

After many, many, months, my Challenger II, Angel's Breath, is flying! The FAA gave me the final paperwork and inspection this afternoon. I had cut the landing gear's loose drag cables and installed turnbuckles in order to be able to keep the cables taut so I wanted to crow hop some to check them out before taking off. The preflight was okay so I got in, closed the doors and crow hopped down my 800' strip.... taxi back and do it again. Everything seemed okay so I asked Linda (wife) to call the tower and tell them I wanted to get airborne. The tower is a couple of miles away over a small hill but they couldn't hear me on the radio although I could hear them fine. This was strange since I had a good radio check from them a few days ago. Linda came back a few minutes later saying okay, so I throttle up and down the strip we go! I'm off in a couple hundred feet, climbing out about 55 mph.... over the power lines with plenty of room under me.

I get high enough to see the tower and call them as I'm turning crosswind. Before I know it I'm at 70mph and halfway along my downwind leg. Geez, this thing moves right along! Hey, the countryside really looks different from up here.... the radio comes alive.... "142 Julie Lima, call turning final". "142 Julie Lima, roger", I say. I come in over my trees a bit closer than I figured I'd be after pulling off power. I slide down to the runway touching down in the first couple hundred feet. Linda isn't too happy with the closeness to the trees and let me know when I taxied back for another takeoff.

This time well over the trees and down to the runway touching down about mid-field this time. I'm slow enough to turn around with about 300 of the 800 feet remaining. Turn around, taxi back, and do it again. Same thing again with the 12 to 15 mph wind helping me get down a bit before mid-field. This time I tell Linda I'm going flying and will be back in a while. "Where?" she asks. I said, "Out to Lynette's place" (daughter). Linda looks so sad because she can't go till my 40 hours is flown off so I took off heading toward the northwest.

About 20 minutes later finds me around 300' over the ground, looking at a lone house on 40 acres with Lynette and Tim (Lynette's fiance) waving wildly. I wag the wings to wave back, do an easy 180, and head back since the sun's going down behind the hills now and I need to get back on the ground. The trip back is a bit faster and everything is running great. I notice I need a bit more right rudder trim set in but other than that I'm tickled pink (partly because I'm getting cold)!

Calling the tower that I'm 5 miles away, I search for my strip. The tower clears me to the strip and says to call them on final. I turn my landing lights on so the tower can see me easier as I get closer to home. "Experimental 142 Julie Lima on final", I called as I turn onto the final approach and line up for my strip. Back off on the power, set up for 55 mph.... getting closer,

now slow to 50 over the trees..... over my yard, chop the power and start settling down to the runway. The gentle touchdown is again just before mid-field, slightly skipping along as the nosewheel finally comes down to kiss the earth. She slows down enough to grudgingly turn around and taxi back to the hangar. Linda is waiting out there, shivering in the cold evening with a big grin on her face. I put the plane away for the evening, close the hangar door, and walk in the house to warm up with a cup of hot chocolate. It was a wonderful hour or so but the heater duct gets installed tomorrow!