-40. I think I have only come this way at most once or twice, maybe never.

It was a nice mellow day with no traffic. The tower put me on a long 5 mile final to runway 35.

I looked off the east at the Sandia Mountains and the city of Albuquerque.





I landed and taxied over to Frank's hangar. He and Steve were getting ready for an afternoon flight. Jane had become very cold during her lessons earlier in the day so she passed on freezing all the way down to Belen.

I didn't want to head straight back to Belen. I asked Paul if he would like to fly out to Mt Taylor to look at the newly installed windmills out there. That sounded good to him so that's what we did.

Mike Marker had sent me pictures of these windmills a few months ago. I was appalled by them. The Mt Taylor Plateau is a beautiful unspoiled expanse of grassy meadows and piñon pine. Large herds of wild elk roam up here. Now they would be joined by windmills.

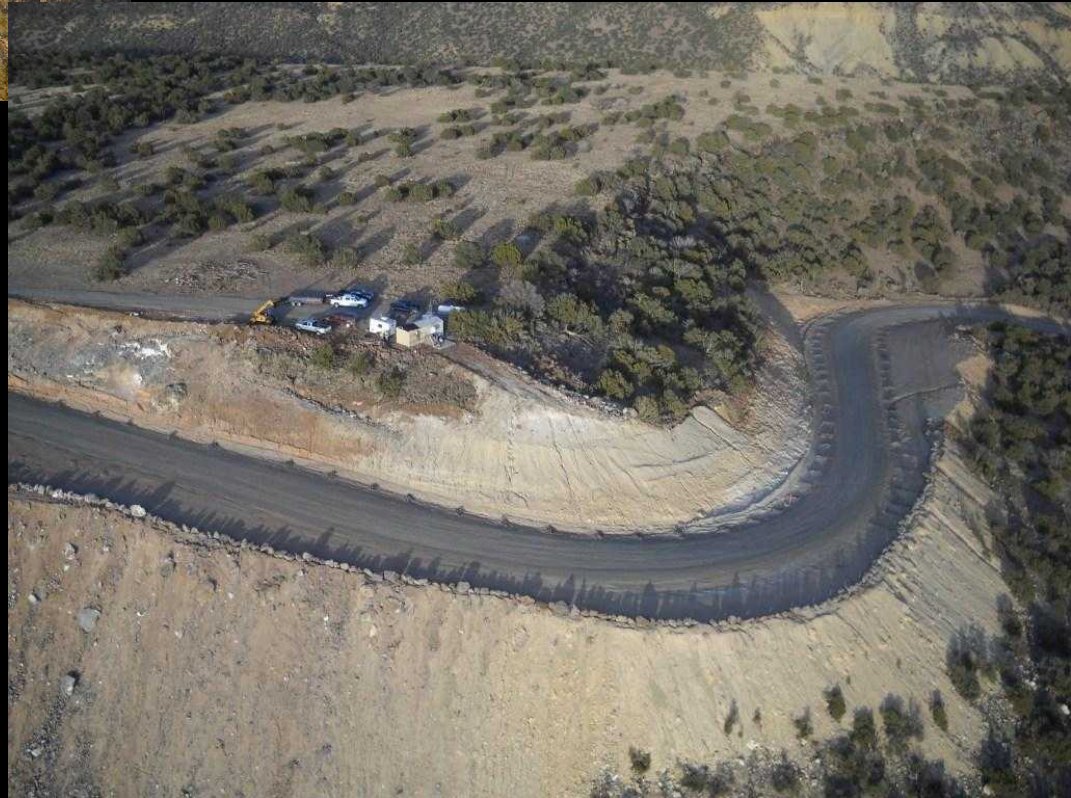
We headed due west towards Cerro Negro. The windmills were not hard to find. I can easily see them from my house, 50 miles away. On our approach, we passed by an island mesa.



I took a close look at the mesa, the long axis of it is over 600 ft. Another potential trike landing site.



I noticed a new access road that wrapped around "Island Mesa", topping out on the Mt Taylor Plateau.





I do not like these windmills.

The Mt Taylor Plateau is one of the last great undiscovered wild places in New Mexico. Most people don't even know about it. Dozens of lakes, wild grassy valleys, trees, with the imposing presence of the summit nearby.

It is a place I could visit and pretend I had travelled back in time. No more.

The corner of the plateau where the windmills are located is right next to Cerro Negro, one of the more interesting volcanic formations here.





After 5 minutes I was thoroughly depressed by the windmills and just wanted to go home. I punched in Belen on my GPS and noticed the course line passed right next to "The Gate". It is a pair of towers that are about two trike wingspans apart. We flew the Gate, and I videoed Paul passing above and between the pillars. It looks like a tight fit.



We headed straight on into Belen and landed. Steve and Jane got in a lot of good training flights with Frank this weekend. They left for their home in Texas the next morning. They will be moving out to Kauai next year. I hope to visit them and their trike.

This was my last flight for 2010. Here is my GPS tracklog.

