

What a Day for Soaring!

That we should all have an unforgettable day like this.

[Jim Carlton](#)



(image: Paul Naton / Radio Carbon Art)

This story was written almost 10 years ago but after stumbling across it as of late, I thought "how fitting" with the new soaring season just a few weeks away and the uncertainty of our times, a look back at simpler times. Follow my flight...

Tuesday was a day that exemplifies, to me, what this great activity is all about. I wish I could wax poetic about my experience but, alas, I will make an attempt to describe the enjoyment of this day. What a day!

Early up and out is always the best welcome to a day of soaring but typical

life duties called and thus we got started about 10:30 am. Setting up the winch the air felt active and light with a whisper of wind coming out of the east but I decided to go ahead and launch into the prevailing west. If anything it would be good practice for downwind launches and then I could land back towards the flight line. Simple. Only one other pilot was to join me for the day and he soon arrived. The air was rich with activity; bugs being chased by thermal birdies, hawks roaming the field for an early lunch and buzzards at altitude scoping out their next lift and who knows what else. Skies were partly cloudy with many cumulus forming and high stratus indicating a great day of thermal activity ahead.

Good karma was already sending out vibes as my partner for the day found his recently treed DLG, sitting pretty in the woods beneath the behemoth that ingested it about a week prior, no worse for wear than a slightly dinged leading edge. He had spent hours prior attempting to dislodge it without causing any more stress on such a fragile toy, but the woods were not done with it, until today! Nice! Let's get in the sky!!



Buzzards in the distance! (image: Jim Carlton)

I staggered out to the line while Larry assembled his Icon2. My trusty Genie LTS was feeling light and responsive as I hooked her up to the line and I

prodded her to make quick work of the winch and fly to the clouds. And fly she did! Certainly not as strong as my “recently departed to faraway skies” Pike Perfect, but with an adequate and snappy zoom none the less, off she was! Right off launch, I hit buoyancy, and **up, up and away** she went. (Reminded me of the old commercials for my dad’s trusty airlines, **TWA**, from days past. Actually started humming the tune and now have an earworm to go with it!)

Up and out she went, left turn, right, any which way was just all up air. As JW and others have so eloquently stated, having the right bird for the mission is important but getting to know your ship, as intimately as possible, will yield much more than the latest wizbang setup could to the unpracticed. The Genie was proving she was the ship for the trip today! What a great flight. Ten minutes of task time (as Gordie so often states that “it’s the task that’s important”) elapsed so I decided to bring her in to see what my fellow pilot was up to. I brought her in for a leisurely hand catch to gently thank her for such outstanding service. Sweet!



Genie LT/S and Monarch in the queue to fly! (image: Jim Carlton)

Hooking up to our trusty FLS winch, his Icon2 majestically soared skyward on launch but as all birds tend to at some time, needed a bit of coaxing and prodding to fly, and upon return to earth revealed that a mighty flap had gone dead, in need of servo surgery. Sorry to see him hangared at such an early time in the day but necessary for future flights of fancy. My companion eagerly retrieved the line and retired for the day as I continued on and upward with the Genie.

I again shot the Genie skyward and again was rewarded with outstanding air. Circled up and out to the east, over the trees and towards the stables and road at the far end of the property. Spotting a gaggle of buzzards low and away out, I pushed onward to see if I could hook up with the avians. Knowing that this was a kind of "hero or zero" move, I decided to range far and intercepted the thermal at the base, and joined the flock. Great indicators of lift, these birds, but also known in these parts as suckers for sink, I was held true and rewarded with an amazing climb rate and soon, five buzzards and one Genie, danced to cloud base! What an incredible ride, all in formation, feeling out the air and each other and riding the "up" elevator! I couldn't make out the stab for the life of me nor my recently corrected 20/20 vision. As my fellow fliers took wing for other areas of the sky, seemingly bored with this composite animal flying in their airspace, I slowly arrived over the field and descended to an altitude easier to be seen.

I played with settings and rates, highs and lows, 1-to-2 and 1-to-4 differential, coupled and uncoupled rudder, reflex, cruise, and thermal modes, all in the expanse of excellent skies. Per Mike Smith and his knowledge base documented on DVD from Radio Carbon Art and Paul Naton, I re-tuned the Genie and soon began seeing the magic let out of the bottle! Fun stuff with predictable performance. I decided to bring her down to a wingspan-high gopher fart altitude and pushed myself to spec out again. Riding and coaxing the gentle thermals down low, turning the Genie into a big DLG, I stood her on a wingtip, not nearly wary of a stall and rode her out, up, over the field, past the lake, over the far trees, and out again to

heights that made any magic carpet look silly! What another great ride! Easy ten minutes and up, another task time made. What stinking pop-offs to worry about? Just low launches! Great practice for that inevitable contest silliness.

Upon locating the runway and landing the Genie, ever so close to that hunskie spot on the tape, a chorus of birds cackling overhead sang out tempting me to again chase the air in their domain, one actually shaking his tailfeathers at me as he circled overhead, taunting us to come play. Up we launched once more to dance with the clouds and chase thermals all across the sky. What a perfect day for soaring!

As the time flew by, another landing attempt was to be made with a simple drop to the spot, points on the tape if needed... and now time to pack up and retire. It felt a shame to leave such a perfect day of flying for other activities. A round of golf this afternoon was just a walk through the park with eyes drawn skyward, following the clouds and birds as they danced through the rising air, wishing I was again in their domain, enjoying such flights of fancy. As my partner stated upon leaving, it was too bad to leave one of our best days in memory at the field, but wonderful to know we were given the gift of experiencing such an amazing day of flying! I hope everyone that attempts R/C soaring gets to experience a day just like today!

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