

A Record-Setting Day in Durham, CT



I arrived at Pinkham Field shortly before 9am. The Stott's were just setting things up for the Mid-Summer Melt contest. The day was shaping up to be a perfect day for flying! The wind was forecasted to remain light well into the afternoon and fluffy cumulus clouds were already beginning to develop. As I set up my winding table, I noticed John Stott's stick model circling over the field and climbing quite nicely. A tight circle in a mellow morning thermal. I watched with a smile as the model continued to climb quite high and drift southeast towards the fairground buildings. It was going to be a great day! The model put in an impressive flight and it actually came down on the field. Pretty sure his time was 3 min 29 seconds. Normally, that's a winning time for Pinkham Stick. I heard Paul say "so much for that event"..... HA HA. I was thinking the same thing. No one was going to beat that flight. I went about taking some test flights with my Comet dimer Fairchild and Curtiss R-6 racer. Around 10am I decided to take a flight with my Pinkham Stick entry. I'm flying a two-thirds size Bruno Marchi Cloud Chaser originally published in the December 1938 MAN. I figured I'd at least give John a chance at a Kanone by posting a score. After a 1 minute duration test hop, I wound 850 winds in the two loops of 3/32 rubber. At this time, the wind was light and quite variable. The windsock on the RC runway was showing a very slight west wind. I launched from a spot on the west end of the field between mid field and the RC field. The Cloud Chaser climbed out in its usual fashion but around 100 feet up it was quite evident it was in lift. And up it went. So now this was getting interesting! Could I catch John's time? 1 minute, 2 minutes... still climbing. Three minutes. OK, there's 3 1/2 minutes.... Cool. But it's still climbing! The model has a nice tight left hand circle in the glide and the Garami/Struck free wheeler works flawlessly. The model continued to climb directly over the field with almost no drift! I ended up lying down to try and keep it in sight. It was getting quite small and appeared to fly in and out of the clouds overhead at one point. At around 8 minutes it slowly began drifting, first to the east to the end of the field. And then began drifting north. This is when I thought it was done. A flight to the north would likely not be retrievable. Some suggested driving to the skating pond north of the field and watch it from there. But strangely enough it began drifting west! And, it looked like it was coming down! It slowly followed the tree line on the north edge of the field and continued slowly descending. Paul Stott and I walked out the tree line as it was finally coming down and watched it circle below the brush by the stream and go out of sight just behind the trees at 17 minutes 34 seconds. And there is another field on the other side of the trees! Paul was kind enough to come with me. We crossed the stream (I actually slipped down the bank on my butt) and found the hiking path. We headed in the direction we expected to find it. We rounded a corner and walked just a bit more when I spotted the model lying on top of the uncut grass 30 feet off the trail! WOW. There it was! I got it back! What a flight! The image of my yellow model circling high overhead remains in my memory.