FLYING SAUCER

Send a paper plate racing up a kite string.

THE SETUP

Go fly a kite! It’s fun. You can make it even more of an adventure with a line traveler. Use a paper plate and you’ve got a genuine flying saucer. Aside from the paper plate you will need a pair of scissors and some tape. Unless you can tie your kite to something while you prepare for the launch, you had better enlist the help of an assistant. Using the points of the scissors, make a small hole (a little bit bigger than the diameter of the string) in the exact center of the plate. Cut a slit from the edge of the plate to the hole. Slide the plate on the kite string with the bottom of the plate facing toward the ground. Tape the slit closed. Make sure the plate slides easily on the string. Push the plate up the kite string until the plate catches the wind. It will travel up the string till it hits the kite. Sometimes, if the plate blows against the string, its journey is interrupted. When the wind shifts, your flying saucer continues climbing.

INSIDER INFORMATION

Line travelers, or kite ferries, as some people call them, are as old as kite flying, which is an ancient sport. Over the years kite fliers have invented some very clever variations. Sometimes they put a stop, such as a cork, partway up the string. One kind of traveler releases a parachute when it hits the stop. Another has a trigger mechanism that collapses a sail and sends the kite ferry back down the line. Kite shops sell travelers in many different styles including airplanes and butterflies. We think its more fun to invent your own.

One of the best things about a paper plate traveler is the puzzled look of passersby as they try to identify your very identifiable flying object. It is easier to believe in a flying saucer than a flying paper plate.