

Ridgely 2001-10-13

A surprisingly good day at Ridgely. Spent the morning hang waiting, watching sailplanes. Around noon, I watched a sailplane circling and going up, so I naturally scrambled to get in line. Surprisingly, no-one else did. I found a 100fpm blue thermal that took me away from the airport, and started to chase the few cumies that had started to form. The cumies got more and more plentiful as I flew downwind, and finding lift was pretty easy.

I shared a thermal with a gaggle of black vultures at one point - very cool - and carried on North. By the Sassafra River, I was down to 1300' and on the point of reaching down to unzip, when I caught the day's best ride, to 4200' and cloudbase. But that was all she wrote, as I was then under a patch of widespread development with nothing happening. I put it on the ground right next to Route 301, in a field of corn stubble, freshly treated with lime - yuck! - for 2:18 and 30.3 miles. My wonderful wife Joan, on retrieve detail, arrived before I'd finished breaking down.

After we got home, Ric Niehaus called to exchange stories. After taking Karen for a 45-minute sailplane ride and driving the sailplane tug for a tow, he still found time to get his Fusion in the air and fly it the 26 miles home - after 4pm for heaven's sake. Whattaguy!

I heard a couple more pilots in the air on the radio - Mike Chevalier and I think Christy Huddle? - but I never found out how anyone else did.

Epilogue

How's this for a coincidence: my landing was observed from 1000' by two Wind Riders club members in a single-engine plane. For real! Here's what Jeff Vaughan reported after my report appeared on the Wind Riders list server:

The cross country police were out randomly checking on pilots to verify their stories. We are happy to report that Bill Buffams report was accurate. His nice landing (NO VISABLE BEAK) was observed from 1000' above. Great job Bill. Remember you never know when we will be watching you!!!

The XC police

Alias Kurt and Jeff V returning from a fly-in down by Cambridge Md.