

An Account of a "Land-out" and Retrieve
Instructional Reading for Sky Soaring Pilots.

To: Sky Soaring
From: John DeRosa

Many thanks to Joe Nemecek for a top quality aero retrieve from Big Foot. A second thank you to Paul Alexander for coming along to help with ropes, etc. A third thank you to Jim Skog for coordinating things back at the ranch.

Some thoughts on the event. A wing-down launch on a CG hook glider can be tricky. One rule is that if your wingtip touches the ground (CG particularly), you should immediately release. Obviously I couldn't follow this rule unless we had left Paul behind or found someone on the ground to train. Neither was an option.

Luckily the grass runways at Big Foot were beautifully maintained, because long grass would have been an issue. Joe and I talked about the sequence of events before hooking up. To get maximum acceleration, Joe ran up the engine with the brakes on before his take off roll. This allowed me to get the down wing airborne within a few feet. I pushed the stick hard over, and had help from those beautiful big ailerons on the DG and a strong headwind. I also had my hand on the release just in case. It occurred to me later that I might have been able to level the wings just by using the headwind. As to land outs there are two quotes that spring to mind...

"It's not *IF* you will land out but *WHEN* you will land out." ...and... "If you don't land out once in a while, you aren't pushing your cross country flying hard enough."

Landouts are not too scary after you have experienced the first one. I had flown to Big Foot as a turn point, then pushed northeast to Lake Lawn to make a triangle for the day. I knew that the lift was dying up north but hoped I could find something after making a dash into Lake Lawn. As I headed back south I found no lift but I knew that Big Foot was nearby and had good runways (18-26 and 9-27). I arrived over Big Foot at 1000' and circled looking for the surface wind conditions. Luckily Big Foot had both a large wind rose and a wind sock to help out.

I flew a standard pattern and landed into strong 10-15 kts winds. When landing out, you should strive to land with as little energy as possible to stop your roll in the shortest distance. The pattern is flown at the correct air speed and then you begin to pull back on the stick as you get into ground effect. At Big Foot this was not really necessary as the runway was very nice (I learned afterwards), however, it's good practice on an unknown field and especially in a farmer's field to come to a quick stop. Farmer's fields are notorious for things you can't see from the air like holes, wires, fences, boulders, etc. One last thought. If I had landed in a farmer's field, or the runway grass had been too long, or something else would have been not to my liking, I had the second option of trailering out. The point is that there are options. Stall-spins, bent gliders, and other mayhem are sometimes caused by people struggling to get home because of a fear of landing out.

There is no shame in landing out...it's all part of the sport we love.

Thanks again to all,
John DeRosa