

August 21st was grandson Trevor's 11th birthday. As he's into paintball wars these days, he wanted part of his party up on Hwy 16 at the local paintball court called Splat Zone. Linda & I were to be there as well. I had agreed to have my first go at it while Linda would run the video camera (safely out of range). Five of Trevor's neighborhood "paintballers" came along, too. To their disappointment (and my relief) the Splat Zone was not open. I mean, I've seen the welts on Trevor by being hit at too close a range. Anyway, two of the boys who were brothers, said we could have it out at their place.

They live about a quarter mile from Trevor. Their dad (also into paintball) has obtained about 25 or 30 of these big wooden wire spools the electric companies use and are quite willing to have you come pickup from them since it saves the cost of hauling them to the dump. I would guess the "warfield" to be about two acres of ground and is located a hundred yards or so behind their house out in the pasture.

We took the boys out to Trevor's while his mom, stepdad, and sister(Lynette, Tim, and Kelsey), went for pizza. They played some sort of shoot-em-up 4-player video game one of the brothers brought over. Well, Trevor has been after grandma (Linda) and I to get some water balloons and try to bomb them during a game. So after eating our late lunch, Linda took me home to get the plane then she picked up some balloons on the way back out to Trevor's.

Linda, Kelsey, and Lynette filled up a dozen or so balloons for us while I drove over to the paintball field to see what rules might be in play. I met the brother's folks and some others playing as well. However, mom was only watching. The dad told me everyone was a target for me. I found out their gun range was about 30 yards (on the level) so decided I could stay a hundred feet up in case there was an "accidental" stray paintball. I came back and Linda got half of the balloons in a blue Walmart bag. Lynette headed over with Kelsey and the video camera while Linda and I taxied down their driveway to the gravel road and took to the air.

I wanted to make a practice run on a target but Linda said, "Nah, let's just DO it!" The wind was out of the north so I circled around so we could be heading into it as we came over the field. The first game had started and we could see everyone darting among the spools and crouching down as we came over. Okay... here we go... lining up... level out... altimeter- 3200', speed- 60 mph... Linda let one go.... AWW MAN! it hit WAY past them. Okay, no problem... circle around for another try. Another line up... altimeter and speed check... steady on the stick... Linda unloads another one. Hey! right in the middle of them but not close to anybody. Swing around in a 270° tight turn to come in 90° to our last two runs. Ooohh, I feel Walter Mitty sitting next to me!

Here we go again... drop down to "run altitude", line 'er up, speed check, bombardier lets one go... it hits near one of their two dogs, a 6 month old yellow lab that heads for the house with it's tail between it's legs (so I was told later). We circle around to set up on our northerly heading again. Hmmm, their first game must be over. Everyone has bunched up by the car... ALRIGHT!!! One more time... line up, altimeter and speed check... Linda lets another one go... I see them scattering! It hits between the car and a table with their stuff on it... swing around for another 270... come in again... looks like another hit in the same place! Circle around and go for another run... dead hit on their table! EEEHaaaa!!!! We're out of bombs so I land in the pasture breezing past the group, slow down, turn around, and taxi back. We park near the car, shut down, and get out grinning big time! As I walk over to the group, I see the wet table, two large wet spots between the car and table, mud on the car and a small black dog wondering what the hell is going on. Turns out that when that first (of my 5 foot shot group) balloon hit, it hit right near the dogs tail end. He jumped up and dashed into the car's open hatchback, knocking over anything in his way! Another game was underway when we landed so we parked by the car and got out. As luck would have it, one of the players came running across in front of us about 20 feet away. I was standing on the far side of my plane when I heard a resounding THUNK! and looked to see pink stuff splatted out on the right side of my windshield...

hadn't thought about a crossfire! Well, no damage done and it washed off easily.

Now, the younger brother wanted to try his hand at bombing so I flew back over to Trevor's place to get the other bag of water balloons. I came back, landed and picked him up, then we took off to make our bomb runs. He was surprised at how hard it was to hit his target but did get close a couple of times. We landed, I dropped him off then headed home since the sun had been down about 15 minutes already. I got home, put the plane away, then drove back out on Linda's trike. She doesn't let me drive it often (it's her big-girl toy) so I felt quite privileged. I got back out there in time for cake and ice cream. Everyone visited a while then headed home about 9:30 or so. SO, we succeeded in getting Tim hooked (he's setting up a toy fund for a paintball gun) and I'm figuring out how I can get a couple of PVC pipes lashed vertically to my jury struts with a release pin. I also figure I got a Young Eagles ride in and the other brother, his dad, as well as two of the other boys there, want to go up as well. What a great afternoon!!!