

# TALES of the BLUE FLY

22 YEARS of  
SOARING by  
BOB FITCH



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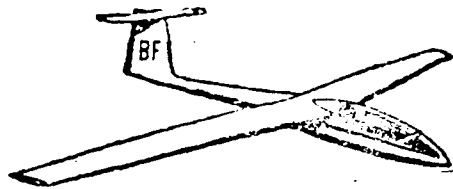




Tales of the Blue Fly is a compilation of 39 articles written by Bob Fitch between 1972 and 1994 and published in 'Pinions, the newsletter of the Aero Club Albatross. Numerous other articles by Bob, published in 'Pinions and elsewhere that are technical or instructional in nature, do not appear here.

Special thanks to Julie Reed for her many hours of work in computerizing the articles and to A.C.A. member John Andrews for his work in binding the text. The cover was created by Bob's daughter Dinny.

-Peter Krasnoff



*The highest art form of all is a human being in control of himself and his airplane in flight, urging the spirit of the machine to match his own.*

*- Richard Bach*

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JUNE '72

### FIVE HOURS AT BLAIRSTOWN

Friday morning, May 26th, it suddenly occurred to me that I might find something better to do than going to work. A sparkling cool day with fresh Easterly breezes made me think that the airport side of the ridge might be working and enable a five-hour duration. (My third attempt.) Besides, I had arranged to borrow Ray Young's "Golden Flyer" trailer for our team's use in the Little Guys' Meet, and it had to be hauled from Somerset to Blairstown.

After a quick trip to Somerset, it was just after 12:00 noon that Hank Scarborough in 28R and I in 40Z took to the air. There appeared to be strong lift almost everywhere, and, other than shivering from the cold, it was easy to spend about four hours running up and down from the Gap to the Fire Tower with no trouble staying above 2500' to 3500', and going as high as 4500'. At one point while lazily thermalling on the ridge, the 1-23 went up through me like a shot with Dent in the cockpit. I was also able to watch Frank Daley in the Ka 6E and Hank at times saw the 2-22 come and go.

My only worry of the day occurred just about at the four-hour mark, when I suffered a sinking spell serious enough for me to think about running for the airport. Heading that way and down to 1200', I caught a good one about over Route #94 West of Blairstown and went back to comfortable altitude. I was then able to coast out the time (usually around the airport) until, when I knew I had the time in, I dove in from 4000'. My landing at 5:20 PM was greeted by Karl who came running up with a big grin and congratulations.

It is a comfort to know you only have to do that once!

SEPTEMBER '72

## TREATISE ON A GRAVE SUBJECT or HOW I LANDED IN A CEMETERY

On Sunday, September 3rd, during the PGC Open House, it fell to my lot to have try #7 at making Silver Distance. By NOT checking with a FSS or attending the Pilots' meeting that morning but by taking a squint at the local surface winds, I came to the conclusion that a flight to the West was in order. So, with New Holland in mind, (46 miles West of PGC) and with the Knights, Dave and Steve, plus my own "Dinny" as retrievers, I launched at about 11:20. Releasing at 1900' somewhat South of PGC, I soon found myself at cloud base at 3500'. Announcing my departure on CB, I started off- with only the barest readability of an acknowledgement from the ground. (I was to read nothing further from the ground as this whole messy affair developed) Checkpoints observed as I made reasonably good progress were the Montgomeryville Airport, a prison near Schwenksville, and in about three quarters of an hour, the Pottstown Airport. Winds were fresh from the North with a small Easterly component. Nearer the prison I thermalled in strong lift to cloud base at 4000' and was able to scoot along beneath the same cloud for about 3 miles at 65 indicated without losing any altitude. Note that altitudes mentioned are MSL, so that at no time was I really "fat", but up to Pottstown I thought I had "a piece of cake". There, however, the picture changed, and I was to get a scenic tour of the Schuylkill River for most of the next hour as the wind took on a distinctly Northwesterly character. It seemed as though it was "One step forward, two steps back", and soon I was concentrating all my efforts toward staying out of Downtown Philly and then clear of the Philly Int'l. Control Zone. I did get back West making up my mind to head towards Wilmington if I could keep ole 40 "Zulu" in the air. Of course by now I was running off my NY Sectional and hadn't brought a Washington. That problem was soon solved by a severe sinking spell, however, and with a gorgeous expanse of green cemetery picked out, I tried to work up in some fragmented lift coming off a shopping center just to the North. After about 5 minutes of this not working out, I threw in the towel and landed on "Saints Peter & Paul International." Time of flight- 2:03 mileage made good- 27. I did not draw crowds as on previous occasions- not even one reporter or photographer (Ed, note: what a HAM!) though this cemetery fronted immediately on a main thorofare, Route #320. The last transmission (made in the blind) that the Knights had read from me was "Pottstown-3000'", so they forged ahead to New Holland only to get the sad news by phone to PGC that I had gone very much astray. Two very friendly and interested policemen showed up after 2 hours and it was from information from me that the Philadelphia Inquirer came up with their front page story (Whichsee). Though I didn't have a murmur of complaint from the permanent residents, the caretaker of the place was a little miffed- reminding me several times that "there are bodies here" before he warmed up and asked if he could help take the wings off. To ease the minds of you readers, there were no stones, monuments, or markers of any kind on my chosen airstrip- just good old green grass about 12 to 1500' of it. It should be mentioned that there was a second choice right across the highway- a High School athletic field- but having already landed on one athletic field and never a cemetery, the choice was inevitable.

NOVEMBER '72

### CROSS-COUNTRY TO ASBURY COMPLETES SILVER "C"

On Sunday, October 15, I made what I hope will be a qualifying 50 kilometer flight. It was a brisk day following a cold front passage by about 12 hours- with strong, gusty winds from the NW bringing cloud streets pouring down from that direction. To the SE of Somerset, however, everything was dissipating into almost cloudless blue - locally there was strong turbulence to 3000' and I found thermals at lower altitudes very hard to work. As it turned out, it was the day that made the flight easy, though I did my best to make it look difficult.

Sunday's flight sheets will show only 4 flights, with Fitch making 3 of them, falling out twice in 0:47 and 0:07 before getting up and away. The first ride never got me more than 500' above release in torn-up thermals and the second was a sleigh ride after a stupid low release. I was preparing to fall out on my third try when the sight of Marcols (who towed off after me) as just a speck up at cloud base in 22R made me realize I'd never hear the end of it if I didn't get up there, too. So, plenty of paint-stirring and a little luck got 28R from 1200' to cloud base at 6200'. Then it was a case of staying with that gorgeous cloud and drifting downwind as long as it lasted- which was to be about 30 minutes. Visibility was as good as I've ever seen it and the mission was never seriously in doubt after getting to cloud base, although there was some concern about all the blue area to traverse between me and Asbury.

After leaving the clouds, two more dry thermals were worked and there I was over the airport with 3500' left. For a few minutes I considered pressing on for extra mileage but it was getting late so I spiralled in to landing after 1:46. Payton, Allyn, and Dinny did the honors on the retrieve.

Accomplishing 50 kilometers turned out to be harder than I ever thought it would be. Being a late starter in Soaring and in my first season with ACA, I wanted to get off in a cloud of dust in the spring and get the whole Silver Badge done early in the year so I could get on to the greater accomplishments. Well, it did start out that way - Altitude in April, 5-Hours in May, and when my second try at cross-country (also in May at the Little Guys') was good for 43 miles with the barograph "OFF", naturally I thought that there wasn't too much to it all. However, after that one (on 5/29) came almost 5 months of frustration, with a total of 8 more departures from the airport required to complete the badge. In addition, there may have been nearly 10 take-offs with X-C in mind but skill or conditions insufficient to permit a departure. My log book shows 225 miles in 10 tries with a little over 15 hours of X-C time. I don't regret any of the failures, as they were all good experiences - rather in Asbury I sort of felt as if the fun were all over. But trying for badges in the 1-23 (or the RS-15) still awaits me and I sure look forward to it. Interestingly, Altitude was in 59A, Duration in 40Z and Distance in 28R. How's that for A Hat Trick?

DECEMBER '73

GOLD DISTANCE - DIAMOND GOAL

or

"Three Tries in The Blue Tail Fly"

The three weeks from 10/27/73 to 11/17/73 will always be memorable to me, as during this period I made my first "real" cross-country runs in the RS-15.

Each of my 3 flights was a declared 300 km triangle from Blairstown, NJ to Snyders, PA to Wurtsboro, NY and back to Blairstown, a distance of 313 km or 195 miles. As it turned out, the shortest of my 3 flights resulted in a distance of 172 miles with the 3-flight total being 551. All together there were 15 hours and 42 minutes in the air.

- I. On Saturday, October 27, I flew 6:10 around my turn-points to a landing at Sussex Airport. I started too late (after 10:45), flew too slowly (took 4:35 to Wurtsboro) and, at the end, left the ridge above High Point and then spent about 20 minutes looking for lift without leaving the Sussex vicinity. An aero-tow home made it an easy retrieve, and I glided back from a 3000' release 13 miles out. The air was very still at that time (sunset) and if I had not lowered the gear and flaps on a 5-mile final, we would have arrived over the airport with over 1000' left. What a delight to fly a real glide-stretching bird!
- II. Tuesday morning, November 6, I woke up the Ol' Professor, Dent, with a phone call to ask his opinion of the day's prospects. His comment (before his morning coffee) was - "my advise is bad as often as it's good - why not let's go and take a look?" A second call got me a "Yes, I'll crew for you" answer from Allyn, so it was off to Blairstown.

After rigging up, loading cameras, smoking barograph, completing Declaration Board and getting Karl to sign as Observer, (he said "It's not too good a day for it"), I was off and running at noon-time. (That other start was TOO LATE?) Dent was already on the ridge in Kilo-Kilo and real good time was made to Snyders, one quick photo pass and a faster run back to the Water Gap, being joined by Karl in the other C-70 somewhere along the return route.

As usual, the troubles stared between Yard's Creek and High Point - there were a couple of landing sites selected - but always a saving thermal. Back on good ridge above Port Jervis, Blue Tail Fly arrived at Wurtsboro before 3 o'clock, took photos, got a nice climb and started home.

Things were sure falling into place when a good thermal at Culver Lake gave me 4500' less than 15 miles from home. However, that comfortable altitude disappeared in a hurry on a disappointingly short glide, during which we never left the high ground for the airport side of the ridge. With lots of sink and a head-wind, down we came on Chado Farms, Walpack, approximately 11 miles from Blairstown. Time of flight- 4:25,



Distance - 184 miles. (Better speed, anyway.) After they were forced to change a flat on my car en route, Dent & Allyn arrived to make the retrieve in the dark. (Still just a bridesmaid- me, that is.)

- III. Saturday, November 16, the Blairstown Flight Sheet will reveal that Fitch had 2 flights - the day's shortest and the day's longest. The first was back to the ground in :04 from a low release when I remembered that I had forgotten to turn on the barograph! This little detail taken care of, we were up and away at 10:33 with the 3500' MSL release coming at 10:39. A fast dash to the rockpile and a left turn got the BTF there (Snyders) in less than an hour. After one photo from 1000' above the ground, we scurried back onto the good ridge lift for the return run. A funny thing then happened on my way to Wind Gap. Just past Palmerton I looked out and saw the Icarus 2-32 sail by in the Westbound direction. I was astonished 'cause those guys don't do that - 35 miles from home with no trailer! (Found out later it was a State Multi-Place Record Attempt).

Westbound, earlier, I had made no turns or "dog-bones" all the way to Snyders, but Eastbound did some "8's" just before jumping Wind Gap. This built up a little reserve altitude and didn't waste too much time, as we were still back across the Water Gap in about an hour and a half. Now to try and get some real altitude for the tougher road ahead. There was plenty of thermal lift around, some of it very strong and all of it very wild at the lower levels. Besides, there was hellish down to contend with and it was sort of "Fat One Minute, Lean The Next" all the way to Milford. When near the "Big S" in the river, I had seen the T-53 way high over in Pennsy (it was Allyn) and decided to route myself in that up-wind direction a bit. There were some gorgeous streets aloft but not exactly running in my needed direction. Even so, by running the good parts and trying to scoot through the sink, alternately, I made my way to Matamoras with no serious problems that I can remember. From there it was a welcome dive over to the ridge again and on to Wurtsboro.

Crossing Rte. 17 before 2 o'clock at about 1000' above the airport, I hit a thermal to 3000', took my pictures and started to work a live one right over the runway. I was soon joined by Moffat in the Nimbus II and "One-Romeo", a Ka-6E with whom I had been in radio contact on my 10/27/73 try and also on this one ever since below Port Jervis. (At this point I should mention the surprise radio call the BTF got while leaving Wurtsboro on 10/27- It started: "Blue Tail Fly- TWA '192--- Guess who?) Well neither the Nimbus nor the Ka-6 could catch the RS-15 in the climb and we departed on course for the final leg in a heavy snow shower. About 6 or 8 miles down the road, I looked 100 feet to my left (and UP) and there was Moffat, who called to ask confirmation of my aircraft type. (Maybe he wants to get one!) I shouldn't mention it, but he was flying with his breaks out... Oh, well...

Starting about the Huguenot VOR, thermals were worked and from there was bothered with only one really low point, which came over Holiday Lake, Montague. Taking the

Ol' Professor's advice, I then stuck with the higher ground and was duly rewarded with lift. About 10 NE of Blirstown my forward visibility went to Zilch because of sun-glare, so I promptly left the rocks and took up a guess heading on the down slope toward Blirstown. The heading turned out to be okay but the BTF and I had to stretch it out, 'cause there wasn't any more lift. The BTF and the terrain kept close contact with each other for miles and near the end we almost went into the school athletic field in Blirstown. However, when Frankie-Baby called and asked me to report my position, the reply was "Just look out across the end of the runway, LOW, -Here we come!"

With somewhat less than 100' left, I dropped the gear, landed and rolled to the trailer, 5:07 airborne, 5.01 from release, 195 miles around the course - for the immense satisfaction of Gold Distance and Diamond Goal successfully completed. Bob Payton, who was my Observer must have been likewise enthused, because at 1:A.M. he called to say that he had developed the film and the photos were good. The barograph trace was good, too, so it appears that it will be a solid claim.

Monday night I talked with Suzanne Moffat on the phone, found out that she had been on the ground at Wurtsboro watching "that cute little glider", and was told that both she and George (who wasn't home) were delighted to hear about the successful completion of the Blue Tail Fly's flight. She was able to give me the name of "One-Romeo's" pilot, so I also called Jack Hill to thank him for the help rendered over the VHF and to advise him, too, that we had made it. We had a nice chat and he told me that George was concerned about me making it back because he thought I was a "little low" when he last saw me . He should see me NOW.

P.S. Now-- Bring on that Blirstown Wave!

JUNE '74

DIAMOND DISTANCE  
or  
"On A Good Day You Can Soar Forever"

In 1971 a glider rating was added to my pilot certificate, but, going into my first season with ACA (1972) with 15 solo flights logged, only one had exceeded 30 minutes - so I sure was no Soaring Pilot. Now just 2 years later, if SSA approves my latest claim, all that is lacking to finish up all my badge work is a little old altitude gain of 5000 meters. I have accumulated 225 hours on 228 flights and feel that, even though a lot can be learned in two years, I'm just a beginner in this sport in which you never stop educating yourself, - and I'm surely nowhere near ready to quit.

One of the most important lessons learned is that you can't perform miracles when the day isn't right - but that you should never pass up a day just because it is a struggle to stay up. Consistently getting your hour when others are only good for 15 or 20 minutes is bound to teach you something about working lift.

Well, now, how was Saturday, May 4, 1974? It was a terrific day- but not intended to be mine in the Blue Tail Fly - as Bob Payton wanted to go 300 km O & R to Manada Gap. It looked so good to me, though, that I planned to try the 500 in 22 Romeo after launching Bob. We had the RS rigged and ready by 0900 and were wondering how we would get a tow when Bob (who was feeling a little ill) insisted that we change seats, saying he would go later in the 1-23 if feeling better.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the airport, unbeknownst to us, Dent Brome was saddling up Kilo-Kilo. At about 0930 Neumann towed him off for the Manada Gap-Ellenville & Return run - with Neumann returning to yank me up at 0946. Release at Blair Auxiliary #1 came at 0952 at 3300' and we were off and running. No turns were needed to Palmerton, running at 60-80 knots holding about 2200'. Using the stronger "gushers" of lift to "dolphin" myself upward, it was easy to stay comfortably above the ridge top for the first 50 miles. My speed to Palmerton was almost 80 MPH and, from his radio reports, I seemed to be gaining on Dent at this time. Only occasionally was it really rough, with cockpit contents floating about a bit.

Incidentally, one of these bits of cockpit flotsam was my "Cockpit Voice Recorder" whose malfunction caused most of this account to be written from memory. I had brought a small IBM office dictating machine on which to make notes of the flight's progress, but, somehow (probably one of the early jounces) it ran when it wasn't supposed to be running and most of my comments went into the machine after its 10-minute run time had expired. I came home with a great recording of radio blasts and variometer squeals!

Just before Hawk Mountain (my farthest reach down the ridge on prior attempts) I climbed to about 4200' and shot that gap well upwind of the ridge, returning to the ridge beyond "Clapp's

Clearing", halfway to Pine Grove from Port Clinton. Just beyond Pine Grove I again started up wind, intending to skirt the Restricted Area via the high ground to the North. At this point I believe I was only about 5 miles behind Kilo-Kilo but working upwind was tough and I soon fell behind again, never having caught sight of him. Having reached the next ridge upwind, I got a call from Dent who said he had taken his photo and was on the second leg. When he strongly advised against my up-wind detour, it was abandoned and a quick return to "our" ridge between Lickdale and Indiantown Gap was made, crossing the ridge to the down-wind side just East of the Restricted Area. I tiptoed along to the turnpoint and took my picture, getting a little low in the process. Down to about 1500' (1000' above ground and not much above the ridge top) I worked several thermals to get back along the downwind side of the ridge until I could jump over just West of Muir AAF field. All these shenanigans with R-5802 cost me about 50 minutes, but at least we stayed legal. (British pilots please note.)

Dashing along on the ridge lift again for about 25 miles, I stopped to climb once more near "Clapp's Clearing" and, as on the way outbound cut the Port Clinton dog-leg by running across the valley upwind, hitting the Hawk Mountain corner at least 1000' above the top. Now I was probably 30 or more miles behind Dent and Kilo-Kilo, but was in no mood for a race, as the important thing on this mission was to make it a Round Trip. On this good stretch of ridge my speed increased, however, and we passed Snyders at 1300 at about 2200', soon slamming right back into the old faithful thermal at Shawnee. This was about 1345 - or a little less than 4 hours for the Gold Distance. At Shawnee a fast climb got me above 5000' and another goodie just NE of the upper lake had me in great shape to start the bad stretch towards High Point-Port Jervis.

Somewhere along here Denny reported sinking to about 400' up ahead of me and passed back the sage advice to "Get High and Stay High". This was no real problem to do, in spite of some fierce "sink streets", as there was always lift when I needed it. Sticking with the high ground and running zig-zags to Port Jervis, we passed there about 1430.

Between Port Jervis and Otisville I listened to Dent's problems in locating the second turnpoint as he discussed it with Neumann on the radio. This sure made me wonder what I would find up that way as I never surveyed the area, either.

Just South of Wurtsboro I got my only glimpse of Kilo-Kilo for the whole day as he went by under me, opposite direction. Moseying on up to Ellenville with fantastic lift, in which you climbed well straight ahead, I arrived in the turnpoint area with plenty of altitude. Not even seeing the power-line at first, I checked the trusty old chart, and saw that it ran down from Rondout Reservoir. Looking up that way, sure enough there it was, passing almost right under me. Then looking around for a quarry, I located not ONE - but TWO! One on each side of the power-line. Not seeing any others in the area, I made my photo passes and snapped a shot of each quarry (with power-line included) - taking both photos in the same turn, from which I emerged doing 100 knots. Being so high, this was no problem and we zapped off on the final leg at about 1530. Back at Wurtsboro in a few minutes, a good thermal was entered with a 2-33- and another 1000' was picked up in a couple of minutes.

Then on down the home stretch, leaving that gorgeous view of the higher Catskills behind- but staying high all the way with "dolphin" pull-ups, some dog-boning and some circling. I was tempted to start my final glide from Culvers Lake but Karl (who was now flying locally near Blairstown) warned me of some heavy sink over the valley, so one more thermal west of Culvers and I shot for home flying the speed ring set on ZERO. This was so conservative that I was nearly 3000' when getting back to the airport at 1650.

Flaps and gear down, I was preparing to land when I struck some suspicious lift at about 1700' over the airport and decided to explore what certainly felt like wave. Flying back and forth along a 5-mile stretch near the airport, I climbed for about 2000' but decided that it probably wasn't good enough for a Gold Altitude gain- and, besides, it was time to get back to the ground.

Landing came at 1720- and so ended my longest day of glider flying yet, 7 hours 34 minutes airborne and 318 miles covered. Pictures and trace are OK, so we'll wait and see what the SSA has to say about it. If it goes through it makes a remarkable change in my statistical record as follows:

Silver Distance	10 Tries for 245 Miles
Gold Distance	9 Tries for 746 Miles
Diamond Distance	1 Try for 318 Miles

Maybe even more interesting, in the light of my early reputation, is that my 4 cross-countries in the RS-15 (which have taken me 869 miles) have required only ONE ground crew retrieve - and that one a mere 15 miler from Walpack!

If there is a lesson to be learned from this day's flying, I think that it has more to do with pre-flight preparation than with airmanship. I'm referring specifically to the fact that Brome flew this course and did it faster than I did - but I was told that he did not have the second turnpoint marked on his chart. We all know that it would be an impossible job to mark off a co-ordinate intersection while you have your hands full of sailplane. Fortunately I had at least done that- though when strapped in and hooded up to the tow plane before take-off, I declined the offer from Neumann to view his survey photo of the turn-point. I am not sure that would have helped because it was taken from a lower altitude than that which I was fortunate to hold when arriving on the scene. But at least I could eye-ball reference the more prominent landmarks and compare with the chart. My recommendation for this course is to choose something more outstanding as a northerly turnpoint, however. Also to run this flight on a day when you don't need to detour R-5802.

Though I know Dent can knock this 500 over whenever the conditions permit, I sure feel kind of bad that we couldn't celebrate together. And as I look back on it, why didn't I tell him to linger up there until I caught up and we could search together? Two knuckle-heads are better than one, they say.

AUGUST '74

### THE SUDDEN UN-DOING OF THE BLUE TAIL FLY

As most everyone in ACA knows by now, July 4, 1974 will be inscribed as another milestone in my soaring career. The event was one that neither I nor anyone else really needed- and, truly, it was NOT the most appropriate way to celebrate NATIONAL SOARING WEEK- which was in full swing.

The 4th was the day of the Randolph Township Glider Fly-In, and, as weeks earlier I had agreed to take part with the RS-15, she was rigged up by 8:15 AM so that the trailer and car could be ferried from Blairstown to the High School landing site.

A survey of the site revealed that we were to have a broad, flat landing surface- but all approach directions were obstructed save for the downwind entrance, where the main football field was situated. The wind favored an approach over a tree and powerline- obstructed threshold which effectively eliminated the first 200-300 feet of the reported 800-foot field.

Although not tingling with delight at the qualities of the "airport", I felt it was indeed big enough for a flapped sailplane- if properly flown on approach. After Dellicker and Greene arrived to park their cars and trailers, we all headed for Blairstown in Tony's car. On the way Benson observed that this field didn't look good for a missed approach- to which yours truly sagely responded that nobody made missed approaches with a glider. Little did I know.....

Back at Blairstown we held a briefing session to agree on procedures and it was scheduled that the 6 participating ships (two 1-26's, Ka6E, SHK-1, C-70 and RS-15) would be double-towed to the scene, releasing for their landings when we got close enough to assure them. The Blue Tail Fly was paired with Kilo-Kilo, but, as it turned out, we never got off that way- for it started to look quite soarable- and, after all, it was only a 28-mile hop. Karl decided to have a run at soaring down to Randolph so he took off. When he reported by radio that he was heading out, I took off, also - at 1:50. This looked like a more proper way to demonstrate the capability of sailplanes and would also add a little more to the ACA treasury by eliminating a cross-country tow charge, which would have been paid for out of the donation being made by the Randolph Township sponsors.

When I had gotten 6 or 8 miles away I discovered that I had lost my enroute companion- as the C-70 had landed back at Blairstown. But, drifting onward with plentiful lift, chasing the better-looking clouds, never getting lower than 2500', getting there did not seem to be in doubt- even though the lift was weak with the very best being less than 2 knots. The visibility near cloud base (about 4000') was pretty lousy, but improved down towards Panther Valley and Budd Lake, so the flight was unhurried and uneventful, arriving over the school site about 3:00 PM at about 2800'.

Dent, on the ground at the school, suggested staying up for a while, but Greene and Dellicker were already there in the 1-26's and didn't seem to have found any local lift. Neither did I, so while Jack was maneuvering to land, I called to say that I'd be Number Two. I flew the prescribed pattern, a 270-degree overhead approach with right turns, but although my overhead pass was with gear down about 650' above the field and flaps were deployed for the entire base leg, I was still too high starting my final. This is where the whole mission was blown- for instead of loitering out away from the field to dissipate altitude with S-Turns or 360's, I persisted on my full-flap final with sideslips both left and right.

This procedure still left me with about 100' or more over the threshold. Probably a maximum rate of descent, if then maintained, would have gotten me onto the last third of the field- but the likelihood of over-running into the fence at the far end did not appeal to me, so I raised flaps and attempted an alternative. This plan involved a 45-degree left turn to be followed by a 180-degree turn back to the field- similar in nature to a procedure turn.

The maneuvering was conducted toward the unobstructed entrance to the airport- over the school's main athletic field, which is adjacent to but at a lower level than our "runway". Almost to the disastrous end I thought that I was going to pull off this improvisation, as I had kept good speed up- about 50 knots. Even though the Blue Tail Fly was below the level of the "airport" when disaster struck, my intention was to roll out of the turn, pop some flaps on and squirt up out of the bowl to the upper surface.

Witnesses said that my first contact was between the high left wing tip and the flagpole, and at first I accepted this theory because in flight my concentration was on the known proximity of the ground to my low right wing and I thought that I had kept it clear. Several facts have since changed my mind, however, to make me believe that the right wing was the first thing to meet an unintended obstruction, the ship HAD to be in a right skid for the short tail boom to strike the flagpole (which it did) after the long left wing had, because the pole caught less than 18'' from the tip. Thus the pole was about 24' from my C.G. when the tip struck it but only 12' when the boom struck it. In addition, when I returned to the scene alone on Saturday morning, I discovered a drag mark on the ground believed to have been caused by my right wing tip. This mark was too far away from the pole to have been made AFTER the left wing contact. The alignment of the drag mark indicated a skidding right turn and I further believe that I was ruddering the ship around as I was already holding as much bank as I dared. (Too much evidently for the altitude) On top of this evidence, the right wing tip skid plate had separated in an outward direction.

So, my deduced sequence becomes: right tip on the ground in skidding right turn (with about 45-degree bank), extreme tip of the left wing strikes pole about 4' from top, left wing breaks away mid-span, tail boom strikes pole at base of left ruddervator, tail boom separates behind pod, pod impacts ground while still rotating to the right (in a steep nose-down attitude), canopy flies off, hat flies off, glasses fly off, instrument panel breaks away at right side, pod ruptures in several places and whatever was still left slews and slides on around still further to the right (now going almost backward) across the running track and into the fence.

Once all of that action started I recollect little except the right turning and the ground coming up- FAST! As you may imagine, the impact was severe, but at least it was on turf, which was better than a nearby concrete vaulting pit. The pod gouged out a sizeable hole in the turf and then traveled some 30 feet to the fence- where I found myself sitting in a cockpit full of broken glass caused by explosion of the vario bottles.

The gear warning bell was ringing and people were running toward me, but I knew that by some miracle I was not seriously hurt. After a few well chosen words to myself concerning my flying ability, I turned off the master switch and unbuckled my straps. I started to climb out, but many rescuers had arrived and restrained me from doing so until the ambulance arrived. The rest was mostly anti-climatic- there being such an overwhelming feeling of disgust with my performance, almost no pain from my minor injuries, and just the beginning of a feeling that I had been extremely lucky because it could have been much, much worse.

Days later, writing this, and having studied in more detail the horrible extent of the damage, it is even more amazing that I received only cuts and bruises- mostly to the lower right leg where the fiberglass ruptured and the instrument panel hit me. But nary a bump or scratch about the knees. In addition to good fortune, I feel that the strength of the enclosure that I was riding in had a lot to do with this. When we have settled our insurance claim and decided amongst our syndicate what the next move is to be, I can only hope that it will not be too long before I can be flying The Blue Tail Fly or a sister ship once again because she sure treated me well for the 150 hours that I spent in her and the ship had nothing whatsoever to do with the crash except maybe letting her pilot walk away. Incidentally, I did no flying the day after the crash but flew again on Saturday and Sunday.

I would like to thank my many friends in the club who took care of the remains and scooped them up into the trailer while I was off at the hospital emergency room. I would further like to express my gratitude to my three partners for the good grace and understanding with which they got this unfortunate news. I hope I can make it up.

The moral of this story concerns Pilot Error. NEVER, NEVER get the least little bit behind on an approach and figure that you can make it up later somewhere along the way. The time for corrective action is RIGHT NOW, as soon as you are aware of it being needed. My final approach was a disaster waiting to happen- all the way in from base leg. Don't let it happen to you.



MAY '78

## 165 MILES OF SOARING FOR NEW STATE RECORDS

Saturday morning, April 8th, I made two early phone calls. The first got me the transcribed weather (lots of NW wind) and the second got me Marie Benson, saying Tony had already left for Blainstown. So I grabbed the trailer and made tracks, thinking that I'd probably be too late to catch Tony, who would likely be off running for his Diamond.

Arriving at the airport, I found that I had caught up- as he had not yet rigged the Ka-6. So we got both ships put together, got Ron Marcels to witness our declarations and were soon in the air. To go after both the "Distance" and "Distance-To-Goal" NJ State Records, I had declared a flight to Frederick, MD- while Tony had a Zig-Zag in mind, using a declared turnpoint of Burnt Cabins, PA. He went first, so it was 1118 when I popped the cork over the Upper Reservoir and turned left. I didn't turn again until I had reached the tunnel at Palmerton 30 minutes later, flying between 2500' and 3000' and at speeds of 60 to 80 knots.

As I made my way westward it became obvious that we were heading into cloudless skies. I left the last of the clouds behind me about 5 miles east of the Lehigh River and decided to hold and wait for Tony, whom I had last seen flying in circles near the Water Gap when I went by, intent on making mileage. This plan (to team-fly for a while as the route got a little more difficult) never developed and I did not see Tony again after Palmerton. I proceeded on towards Snyders and Hawk Mountain, staying a bit higher and figuring to get at least 5 or 6000' before leaving the Hawk Mountain corner. However, while thermalling just before the corner, I ran into smooth wave lift and decided to see how high it would take me. This turned out to be 11,000' but, when reaching this altitude, I was flying backward at 60 knots indicated. It didn't seem to be too efficient for cross-country wave soaring unless planning to go down-wind. Since my route lay essentially cross-wind, I pushed on, using up my altitude fairly rapidly and soon banging back into the rough air at lower altitude. I returned to the ridge just east of Pine Grove, but was moving along- now almost half-way to Frederick. Just before reaching the R-5802 "shooting-gallery", I started to work a thermal which carried me up and over Muir AAF. Calling the tower while circling up through 4000, I advised them of my presence and was warned not to penetrate the restricted area- which had been "hot" all day.

Deciding that the ridge had done all it could for me, I then left towards Hershey and the Susquehanna River, which I crossed between Olmstead and Capital City airports, chatting with Harrisburg International Tower as I thermalled in their air space. Soon York was in sight and it was "thermal-and-run" with an average 50 degree crab angle as town after town passed beneath me, working mostly between 3 and 5000'. About 15 miles out of Frederick, it seemed as though the flight was going to fall short when I got uncomfortably low (less than 1200' above the ground), but ran into a last strong thermal. This got me back safe once more and it was then easy to final-glide on into my goal. Resisting the impulse to make a Contest Finish over the field, I flew a high pattern and landed at 1642.

The day's soaring had just ended for the MASA group, too, but several of them helped me park the HP-18 out of the wind in the lee of the hangar and two signed my form as landing witnesses. A phone call to Blairstown got John Dellicker's offer to come and get me and one of my Frederick witnesses (Doug Jensen) offered a lift into town for some food. It had been a long time since breakfast so this was most welcome- as was their turning-over of a club-house key. John arrived just before 2200 and we got back to Blairstown at 0430- tired, but happy and fulfilled.

This was only my second flight in the HP-18 this year but it has to be described as one of the most interesting flights I've ever made. Using ridge, thermal and wave all on one cross-country is always fun and 165 miles marks a new high for me in reaching out. I have only logged 28 flights (70 hours) in the new ship but already have flown it in three contests and about 1100 miles of cross-country. Not bad, considering that the first 15 hours were restricted to local airport flying.

If my records are approved and the next pilot to extend them doesn't go berserk and push 'em out of sight, I'll be back for another shot. But, meanwhile, the speed records of NJ could stand a little challenging!

SEPTEMBER '78

THE NESA LABOR DAY MEET  
or  
BLUE FLY MAKES IT 3-FOR-3 IN '78

Having found no others interested in going to the Hillor Field weekend meet, I hit the road alone on Saturday, September 2. By 10:30 AM we, (me and Blue Fly) were parked on the glider port and registered for the Meet. The Pilots' meeting was shortly over with and Competition Director Bill Foley had declared a "Big Guys" Task of Ellington, CN, and return-- about 70 miles. There were approximately 30 sailplanes on the field and 2 classes of competition. My class had about 16 entries, all pretty fine gliders. Included were the following types: ASTIR, ASW-15, ASW-19, C-70, CAPRIONI, CIRRUS, HP-14, HP18, LIBELLE 201, LIBELLE 301, LARK (single), LARK (two-place), LP-49, LS-3, PHOEBUS, and the 1-23.

Scoring was to be the handicap system, but, except for the 1-23 and the LP-49, there wasn't much difference in the factors used- although I never found out what handicap was assigned to me. A Start Gate was used with altitude and speed limits on the honor system, turnpoint verification was by reporting configuration of ground panel symbols laid out at the turnpoint airports. These symbols were to be changed from time to time during the task, so your report was of clock time at turnpoint and symbol observed.

Saturday turned out to be a fair-to-middling good day with a brisk SW wind. As I had no crew for the contest, I flew a very cautious task, taking about 2 hours on the first leg- making up my mind that I was going to the turnpoint and then getting there. The return leg was only 40 minutes! Only two ships completed the task, with BF taking 2nd place to an ASW-19 and earning about 875 points. BF crossed the finish line at 100 knots at 800 feet whereas the ASW-19 just got back and made a rolling finish. About 5 or 6 A/C landed at an airport 13 miles away (without making the turnpoint) and most of the rest landed back at Hillor for zero miles. One unfortunate pilot put his HP-14 onto some R.R. tracks after brushing through a few trees, resulting in a damaged glider but an intact pilot.

The next day was forecast as somewhat poorer and having more wind, so a "twice-around" O&R was called to the Palmer, MA airport (about 50 miles total). I had flown along this course the day before, so knew the locale and terrain. The task was a comfortable and re-assuring one because there was never a moment when you were beyond gliding distance of one of the 3 airports forming the leg.

It could have only been my well-practiced technique of flying straight ahead in lift that enabled me to complete about 8 mph faster than any of the others, because I never flew real fast. There were about 8 or 9 finishers, a couple of whom passed me on the final let. My 1000 points for the day gave me a lead of about 200 points overall.

On Monday another O&R was called- this time to Groton, MA, for 70 miles of cross-wind soaring under mostly blue skies. Because of the uncertainty of the lift and the terrain, I merely

flew around Hillor for about 2:20 before taking the gate at about 3 o'clock and heading out. Having heard several pilots report weak conditions on course, I had decided to fly the O&R as a triangle, using Gardner, MA as my own initial "turn point". After starting, I was delighted to discover that the first 5 or 6 miles upwind only cost me about 100-150 foot of altitude. But this couldn't last and it didn't- so it was with considerable relief that I received Bill Foley's radio message declaring a "No-Contest" day as I reached a point about halfway to Gardner. I was just about to do a "180" in any event as by then I was encountering not only the head-wind, but rising terrain and a bad case of sink as well.

So I returned to Hillor to end a scratchy 3-hour flight and the Contest- which had really been over the day before. At a concluding Pilots' meeting, with the bird already packed away in the box, I was awarded the Winner's Trophy in the form of a very handsome silver bowl. It was a most pleasant weekend- seeing several old friends and meeting a number of new ones. I hope to go back another year and recommend the jaunt to the rest of you.

Although none of it was "Big League", would you believe that the HP-18 and I have a perfect record for 1978? We are 3-for-3 with the "Little Guys", The Gus Scheurer, and this one!

JUNE '79

## SOME EXPERIENCES WITH THE BLAIRSTOWN WAVE

Although others have ridden it to greater altitudes, I can perhaps qualify myself as the local "authority" on the Blairstown Wave on the basis of about 20 encounters since 1972. Very likely only Doc Solt has been as active in wave-chasing as I have and, since there has been almost nothing written on the subject, here we go.

My first experience was in 1972 on my first Gold Distance attempt, flying 22R. There was a strong NW wind blowing and a solid dark overcast that November week-day morning when I asked Gil Sappah for a tow to 3000' over the airport. We soon discovered that this was impossible- as we arrived at cloud base at about 2500' MSL. So I released- but didn't start for the ridge because of insufficient altitude. Flying west and drifting away from the ridge, I was surprised to enter smooth, strong lift approximately over the RR tracks. I took up a quartering heading, climbed back to cloud base and was then "forced" to speed up. I recollect going about 80-85 knots and barreling along westward just under the clouds. As at this time in my career I had never jumped the Water Gap on the ridge and had an uneasy feeling about making my first try at it, it came as a pleasant revelation that I was already across the Delaware- and going like crazy! But this had been planned as a ridge flight, so I thought I'd better try to reach the ridge. This didn't work- I ran into the down part of the wave and the brow of the ridge rose to meet me faster than I had thought possible. So, turning tail to try to get back to where I'd left the strong "up", I swallowed a second dose of "down" and found myself abruptly on the ground after 17 minutes airborne (including tow)- having made a net 12 miles!

In retrospect, the thing to have done (if flying cross-country at all that day) would have been to stay on track at cloud base watching those miles fly by and, perhaps, as the day wore on, the air would dry up enough to at least open some windows through which I could have climbed. Under these circumstances a cross-country wave flight might have been done with comfort and the extra altitude would have made possible a penetration to the ridge when wanted. Later, while on the ground, the windows opened! We'll never know how high the wave was working that day.

Almost exactly 6 years later (in November 1978) I was flying the same ship on an entirely different-looking day- not a cloud in the sky! The wind was right, however, and after about 45 minutes of flying upwind of the ridge and getting as high as 4000', I started back across the ridge to explore the downwind side for wave. Within a half-mile of the "cliff" I made my 180 into smooth lift, topping it out at 9500' about 20 or 25 minutes later. The climb was made mostly within a 5-mile width and with considerable crab angle. Instead of pointing into the wind, my heading was about 45-60 degrees away from the wind. The average climb rate was

nearly 3 knots (which wasn't bad), but, feeling that there might be stronger and higher harmonics down-wind, I flew as far back as the Musconetcong River valley (the one in which the town of Washington lies) but was never able to get above 9500'. I located a total of 6 waves in this 15 - mile stretch (giving a wave-length of only 3 miles), finding it especially good right over the town of Hope. I did very little additional exploration along the width of the wave, but have no reason to believe that it was limited to the approximately 10-mile wide swath that I flew.

To find a wave, it helps a potential wave-soaring pilot to believe it is there and to have a totally open mind about exactly where he will contact it. I think that my own initial contact with wave on any given day has, as often as not, been on the far side of the ridge. This in spite of a generally-prevalent notion that you always start into wave over "94" or the airport. Remember it is usually a ridge day when the wave is working, so I usually start out by flying at the ridge, which I can use as a "jumping-off" point in searching for other lift. A very interesting example of this occurred in 1976 when flying the RS-15. There was a scattered to broken cloud condition which bore no classic resemblance to wave clouds. But, climbing beneath cloud in the Shawnee vicinity, I reached their base at about 5000' and slid out the upwind edge into intermittently smooth and choppy lift. Climb was continued in front of the clouds, the lift smoothed out completely and, soon, at about 6500' we were above the tops. Although there was still lift at this time and place, I wanted to try my luck back downwind of the ridge. So I cruised back over "my" line of cloud and crossed a blue area to the front edge of a line of "valley" clouds. Here the beautiful smooth lift was stronger and we went to 10,500' at a rate of nearly 4 knots. This climbing was done between 94 and the ridge (closer to 94) and along a 12-15 mile front. Then the notion came to try it more the west, having heard others say that the wave was sometimes quite strong in the Wind Gap area. My westward cruise took me about 15 miles the other side of the Delaware, maintaining 10 to 10.5. In the Wind Gap vicinity, however, it was my luck to find reduced lift and then no lift- so that rumor can not be confirmed by me. When starting to lose altitude, I elected to search upwind and did not locate either strong lift or strong sink- maybe I should have gone the other way. But that will have to wait for another time. I do know, however, that over the years I have had wave climbs at least 6 times upwind of Wind Gap and slightly NE of Wind Gap- and this on days when there was no contact elsewhere.

Another unusual occasion was an encounter when the wind was westerly, even a little south-westerly. There was a wave oriented almost perpendicular to the ridge and flown pretty much along the high-tension line from the ridge north about 10 miles. This is the power line that goes through the "bad" country toward Lake Wallenpaupack and if I remember correctly, Doc found the same thing that day.

The day that Dent did his successful 500 km flight last year there was a nice wave working over the valley. I remember cruising up to Sussex at about 7-8000'. It is interesting to speculate on the possibility of traversing the Blairstown-High Point "bad stretch" in this manner or even to go all the way to Ellenville at high altitude in smooth air. On the right day I believe it can

be done- maybe the whole length of the ridge for a Diamond! We know that pilots from both the Wurtsboro and Middletown gliderports have flown lots of wave and gotten a whole lot more Gold Climbs than we have at Blairstown.

So whenever we have a NW wind of more than 10 knots, be watchful- it may be there. If the clouds are aligned parallel to the ridge, whether they look like lennies or not, they could be wave markers. The traditional entry is to climb under the clouds' leading edge and then work out in front, looking for a ride to top them all! Good Luck!

NOVEMBER '79

### 1979 FLYING- ALL THAT BAD?

Most of my 1979 flying has been Blairstown flying- even though I opened the season at Wurtsboro and have flown at Julian, PA, Harris Hill and Fairfield. There have been 11 flights elsewhere, 20, at Blairstown, and the Blairstown cross-country mileage comes to almost 1100 miles in 9 efforts.

Sunday, October 14, was gorgeous; I declared a Carlisle and return for a State Record but chickened out at Hawk Mountain when I was unable to climb high enough for the upwind jump to Pottsville that I wanted to make. Had gotten rain-soaked wings three times and it looked very black in the westerly direction so after lingering around Hawk Mountain for about an hour and a half I came back to the Blairstown vicinity. I then flew a 100 km. triangle to Mt. Pocono and Kunkletown- making this flight with no required circling in about an hour!

I said "no required circling" because I did hold at Mt. Pocono to wait for Dent- who was coming along behind me. But after flying the street up to Mt. Pocono I was at 5000' and when Dent caught up we just backed downhill to Kunkletown and came home on the ridge.

When we get this all put together for a record, don't be surprised to see speeds well over 60 mph for the 100 km! I think 80 mph is indeed possible. I don't know if you know how we have fiendishly devised it- but we will use a START-FINISH gate over the upper lake which permits a start at 4800' MSL. Then we grab the cloud streets to Mt. Pocono and lose no altitude going upwind. (Sunday, I gained about 900 feet straight ahead while going the 20 miles! Then you shoot to Kunkeltown, make the turn and jump on the ridge. Unless you get slowed down jumping Wind Gap or Delaware Water Gap, it should be a piece of cake. And ought to open some eyes when we post such a high speed in "Soaring".

We have 200 and 300 km triangles worked out for similar feats. All on the same scheme. Take a high gate; run cloud street up into the Poconos; turn downwind to the ridge and coast home. There are three of us interested in these records-- Brome, Malpas and myself. Incidentally, Malpas flew to Lickdale Sunday, (October 14) as well as doing the 100 km triangle. The only thing we didn't get on Sunday was WAVE! I had to land after 5:45 on account of a swollen bladder or I'd have tried for WAVE in the late afternoon. (It was only 4:30 when I came down, but I had been up since 10:45 AM.)

Incidentally, Jack Greene hadn't gotten anything at Mt. Washington through Monday, October 15th, and reported only one Diamond-- for Mike Ledet.

This year I've heard a lot of members complain about what a poor year it has been for soaring. Since I, too, have had a lot of "Lost Weekends," , but could still recollect some great flying days,



I did a little research in my log book and this is what I found, comparing this year with previous three up through the second weekend in October:

** CROSS-COUNTRY FLYING **						FLIGHTS OF SUBSTANTIAL DURATION				
YEAR	FLTS.	HRS.	AVG.DURATION	# FLTS	MILES	AVG.MILES	LONGEST	3+ HRS	4+ HRS	5+ HRS
1976	44	096	2.18	11	0740	067	138	16	7	2
1977	48	100	2.08	22	1325	060	130	17	5	1
1978	41	099	2.41	19	1350	071	170	16	8	3
AVG OF 76-77 &										
1978	44	098	2.22	17	1138	067	170	16	7	2
1979	31	091	2.94	14	1760	126	200	18	10	3

So, I find that, although 1979 has given me 13 fewer flights than the 3-year average, my duration has been better and my cross-country mileage a whole lot better. This year I've had three 200-milers vs. none in the previous 3 years.

That doesn't make 1979 look too shabby, does it?

DECEMBER '79

## EIGHT YEARS OF "OUT-LANDISH" FLYING

There are glider pilots who seldom, if ever, cut their ties to the home runway. They are content to do most of their soaring within glide-back distance. On the other hand, there is the segment which has discovered that Cross-Country Soaring is their "thing". Though belonging to the latter group and feeling strongly that X-C is the ultimate delight in our sport, I would be the first to concede that glider travel is not a totally reliable form of point-to-point transportation. And maybe what I've been doing for the past 8 seasons proves it.

Inevitably, leaving the airport exposes you to the risk of possible out-landing and in my 530 flights I have failed to return 44 times. Three of these failures were quite inadvertent (as X-C was not part of the flight plan), but I don't do that any more. All three were in my early stages, two in my first month of soaring. It hasn't happened in the past 6-1/2 years, however, even though most of my "local" soaring takes me beyond glide-back range at some time or other during the flight.

My log book lists my X-C flying separately and I can keep track of my X-C hours and mileage flown. 99 X-C flights (badge and record attempts, contest flights, and just plain "fun" tasks) are listed and 41 resulting out-landings. But that looks worse than it is, since 14 of these flights were intended to be one-way trips. That leaves 27 land-outs on 85 planned round-trips. Of course, competition flying runs up the percentage of land-outs, as it's virtually mandatory to leave the airport on some days when you might not otherwise chance it. 17 of my out-landings have come in competition.

Still not too reliable, you'd have to say, but in my case it's interesting to note that, while landing out 16 times in my first season, I averaged only 22.6 miles of X-C per land-out. By contrast, 7 years later- in 1979- 4 out-landings, for an average of 49.1 miles per visit to the boonies. For the past 7 years (omitting my first season) I've averaged only 4 landouts per year and most of them in competition. Sure there's been some improvement in my flying since my first season- but I've also quit flying the 1-26 on X-C! Would you believe I list 17 land-outs in the 1-26 but have only flown it X-C 15 times?

Flying the RS-15 and HP-18 has certainly helped- my land-out score is 11 in the RS and 10 in the HP but my total of over 7000 miles of X-C in the two ships makes it look more respectable. It might be nice to have a record as good as the well-known pilot that Bobby Templin and I retrieved this spring out at Julian. This guy told us that it was his first retrieve in 11 1/2 years- and we only had to bring him back about 2 miles after a flight of perhaps 200 miles that day! This happened to be Mike Stevenson, one of the elite few who has achieved the 1000 km distinction and who has probably accumulated many times the total mileage that I have.

But landing-out is usually a fun experience and invariably exciting both for you and the landowner or witnesses. In my list of capers the natives were always friendly- with only one

complaint- that one coming from a cemetery caretaker in Philadelphia when I dropped in with 40-Zulu while on a 50 km attempt from PGC. He was grouchy at first but warmed up to the point of trying to get the police to hook up a long rope and auto-tow me out! Dave knight will remember that retrieve as he and son, Steve, came to Philly by way of New Holland- which was my intended destination. That landing made the front page of next day's Enquirer.

Some of my land-outs were outlandish enough to make the newspapers besides that one. I can remember the one at the school and the one in the traffic circle in addition to the one I'd like to forget about- the crazy Flagpole Caper. Outlandish as it has been these past 8 seasons, only that once was it downright unpleasant- that awful Fourth of July 5 years ago when I messed up my approach into the Randolph High School. And, ironically the only messed-up approach I've made was on the only site that I ever surveyed and planned in advance from the ground! Even though this was supposed to be an exhibition, I never should have gone that far. But it did give the crown something to buzz about.

That one seem to slow me down in the statistics department. For the 2-year period following the Flagpole there was only one land-out recorded in my log book and for the 3-year period following only 3. But out of all the others I've had before and since only a couple have done any damage- and that has been minor dings and scratches. As is typical of most off-fields, the majority take you to farming territory and my list includes 11 in cultivated fields, 9 in pastures and 3 in high crops- oats, wheat and alfalfa. 12 times my land-outs have been recognized airports and maybe I shouldn't even count them - but they were included in the totals given in the beginning of this tale. Ron Schwartz says he doesn't count them and his total is up to 32 now. So we are about even.

But, speaking from the vast store of experience piled up in these 8 seasons of Outlandish Flying, my advice would be that when the time comes, look your site over with the greatest of care while airborne- but never from the ground!

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What prompted me to write this story was a visit to the Bangor High School just a few weeks ago when I strayed much too far afield on a weakish sort of day. Even though I had declared an O & R to Carlisle, PA there was no chance of making the round trip and I probably never should have gone as far as Pine Grove- there were at least 3 earlier low points in the flight which had me thinking outlandish thoughts. But at least I almost got back to Blairstown- and the retrieve wasn't that far was it Ron & Tony?

JANUARY-FEBRUARY '80

## GYPSY GLIDER BUM

When winter's first significant snow fall came on the Wednesday before Christmas, it was enough to convince me that it was time to hook up the trailer and head for a warmer climate. So this will be a chronicle of what happened while hauling an HP over 4500 miles through 15 States and the District of Columbia during a 4-week period.

In summary, though the soaring might have been better if we had stayed in Blairstown, it was an enjoyable experience. There were only 7 flights made, 3 in Florida and 4 in Texas, but the trip also included visits with my daughter, Dinny, in Florida, my bother, John in Louisiana and my son, Charlie, in Tennessee, as well as two days on business in Texas. In addition there were brief visits to 4 other gliderports at which I didn't fly.

Leaving on Thursday, 12/20, first stop was at Chester, SC- but since it was a gray, raw day, I quickly pushed on southward in a continued flight from winter, arriving at Arcadia, Florida Friday evening, 12/21. The next morning the ship was rigged (it stayed that way- tied down outside- until Sunday, 12/30) and flown for a couple of hours, never getting more than 10 miles away from the airport. Though lift was fairly plentiful, it went to less than 3000' and it was a very windy day. With no ridges for it to blow against! That part of Florida (like most other parts) is pretty flat and provides only convective lift.

The airport at Arcadia is municipally-owned, but managed by 2 female pilots- Pat & Harriet. Gene Krasnoff knew them years ago in Ohio and I believe this is their 3rd or 4th glider operation. They own several power planes, including a Cub and a Citabria, with which they tow. They also have a 2-22, a 2-33 (or two), a couple of 1-26's and a 1-23. There seemed to be only about 4 other privately-owned gliders on the premises- one of which belonged to Hall-of-Famer Bill Coverdale, whom I met the second day there. His ship, a Janus, was being kept in the main hangar. The field is quite large, has almost no power traffic, two grass runways and has been the site for several competitions held in Florida.

On subsequent flying days I strayed off a little more but never over 25 miles. My last day, with a fresh southerly breeze blowing, I started to fly to Winter Haven in company of a 1-26 flown by Pat Conner. Winter Haven was about 60 miles away- almost directly downwind. As we moved about 20 miles out on course I asked Pat if he was sure he could make his 1-26 come back against the wind. His surprising reply was to answer that he was planning on a one-way mission. As it had started to heavily over-develop on course and, having a dinner engagement in Sarasota that evening, I decided to do a prudent 180 and sneak back toward Arcadia against the wind, which was easily 15-20 at altitude. At the time of my course-reversal I was at about 4500' but it looked like Pat was in trouble at 1500' or lower. Meanwhile, his Dad, Frank Conner, (who is a prominent 1-26'er) was on the road with their trailer. I did not stick around to watch or there might have been 2 of us doing what Pat did about 5 or 10 minutes later. He landed on the road!

Christmas having come and gone, it was time to move on, so on Sunday afternoon, 12/30, we hit the trail once more. I made a brief visit at the gliderport outside of Pensacola but only for a look and pushed right on westward along the Gulf Coast. We detoured off the Interstate to wind through some of the back streets of my old home town, Biloxi, Mississippi. Staying along the beach to Gulfport, we returned to the Interstate and soon arrived at the Louisiana Soaring Center- Oakhill Plantation- at Robert, LA. It was freezing cold by comparison with the mild temperatures I had left in Florida, so it was only to be expected that the first guy to greet me should stick out his hand and say "Hi, I'm Jack Frost"! They were flying a little that afternoon, New Year's Eve, but it was too late for me to think about putting together. Had about an hour and a half visit and yakked with several of the locals- saw there were about a dozen gliders there, lots of glass. One guy told me the soaring had to be good there on account of the higher elevations in the vicinity- the airport was 70' above SL! And I sure didn't see anything higher in the vicinity. But, come to think of it, that's pretty terrific for Louisiana.

Went on into New Orleans (my birthplace) to stay with my brother for a short visit. It was really cold there on New Year's Day, with a fierce wind blowing in over the lake from the north. When it came time to leave, John said he'd like to go back out to the gliderport with me- so he did and we got him his first-ever glider ride in a 2-33. It wasn't worth putting the HP together before hitting the trail once again.

Next stop was Caddo Mills, Texas- the home of Southwest Soaring- and mine, too, for the next week and a half. Instead of going to look for a motel, I moved into a full-sized house trailer right next to the hangar and office- last occupant Derek Piggott. Spent a couple of days just hanging around, as there was no soaring, but got acquainted with A.C. Williams, owner of the operation, and his wife Mary. There were at least 25 gliders on the premises here (and this the height of the off-season) all in one large hangar. About half were in boxes in the hangar and half set up. A.C. (a former 1-26 National Champion) is Schweizer's biggest and most active dealer. He had a couple of factory-fresh 2-33's in stock- not yet assembled- plus about a dozen assorted 2-33's, 2-32's, 1-26's and 1-35's, all belonging to his own operation. At Caddo Mills there are no clubs but in season there is plenty of training, renter, and private-owner activity. They have run a couple of Nationals there and the field facilities are great. Almost no power traffic on the airport with two 4000' paved runways plus parallel grass.

Early my first Saturday morning there I was awakened by the sound of a station wagon rolling in with a glider trailer in tow. Going out to see who was up so early, I discovered Dick Johnson had arrived with his PIK-20 to make some high tows for performance testing. Having just completed a major recontouring of his wing surfaces to extremely accurate templates, he was anxious to see if he had gained any performance. We got him rigged up and soon he was off, being towed to 12 or 13,000'. He made 3 or 4 tows (those expensive high ones) that day and seemed very pleased with his initial results. However, there wasn't any lift.

We put the HP together that afternoon but didn't fly as no one else was able to stay up. The next day was supposed to be soarable according to the forecast. But it was a fortunate thing that we put the HP in the hangar that night- as opposed to tying it down outside- because Sunday the wind was never less than 35 with peak gusts to almost 60! Nobody took off all day, even though in late afternoon classic lenticular clouds appeared in the western sky. (Caddo Mills is hundreds of miles from any significant mountains.) But it was a rewarding day in spite of the weather as there was plenty of time to chat with Dick, who as everyone knows is one of the world's best glider pilots and probably the world's leading performance test pilot. After he had looked over N77BF's wings rather thoroughly, his recommendation was to do a job on them such as he had done to his PIK. Well... some day, maybe- but it sure looks like an awful lot of work and maybe the same amount of time spent trying to improve my flying would be just as valuable.

With everybody apologizing of the lack of good soaring conditions and telling me to come back in the summer time, it was a week before I flew, finally getting desperate. A.C. towed me off twice that first day but I only got a little over an hour and a quarter in two tries, never getting above 2000' release altitude and almost constantly circling. Was this why I had come to Texas? A.C. said I should have been there on New Year's Day 'cause he burned the grass of the airport and everybody got fire lift.

The second Saturday wasn't too bad by comparison- but altitude was limited to about 3000' and there was plenty of wind that day, too. At one time there were 12 to 15 ships in a gaggle from 1500' to 2500'. A little crowded! That day Dick had taken a couple of high tows in the morning, carrying ballast, and then, when it became soarable, was comparison- running with young Sherm Griffith in the family Nimbus II. Dick invited me to join them on a couple of runs but with the shortage of available altitude I thought the runs were a little too short to be very conclusive. Later, both Dick and Sherm were complimentary of the HP's climbing and running ability, which made me feel good, anyhow. And if Steve DuPont ever brings his ship to Texas, Dick is going to test the HP-18. It seems Steve had teased him into agreeing to do the job even though, as Dick says, there are no two alike. If factory ships come through with no two alike, how could home-builts? Incidentally, many people know Dick Johnson as the designer-builder of the RJ-5, but not as many know that he built his own HP-13 some years ago and did quite well with it. He thinks Schreder's designs are for the most part pretty good, but wouldn't rank them in the top row for competition with so much good European glass round. What else is new?

Other highlights of my stay in Caddo Mills were the afternoon that A.C., Marion Griffith and I took transit, steel, tapes, stakes and a hammer and did a little surveying. We laid out the corners for some new hangars which will be built this spring- one of them a glider T-hangar almost 300 feet long! Then one other day A.C. and I went off in his Mooney (Ah, memories) to Denton and stopped at another gliderport on the way back. This field had just been occupied

by the North Dallas Glider Club. And the last Sunday there, Horst Eschenberg, LS Importer, (from MASA) arrived with his brand-new LS-317 to leave it there for Johnson testing. This is a convertible 15 meter racer with quick-change capacity to a 17-meter ship. Very nifty.

So, outside of going off to Texarkana for business purposes, that was about it in Texas- and I had to start homeward. I left on Monday, 1/14, and with just a half-day visit at the Tennessee Fitches (all 5 of 'em), arrived back on Wednesday 1/16. Of course, the very next week-end was GANGBUSTERS at Blairstown, but as soon as I got home I spent 4 days in bed with the flu!

MAY '80

## MY FIRST RUN FOR THE DOUBLE DIAMOND

Last year our Annual Dinner (also celebrating ACA's 50th year) was held on April 7th. I ate my heart out because it had seemed obvious that a fantastic day was brewing on the Allegheny Ridge. But with our affair that Saturday night, it was impossible to go to Julian until the following weekend- so, what happened? The 7th was the day that many long flights were made- including World's Records for both Tom & Doris. Although I left my HP at "Ridge Soaring" for a month, there was no repeat of that kind of day. During my visits to Julian in April and May last year I was forced to settle for a few 300 km flights while acquiring a knowledge of the terrain from Lock Haven to Cumberland.

This year, seeing the right weather situation falling into place, I hauled the Blue Fly to Tom's gliderport on Good Friday afternoon, hoping to get a shot at a 1000 km flight the next day, April 5th. On arrival at Julian about 5:30 Friday evening, Tom agreed that the next day looked great. When I woke up in the morning, the strong cold front had gone through and the wind was blasting against the ridge. Skies were blue- with quite a few clouds rushing through. An early call to Flight Service confirmed that things looked like "GO" for the day.

Arriving at the airport at 6:15 AM I found myself all alone but knew that everyone else would be along soon. So I got barograph, cameras and declaration ready- got the fuselage out of the box and rigged the empennage. But then I was stuck- nobody to help hang the wings, no observer, no tow-pilot. Tom & Doris rolled in about a quarter to eight and I was greeted with Tom's observation that "It's not a 1000 km day- but you can probably do 500". There were to be 3 other pilots trying for 500 and 1 for 300 that day, so folks started appearing about 8:00-8:30. However, I had wanted to be on the ridge early on my declared triangle to Lock Haven and Glen Lyn, Virginia. Like 7 o'clock! Or before!

With the ship finally rigged, I decided to try anyway and was the first off the ground- but it was 8:45! After about a 60-second tow, releasing in ridge lift, I boiled along northbound, pausing only briefly about 5 miles out on course to test availability of climb. My average speed to Lock Haven was a little better than 80 mph including a climb to 3000' and scooting over the airport to take 3 pictures. Then back slamming along the ridge southbound, only to get an unpleasant shock crossing Milesburg Gap a few minutes later. It really isn't much of a gap and northbound I had crossed it as if it didn't exist- but southbound- WOW! About as quickly as it takes to tell it, I fell from about 500' above the ridge to 500' below it. We skimmed (and I do mean SKIMMED) the trees on the flatter base section of the ridge for 5-7 miles, but, by sticking as close as terror would allow to the steeper upper slopes, crept slowly back to the top, passing the gliderport 50 minutes after release, having completed about 61 miles at better than 70 mph average.



Because of the hassle and time involved in getting water at Ridge Soaring, I had gone without ballast- even though the extra weight provides a better ridge-running ride and probably adds 10 mph to average speed. Now, because of turbulence and that "A&P" (Adrenalin & Pucker-Power) experience of Milesburg, I was flying a little higher. The turbulence was the fiercest of my career and it seemed like a good trade-off to go a little slower but escape some of the thrashing. It was so violent that my feet were thrown off the rudder pedals a number of times, the gear was banging down in partial extension- gear doors slamming- and, of course, everything flying around the cockpit.

Between Tyrone and Altoona I caught sight of a stack of 4 lennies, looking just like 4 eyebrows, somewhere way ahead of me on course. They immediately got me thinking "Wave"- and with Altoona Gap just ahead, anyway, I spent some time dog-boning and circling to probe upward for some of that wonderful SMOOTH lift. While doing this, two of the Diamond-seekers, a 1-35 and an ASW-20, went by underneath on their way for Seneca Rocks & Return. I never saw the third "500" fellow (in a Libelle) nor the chap doing the "300".

Unable to get above 5000' or to contact wave, Altoona Gap was left behind and on we went towards Bedford Gap, but never going below 3000'. (The only advice Tom had given me was to "get-high-and-stay-high" for about a 40-mile stretch from just before Cumberland.) So the sizable Bedford Gap was crossed with decent altitude and just before Cumberland I climbed to 6500'- still unable to contact wave- and no further sign of lennies. Sailed across Cumberland, (now averaging 65 for elapsed mileage), and at Keyser climbed in a thermal (or rotor?) with everything pegged to 7800'. This gave me my first contact with wave. Cloud bases were about 6500' in that area at that time, with tips ranging to 8500'. There was about 50% cloud cover- with even more on the course line up ahead.

The wave lift I found and used was never fully-organized, never totally smooth, never steady and never clearly-defined by cloud shape or alignment. Nevertheless, was able to cruise for approximately 50 miles while staying generally well above cloud base and weaving amongst the clouds, occasionally having to dive under one to proceed on course. This was mostly continuous lift without any circling or dog-boning, but not what I was really looking for, which was a 10-12000' cruising altitude above the clouds. If I had latched onto that, the day might have turned out differently, in spite of the late start.

But, when I reached Seneca Rocks my watch told me it was 12:30 and my chart told me there were 140 miles remaining to my turn-point. I had flown 220-230 miles in 3:45 for about 60 mph, but could I complete almost 430 more? My mental computer said "No", and, somewhat reluctantly, I decided to abort and go home. Contributing to this decision was the fact that, looking ahead on course, there was even heavier cloud cover- approaching 80%. The ridges are much higher down there and reportedly the best of the whole route, but I'll have to find out another time.

Taking several pictures, I turned north. Nearing Keyser again, I had lost some altitude- so was grateful for a fast climb near the same spot that had been good to me southbound. After this

climb, I was not to circle again for 80 miles, and probably didn't have to then. And this without ridge-running! Not long after crossing Cumberland Gap, and now returning to a more scattered cloud region I finally found what I had sought so hard to find on the way south, very easily slipping into an honest, pure wave which carried me up smoothly to 13,250. When I abandoned further climb, my Netto was showing 5+ knots, but I was high enough- and had left the oxygen at home, too. Slipping across Bedford Gap over 2 miles up was a pleasure after some of the trials and tribulations of the day. I snapped a picture or two while cruising above the clouds.

The rest was anti-climatic, although I lost the wave before crossing Altoona Gap and actually made 4 circles in the middle of the gap to stay high before hitting the ridge beyond it. My landing came at 3:45, exactly 7 hours from T/O, having flown 382 miles- my longest flight to date. Speed for the whole trip- 55 mph- with only 80-90 miles of ridge-running. That's not really fast enough, but I did do a little foolin' around and didn't use too much of the "Speedway". It wasn't a total loss- I now have seen and scouted more than half of the route- I did do 615 kilometers- I did achieve a gold Climb- and I got back! Incidentally, mine was the longest flight of the day (from Ridge soaring- see below) and the only one that got that high in wave- though all the other pilots who tried for their 300 or 500 Diamonds completed in good shape with good speed. But instead of a "Double Diamond" I had gotten a "Triple Gold". (Two 300's plus the climb).

Next time hopefully, I will start earlier and fill my tanks with water. It seems prudent to plan on not less than a 10-hour trip, but to start early enough to allow for 12, which it could easily take. It is still my ambition and hope to accomplish most of the trip in wave, as there is much greater comfort (both physical and mental) that way. And what a VIEW!

I later learned that Cornelia Yoder (SQ) is claiming a Feminine World's Record for O & R Distance on a flight made that day with Karl Striedieck. They flew from Karl's field and traveled something like 1060 km. But I'll bet THEY started EARLY!

TRY NUMBER TWO....came on Wednesday, April 16th. Driving out the night before, I had passed Bill & Evelyn Malpas (with WY) on Route 80, and, at 5:30 the next morning, had beaten them to the gliderport. But, unlike April 5th, I wasn't alone- the place was bustling with activity. Knauff & Vakkur were off first (at about 6:00) for Georgia and Straight-Out Records. 5 others were to attempt "1000", including Erica Scurr (seeking that Feminine World's Record again) but not including Malpas, who was to be delayed for a check-out. His delay didn't cause him to miss anything, however, as the day's only completed task was a 300 by a 1-26 pilot. Longer flights were stymied by a low overcast with snow showers, which persisted too long into the morning. My flight (about 125 miles) was an O & R to a holding point at the southern tip of Dunning Mountain. At Altoona, where it took me three stabs to get back across the gap, I passed WY on his way outbound. Bill enjoyed a nice flight joining up with the returning Tom Knauff near Bedford and taking the "back" ridge north to Lock Haven- thence home to Julian.

At one point during my almost 2 hour hold at Bedford Gap, along came a 1-26 and I was sure at first that it was Bobbie Templin, who had not been at the gliderport when I took off. Pulling

up close enough to make an identification, however, proved this to be not the case. It was a chap trying to do a 500 O & R to Seneca Rocks. He was in the air for most of the day but had to come back without reaching his turnpoint.

Just prior to my getting back across Altoona Gap, a motorized PIK sailed by over my head with his fan turning- going home the easy way. Sure wished for a few minutes that he could throw me a line. It was Bob Tawse (also on a declared 1000) and he had made two starts that morning. The first time he crossed Altoona, outbound, he had gotten disoriented in the snow and wasn't sure of his whereabouts. So he had fired it up, flown back, stowed the fan away and started anew. Nice way to go!

JULY '80

## A SATURDAY AFTERNOON'S FUN

Seventy-two hours in advance I could see it starting to shape up on the weather map. So when I talked to Bill Malpas on the phone Friday evening it came as no surprise that he had a truly prodigious task in mind for Saturday, 6/21- a 750 km triangle! But I hope he will tell his own story of that- this yarn will be about what BF and I did that glorious soaring day.

Though my own plans were likely to be much more modest than Bill's, I occupied a room at the Albatross Hilton Friday night- just in case I felt like an early departure for a longish task myself. (Bill Shea was to be on hand for 8 o'clock tow service.) When retiring about midnight, the front had gone through- a strong wind was blowing from the northwest and there were unmistakable signs of wave in the sky.

In the morning my decision was to make an attempt at the NJ 300 km Speed Record. Chosen T/P's were Sky Haven Airport (Tunkhannock, PA) & Schuylkill County Airport (Pottsville, PA). Bill & Evelyn drove in about 6:30 and Bill left on his 750 about 8:20. I waited until afternoon, hoping to make it around my measly 198-mile triangle in the strongest "four hours" of the day. It turned out to be almost 5.

Start time came at 12:42:30 when released from a 3000 foot tow over the Blirstown Airport. Flying between 4000' & 6500', progress was slow but steady to Mt. Pocono (where I had fallen out on my previous try 4 weeks earlier). Was not able to achieve the consistent, solid Street-Running which is so necessary for speed on this upwind, uphill leg- but never let myself get below 4000 over this terrain which rises up to 2000'. Speed to Mt. Pocono was about 33 mph. I found the 15-20 mile stretch of unlandable territory beyond Mt. Pocono also quite unproductive and glided directly in over the runways of the Wilkes-Barre Airport at 3000, about 2000 above the field. Had a running conversation with Tower & Approach controllers for the next 10 minutes as I saved myself with a climb to 7000 directly overhead. (No, I am NOT declaring an emergency . . . Negative Transponder . . . etc)

That was the first and only "problem" time of the flight. Continued on to the first T/P, turning it at 3 o'clock with the breath-taking speed for the leg of 27 mph. The second leg was pretty much crosswind with a tailwind component. Circling 6 times along its 60 mile length, I worked between 5000' and a high of 7300', picking up a little speed- 45 for the leg and now 34 cumulative for the mission.

After turning Schuylkill County at 4900' at 1621 on the clock, it was a 15-minute, 21-mile down-hill glide (at 41:1 with a tailwind) to hit the Ridge just East of Hawk Mt at 2200 feet. The ridge lift kept me running at 15-1800' MSL all the way to Lehigh Gap, making good an average 80 mph all the way from Schuylkill County. Passed Snyder's Tower at ridge top never noticing ol' "157" on the ground near there. (Bobbie didn't get back from the retrieve 'til after midnight.) Paused for a couple of dog-bones to 2200' at Palmerton, then pushed on, ridge-flying

to about 5 west of Wind Gap, where I made the decision to set up for a final glide into Blairstown. (It looked as though the thermal day was dying.) There was only one last cloud in the sky (right at Wind Gap), so we used it to climb up and coast home at 26:1 flying 80 knots. This final glide eliminated jumping the last two gaps along the ridge, but may not be the fast way home. I made a high finish at 1734, producing a last leg speed of 61.4 mph and a triangle speed of 40.74 mph. (Incidentally, I kept my 200 pounds of water all the way.)

Now that I have familiarized myself with the territory beyond Tobyhanna and along the second leg, I'm sure that my next run over this course will be faster. And I sure left plenty of room for improvement on the speed, so let's see some of you speed merchants have a go at it. You sure don't even need a ridge day to beat 40 mph! However, with the right conditions (and maybe with our dreamed-up High Gate) this same triangle can (and will) be flown a whole lot faster- the key being to climb and cruise straight ahead on the first leg so that you run it with not less than 40 mph leg speed. Circling is SLOW. And for maximum benefit from the Ridge, you should run it all the way back to Sunfish Pond- or at least to the Water Gap.

WY was on his tie-down when I got back- after the LONGEST FLIGHT EVER made from Blairstown. Knowing that you readers would like to hear about that one, I sure hope he takes the time to write about it.

MAY '81

## MY 1000-KILOMETER FLIGHT, FIRST FLOWN IN HOME-BUILT GLIDER

Starting with the Spring of 1979, my HP-18 ("Blue Fly") has been taken on 3 annual pilgrimages to Ridge Soaring Gliderport for the purpose of attempting a 1000 km flight. During the first year's visit, no days of appropriate conditions came along and no attempts were made, although the Ridge was explored as far South as Cumberland, MD. Last year (1980), two attempts were made and, although conditions were "right" on the first one, we didn't get launched early enough and had to abort with an uncompleted triangle of about 615 km. The second try didn't pan out because of low cloud cover and snow showers and was aborted without crossing Bedford Gap. This year on Thursday, April 2, 1981, on my first (and only) attempt of the season, I struck it rich and became the 16th pilot in the US to make the "Double Diamond", the first to do it in a home build glider, built for the most part by himself.

As of Tuesday evening there were good weather prospects for Thursday- confirmed by a Wednesday morning phone call from Doris Grove- so I left straight from the office after work on Wednesday. Picked up Bob Templin on the way and were asleep in the "Ridge Soaring Bunk House" by 11:00 PM. It was still dark at 5:00 AM when the lights came on and Tom Knauff hollered: "Everybody up- it's a Super Day!". Bob and I rigged the Blue Fly (partially in the dark), filled the ballast tanks, and got cameras, barograph and declaration all squared away. It was to be O&R to the Fincastle Country Club, just beyond Bluefield, W VA. Doris was the first one to tow off- a little after 0600. Since she had declared O&R to the same T/P, but from Piper Memorial Airport, Lock Haven, (for 1100 km and a new Feminine World Record) the tow-plane was gone nearly 45 minutes to get Doris to her remote release point.

Since the Blue Fly was next in line, off we went at 6:49, releasing at 0651 about 1200 feet above the airport. We cruised the turbulent ridge to just past Tyrone, where it began to look as if dreams really DO come true. (My hopes for the flight plan had always been to climb into wave at that point and ride in smooth air as far SW as possible.) Here in front of me was a cloud deck, reaching from above the ridge to perhaps a mile or two upwind, and stretching south-westward as far as the eye could see. The upwind edges of this cloud had the unmistakable feathery look of wave and, looking further upwind across a 5 to 7 mile window, there was another unbroken line of cloud across the wind. 32 minutes from release I was over 35 miles out, above the clouds, climbing through 7000' on course, across the Altoona Gap, cruising at 60 knots while climbing.

As we climbed through 10,000' we increased speed to 80 knots and just watched the miles fly by with a TAS of well over 100 MPH. Since we were "at the point", with a number of others to follow, just as soon as we had made the wave transition we passed the word back on 123.3 so that they wouldn't miss taking advantage of my good fortune. I was not to see another glider, however, until we were over 220 miles out. This first 120 miles of wave were the strongest and had me flying as high as 12,000' well upwind of the ridge. In the Cumberland area the amount of cloud started to diminish, and, passing Keyser, W VA we temporarily lost the wave, regaining

it near Scherr at 0823, climbing back from a "low" of 7000' to 11,000', which lasted as far as Monterey. Exactly 2 hours from release, we passed Snowy Mountain, over 185 miles out, leaving all cloud by this point. For the remainder of the flight the sky was to be totally cloudless. After Monterey my altitude was slowly given away, even though still cruising in weak wave.

I had been able to stay with wave lift in the blue by the "Known Error" method. With my Cambridge set on "High Sensitivity", the Schuermann Netto gave me excellent "trend" information while steering a heading intended to fly out the front of the wave. As lift eased off, we simply steered away from the wind until the needle peaked again. Once more, made a course correction to fly out the front of the wave- it worked, keeping me high until passing Mountain Grove. About this time Tom Knauff passed me in his Nimbus 2- I spotted him on my right, slightly lower, and about 2 miles upwind. I watched him dive for the ridge at Lick Mountain and then Peters Mountain (in the Covington vicinity). My wave lift continued, though weaker and I was descending through 6000' (with the GOOD ridge past Covington easily made) as I crossed Interstate 64. Shortly after 10:00, SW-bound, running the ridge at over 4000', Tom passed me again, opposite direction, making me wonder where he was going and what his task for the day was.

At 1012 we crossed Narrows, sighting the T/P at 1039. Took the picture (yes, just ONE!) at 1041, already on the return run, only 3:50 from release- my speed was a very respectable 82 mph (twice as fast as my usual X-C speed). It was at least 30 minutes ahead of my most optimistic flight plan. Now "all" I had to do was get home. Minutes out of the turnpoint another glider (heading SW) passed under me and didn't respond to my radio call. Not recognizing who it was, I assumed it was Al Buzzard (OY) who had taken off about 5 minutes behind me. Later I was to learn that it was Doris (KG) and that OY had landed at Mt. Grove, outbound.

Things went easily ridge-running back to the Covington area, where I attempted to relocate the wave that had brought me to this point outbound. Before finding it, however, I got low enough to be concerned and dumped my water, then promptly found a thermal to 7000'. Going well upwind, wave-hunting, my efforts were rewarded by finding more down than up and near Falling Spring I turned tail to run back to Little Mountain. Determined to stay as high as I could, I used thermals along this ridge until past Hot Springs. From a little over 5000' I then dove for the upwind ridge at Mountain Grove, crossing (through a saddle) at about 3500' and immediately sighted the cheerful scene of a downed glider in an excellent field there. It was somewhere along here that I started to tell myself: "Every mile you make now cuts two miles off the retrieve".

Not trusting the ridge lift (though it probably would have brought me home faster) the next 70 miles was covered by Thermal & Glide, working from 4000' to 5500', occasionally sighting KG (Doris) who had caught up and was using the same technique. At Hopeville, now only 150-odd miles from home at 1420, wave was found once more and I was able to cruise at 55 knots above 7000' until losing it while passing Keyser. More Thermal & Glide got me past Cumberland,

where I again sighted Doris, still doing the same as me and not ridging it. At Bedford Gap, she was first to leave for the crossing and I was not to see her again during the flight. Bedford Gap presented no problems (for me), the first 5 miles going by with a gain of 300 feet straight ahead. At about 1645, running the excellent stretch of ridge to Altoona, a radio query asked "Is anybody still flying?". I recognized Lee Bernardis' voice and replied that "Blue Fly is coming up on Altoona, north-bound". He said he was on the ground in Altoona Gap and would watch for me. Leaving the ridge at 4000' about 5 miles before it ended, I climbed straight ahead (to 4300') while going upwind until I was a little past even with the next line of ridge on the far side of the gap, turned right and went for it, spotting Lee's glider on the ground at Ward's Farm.

Once established on the final stretch of ridge it was only about Silver Distance back home, so we flew quite slowly and carefully in the (now) weaker ridge lift. Passing Striedieck's field I picked up the mike and announced my position (with a sigh of relief), saying "Blue Fly landing in five minutes- ice the beer"! On the ground at 1745 after an airborne day of 10 hours and 56 minutes for the 622 miles claimed, I discovered that no others had yet returned of (at least) 9 who had departed- and that numerous retrieves were in progress. Perhaps a half hour later Tom landed, having flown a prodigious 1000 km legal triangle, the first to be flown in the US. His was the only other completion of the day. Doris, unbeknownst to me, had aborted her Bedford Gap crossing in favor of the "back-ridge" route to Lock Haven- but had run into trouble and landed at State College Airport.

The achievement of a distance flight such as this in my tenth season of glider flying is naturally a very gratifying experience to me. Since I consider myself only an "ordinary" glider pilot, it would never have been done without the pioneering efforts of those who had flown this route before me. My thanks to two of those pioneers in particular- Tom Knauff and Karl Striedieck. This "milk run" of mine is a meager accomplishment alongside of some of their early feats in a Ka-8 and a 1-26. Thanks, too, to George Vakkur for his documentation of this route- and Special thanks to whoever turned that wave machine on. Post-flight analysis revealed that I flew about 240 miles in wave lift, 200 miles in ridge lift and the balance in thermals. Of the three ways to go, there is no question but what X-C wave is the deluxe method.

To make my day complete, less than an hour after my touch-down I was on the road for a 520-mile round trip to retrieve Al Buzzard, who (like me) had come to Julian "sans crew". My Blairstown companion, Bob Templin (157), (also crewless) was in the process of being retrieved by a Canadian pilot. Bob had made both T/P's of his 500 km triangle, but had landed at Williamsport- for better than 400 km. We got back to Julian with Al's Standard Cirrus early Friday afternoon. I was completely bushed, but still very, very elated. It has not worn off yet.

The only regret is that neither Dent Brome or Bill Malpas were there to share the day.



JUNE/JULY '82

### WHAT HAPPENED TO BLUE FLY?

Most everyone in the Club knows that I broke it, but when a glider accident occurs, it seems only fitting and right that the responsible pilot (in addition to required FAA and insurance reports) should come up with an account to his peers and Clubmates. There might be something to be learned from another pilot's mistakes.

So, here's what happened to me:

On Monday, May 10th, Bill Malpas (WY) and I agreed to fly the same 330-K triangle, aiming at both a NJ Record and the SSA's Region 2 prizes. We chose a Blairstown-Grimes Airport-Dallas, PA- Blairstown triangle and made a race-horse start from over Blairstown Airport at 1235.

It was a strong Northwesterly day following a frontal passage of the previous day. It was totally blue, dry air, though I expected cu's to develop before the day was over. (They never did.) The first leg along the Ridge was very fast, limited only by the pounding you were willing to accept for your body and your bird. BF led until about Snyders, at which point, choosing to gain some altitude for the Hawk Mountain jump, a bit of wave upwind of the ridge was explored. This didn't develop too well and BF had to now try to over take WY who was seen thermalling well downwind of the Hawk Mountain corner. (We had been joined by "JW", Jae Walker, out of Beltzville about this time.) WY led the way to the first turn but elected to take his photo from low altitude and then scoot back upwind to the ridge. He was unable to clear the ridge and scooted right back through the downwash for the safety of Grimes. He had dumped his water and lowered the gear in the pattern when he encountered a hawk. From that thermal he went on up in wave well downwind of the ridge but climbed to a new NJ Record altitude! (Over 15000')

Meanwhile, following my game plan, I took a thermal from in front of the ridge and drifted back for the photo. Taking it from about 4500', I departed on the second leg with no altitude worries- AT FIRST! Climbing some as I went I passed over the Pottsville area at above 7000' and wondered if I shouldn't run right at Hawk Mt and go home. It was obvious that though we had made about 75 mph to the first turn that the 40-knot headwind and absence of cloud would make a new record unlikely. (And, besides, I already held the NJ 300-K record!) I called "Whiskey-Yankee" and asked him if he was continuing the race. He said "By all means". So I pressed on. MISTAKE NUMBER ONE. But then I'd never beaten WY around a course and I now had a considerable lead over this superior pilot who was now without his ballast. DUMB! For the benefit of those who have not flown over this territory, it's frankly terrifying country, high and for a great part of the way unlandable. But there ARE stepping-stone airports, I told myself. Keep them available.

One low save from upwind of Bendinsky Airport caused me to cross I-81 three times, but I was still miles ahead and if I could ever reach Dallas the final leg ought to be laughing all the way home. The next stepping-stone airport was Hazelton and it seemed that I should have no trouble reaching the security of its runways. Not to be. The combination of the bodacious headwind and persistent sink (down wave?) soon had me low again and now Hazelton was out of reach.

A smoothed-over former strip mine was selected as a possible out-landing site, about 5 miles short of Hazelton. It could have served the purpose even though directly across the wind. IF I had not delayed the final commitment to land until very, very low. The water was dumped at 5 to 600 feet above the ground, but I continued to try to make a save. MISTAKE NUMBER TWO.

Then when actually starting to land the bird, I overflowed the final approach course to the upwind side of the strip. I thought that was a good idea at the time, thinking that the strong crosswind would drift me back. MISTAKE NUMBER THREE.

In my gentle right turn to final a thermal and/or gust lifted my left wing sharply and beyond my aileron power to roll out. If you can't lick 'em, join 'em- so I threw in right stick and rudder to complete a right turn and land on the strip in the opposite direction. This might have worked if I'd had any altitude to work with. But as I completed a little more than 180 degrees of the turn, I started clipping the tree-tops on the downwind side of the strip. I was now over (and IN) the woods adjacent the landing strip. I cut tree-tops for about 50 yards, settling in, and came to a stop about 18 or 20 feet above the ground, swaying in the strong wind, sitting unhurt in a badly battered bird, wondering if it was going to fall the rest of the way to the ground.

I was about 50 yards or less off the "runway" centerline at 1700' MSL. I had called WY when I dumped my water, saying I might have to land. Now I called again and advised him that I was in the trees. He was approaching my position but turned for home then, together with Evelyn and Dent, came to my rescue.

So ends (perhaps only for a time) a beautiful association with a delightful bird. Just shy of 5 years of flying the Blue Fly after almost 2 years of building; about 740 hours of enjoyable flying and over 17000 cross-country miles. Lots of memories.

It can and should be repaired. I look forward to flying it again.

But if there are any lessons to be learned, I hope to never repeat this kind of thing myself- and may those of you who read learn also.

MAY '83

### "RAT FINK" TAKES A TOUR

Having been delayed by first one thing and then another, my long-planned escape from winter started on Friday, February 11th. Bad Timing! Winter happened to do its wintriest thing of the season that day and that night, dumping a couple of feet of snow along my intended route of flight (get it?), which was to have had its first port of call in central Tennessee for a visit with my son and his family.

Without all the gory details, my first day on (and off) the road got me only to Hagerstown, MD, where car and trailer wound up in a snow bank- and I wound up spending the night with some delightful nearby Good Samaritans. Back on the road the next day, with "Tennessee First" eliminated from my flight plan, slow progress was made in a generally southern direction. After running out of the snow, I ran into heavy rain from the Carolinas to Florida, but the "Sunshine" State's border was finally crossed Sunday morning. First stop there was an afternoon's visit with an old college chum and fraternity brother in Delan- then on to the Flying Seminole Ranch that evening.

This gliderport (probably the most active in Florida) is the one you all saw in "Soaring" in the centerfold a couple of months ago (January issue). It is about 10 miles East of Orlando and seemed to have a glider population of about 15 at the time of my visit. Unfortunately, when my odometer told me the bad news that it should be a 200-mile round trip from my base in Vero Beach, "Rat Fink" didn't stay there very long. Just long enough to get acquainted with the staff and take one 1500' tow (\$9.50) for an enjoyable 3:40 flight. That was on Tuesday, 2/15, giving me the chance to roam the vicinity a little. Lift was good (2-4 knots) to the 5000 foot cloud bases and I got as far away as Maguire Airport (On the west side of Orlando), where another glider operation is located. There was a moment or two on the way back (into the wind) when going into Herndon (now known as Orlando Executive) seemed a distinct possibility, as I sank to about 1800-1900' just north of town. This was only a temporary state, however, and it was soon back to cloud base and easily home. A few delicious martinis and war stories were shared with Roger, the tow pilot, and we bade farewell for a soaring site closer to Vero.

This turned out to be the Circle T Ranch, Indiantown, FL. While flying at Chuluota (correct address of Flying Seminoles), I had talked on 123.3 with a couple of other glider pilots who said they were flying from this field, which you will find on your Miami Sectional between Lake Okeechobee and Stuart, about 30 NW of West Palm. It proved to be just about the same mileage from my Vero Beach headquarters as I usually drive to Blairstown, 46 miles on the odometer and 55 cents toll on the Sunshine Parkway. During my stay, I made this round trip 7 times and flew 4 days, logging 11:40 in the H301.

The airport proved to have not ONE, but TWO, glider operations! A prior phone call to Barbara Malone before trailering down there ahead directed me to HER site, so imagine my surprise on

arrival (following in her directions) to keep driving right past the guy washing the Blanik, past the tied-down 1-23, past a whole covey of tethered ultralights and on up to the SECOND glider operation: Sunniland Soaring. This setup, owned by Barbara and husband Bill, consists of a combined Ag-plane and glider operation. Their spray planes are Thrush Commanders; their tow plane is a Pawnee. Glider fleet is a pair of 2-33's and a 1-26 owned by operator and several privately-owned ships- a 1-36, a PIK-20D, a Standard Cirrus and an LS-3-17 were there when I arrived. A much smaller fleet than at Chuluota.

The field has a 6300 foot (!) grass runway with a "dogleg" taxiway running from the Sunniland operation at the SE end down to the "other" operation. It soon became evident that the "other" operation, which also runs a busy skydiving school, didn't consider the "taxiway" to be just that. They frequently came roaring up that part of the airport with either a glider on tow or a load of jumpers.

Nevertheless, in spite of the soaking ground (from the unusually wet winter) I found the soaring to be quite good. Only one day, when I fell out after an hour and a half, was not so good. There was one other day when I drove down to fly but didn't bother to rig because a high overcast persisted and even Andy McQuigg was only able to stay up in some nearby fire lift. On Friday, 2/25, the whole stay was made worthwhile by a strong "Go-Anywhere" type day with 6-8 knot lift up to 5000' and one surprising "wave" climb up the face of a cu to 5700'. I started off to fly to Sebring that day (about 65 miles to the NW), but chickened out at Okeechobee County Airport- less than halfway- and then visited Fort Pierce and Stuart for about a 90-mile triangle.

Tows at Indiantown were about the same price as at Flying Seminole Ranch. On that one poor day I took a "high" tow- 1800'- but all the others were from 1200' to 1500 foot releases. Both gliderports use the (sensible) tow fee system of a "hookup" charge (which includes the first 1000 feet) plus so much per additional 100' and the tow pilots are GLIDER pilots - so they tow you to lift, as indicated by clouds or circling birds. My Circle T Ranch tow pilot (who sprays crops or groves in the early morning) lives in the Sunniland office/house trailer and naturally had a well-stocked fridge with the usual libations for post-flying restoration of body fluids. It didn't take long to make a new friend of Bill Barnes.

During that good flight on Friday I was surprised to hear 2 other glider pilots on 123.3 using the call signs of "Bravo Foxtrot" and "Bravo Romeo". "BF" was a Ventus and "BR" was a Mosquito, both of them flying from Miami. They were in turn surprised to hear from me that ACA's fleet had a couple of gliders wearing those numbers, but, when informed that the REAL "BF" was flying "RF" out of Indiantown, "Bennie Flowers" asked me if that was Bob Fitch! Evidently my fame (?) had preceded me to Florida and he was aware that he was making unofficial use of my numbers. Couldn't say much myself- what with "Rat Fink" being an imposter, too!

On one of the several rainy days I drove from Vero to Sebring to visit Derek, Elsie and Peter Johnson, whose glider operation I had visited a couple of years earlier. They were just days away from departing for the Peach State Gliderport (South of Atlanta) where they will make their new home, and where Derek hopes to conduct one of the country's few real X-C training schools. We had about a 3- hour visit solving most of the problems of the soaring world. He has been involved in soaring for nearly 40 years and is a most delightful person to chat with.

Being a tourist with a rather specialized interest, I spent NO days at the beach while in Florida, though I did spend one Sunday cruising up and down the Indian River on a 26 foot power boat. All in all the weather was nice enough. With daily temperatures usually in the 70's and not too many rainy days, it was hard to say goodbye and hit the road once more for the northland, but that I was compelled to do on Monday, 2/28.

Spent one day of my homeward journey with my daughter-in-law and 3 grandchildren in Tennessee. My son, Charlie, was away on a job in Mississippi so I missed seeing him. Then off again with a minor detour to take a look at the famous ~~Chilhowee~~ Gliderport in the eastern part of the state. What a waste of time and gasoline! I found the glider port in the dark, dropped off the trailer and holed up in the nearest motel. Referring to the phone number in their "Soaring" magazine ad, I got no answer either that night or the next morning, but showed up anyway, hoping to fly on Wednesday, 3/2. Since the place advertises "open daily, year-round", I didn't expect any problems, but after a 3-hour wait on the premises without another living soul around and questionable prospects, I gave it up and hooked the trailer on again. It sure wasn't my day, because in the next 2 hours I suffered 3 flat tires- 1 on the car and 2 on the trailer! This necessitated leaving the box on the shoulder of I-75 and going to buy some new rubber before the safari could roll again.

Got back to NJ Thursday morning to see a gorgeous ridge/wave day developing but, having put over 5000 miles on the car and a good 4000 on the trailer, chose not to call it a flying day. Home we went to take a nap so as to be alive for the monthly ACA meeting that night and the departure for State College the next day.

APRIL '83

I AGREE, DOC- YOU DEFINITELY CAN GET A DIAMOND CLIMB HERE  
or  
"IT WAS THERE"

To get a Gold Climb, your barograph must verify a height gain of 3000 meters (9842') and a Diamond requires 5000 meters (16404'). Since Blairstown's field elevation is 380', it is pretty obvious that you'll need to climb to 11,000' (with 11,500' being more realistic) for Gold and 17,500' or 18,000' for Diamond. But remember that to get either one (most especially the Diamond), you had better make a deliberate attempt to establish a good low.

Fortunately, the presence of our ridge makes it possible to go for your low point right off tow. Depending on how many "brave pills" you swallowed before takeoff, you can get a low of 1200' and know that you can climb or zoom back up off the ridge. I believe the "Schwartz Low" has even gone down to 1000' (600' above Blairstown) although I can't remember going lower than 1300' myself. If you don't mind extra takeoffs and landings (and extra tow fees), you can always try to establish your low on the "airport ridge"- in the pattern. It has been said you could go for an 800' low, maybe even 600' there, but most of us don't care to try it and prefer towing to the main ridge.

It has obviously not been too commonplace to get Gold Climbs at Blairstown, however. Only Ron Schwartz has ever claimed one for a Badge. That was in 1978 and he has duplicated the feat on two occasions since. Until Sunday, March 13th, only two other pilots had ever produced proof of a 3000-meter gain or more: Dent Brome in 1973 for NJ Records, and Bill Malpas in 1982 to break Dent's records- although rumor has it that Doc Solt got pretty high one time, too.

Although I did my 3000 and 5000-meter climbs (plus a Lennie Pin) at Mt. Washington in 1974 to complete my FAI Gold & Diamond Badges, until Sunday, 3/13, I had not once achieved a legitimate Gold Climb at Blairstown. Several times I went high enough (above 11,000') but never was the high combined with a good enough low. And, believing that I have flown more wave out of Blairstown than anyone else (including Ron), it seems fair to repeat that Gold Climbs are not commonplace. (Except to him.)

Nevertheless, when it's there, IT'S THERE. Both Steve Sampson (N3) and I exceeded Gold on March 13th. Steve went to about 12,500' and my altimeter told me 16,800' for the high with 1800' for the low. As soon as my barograph comes back from calibration, I will be claiming both the Absolute Altitude and Altitude Gain Records for New Jersey, but not necessarily for those exact numbers. It will take at least 15975' Absolute and 14795' Gain to break the Malpas records, but it is the barogram which tells the tale. (Existing Altitude Records must be exceeded by at least 3%.)

How did the flight go? "Rat Fink" was second to take off at 1241, Jack Greene having gone first in "028". Tow was a little hairy, release came at about 3200' (MSL as are all altitudes mentioned) when just across the lower reservoir. Dove ahead to cross the ridge and started setting up for my low notch. It was so extra-rough that I made only one plunge at the ridge and never got within 200' of the crest. Then flew toward Shawnee, edging upwind. Plenty of rotor had been in evidence while on tow, so, despite the total lack of cloud in our area, wave was undoubtedly present. It was first encountered about 20 minutes after liftoff between Shawnee and Stroudsburg Airport at about 4000'. To chase the "Elusive Camelback Wave", I flew SW to the other side of downtown Stroudsburg into its secondary. climbed about 15 minutes at over 3 knots to 8250' and decided to explore upwind for the Camelback primary. Lost about 2000' on this 5-6 mile penetration, then climbed slowly for over a half-hour to 11,250' at about 1.5 knots average. Since this wave, though steady, never did show me any real strength, I then decided it was time to turn downwind. With a 50-knot tailwind it didn't take long to cross the ridge and locate the primary ridge wave just South of Bangor, losing only about 1400' for the 10-mile downwind jump. Settled in here with lift averaging about 2 knots for the next 35 minutes, climbing to 16800'. As my barogram shows, there was still the same climb rate at this altitude, but, being short on oxygen and starting to feel it, I dove out of the wave at 120 knots indicated. According to my altimeter, both State Records were in the bag, just so long as none of the other lads had done better that afternoon. The only other glider I had seen all day was Jack in "028", who was on the local ridge when I got off tow. But, since I had no radio, I had no idea what the others might be doing.

Returning to the ridge scene and seeing a whole bunch of gliders, I began to think I'd had the wave all to myself, which (except for Steve) turned out to be the case. Having been riding in that nice silky air for most of my flight, it was no fun at all to get back into the turbulence, so I called it a day and landed after another half hour. The barograph had done its thing and its good trace was shown to non-believers.

As my story's title implies, Doc Solt has long said (and many of us have always believed) that a Diamond Climb was possible at our Blirstown, base. Now I KNOW it, since IT WAS THERE on Sunday. If my low point had been pursued (in the face of the crashing turbulence on the ridge) down another 500' to 1300', another 5 or 6 minutes spent at the top of the wave could have proved it beyond any doubt. It would have required going right to the floor of positive control airspace, but IT WAS THERE!

OCTOBER '83

### CLACK AND FITCH FLY RECORD COMPETITION TASK- 755 KILOMETERS

Though it meant missing the second weekend of this year's Little Guys' Meet, Bob Clack (VL) and I (Rat Fink) more than made up for it by competing in the highly successful 7-day Regional sponsored by the Blue Ridge Soaring Society at New Castle, Virginia.

The highlight of the week came on Thursday, 9/22/83, when Competition Director Karl Striedieck called the longest competition task ever flown in the United States- (maybe in the world?) The task was a 6-leg course of 469.6 statute miles or 755.5 kilometers. 18 of the 19 starters turned in successful completions with speeds ranging from 80 mph to 120 mph. ACA's entrants both got around, Clack taking 5:25:28 for 86.56 mph and Fitch 5:29:43 for 85.45 mph.

That day the fastest pilot in 15 Meter Class was John Seymour (SM) @ 120.37 mph, while Tom Knauff (CA) was the fastest in Standard @ 112.63 mph. Seymour flew the new ASW-20B and Knauff the new (One-of-a-kind) Pegasus. At the end of the contest, both turned out to be the winners of their respective classes.

Including Striedieck (who was not a competitor, of course) there were 11 pilots who exceeded 90 mph for the day and 5 who exceeded 100 mph. Since most were back home by about 4 o'clock, there were some mutterings that Karl had under-called the day! We probably COULD have flown 1000-K! (It was interesting to note that 4 of the competitors plus the "CD" were holders of the 1000-K Diploma with 3 more present on the field!)

The fantastic speeds over such a long task were made possible by following a number of the many ridges found in these parts, including the "Main Line" over which so many world records had been flown. Very little circling was done, even though several transitions from ridge to ridge were required. Some of the heavier and stronger gliders probably cruised as fast as 150 knots along the better stretches of ridge- high wing-loadings were the day's secret of success. Many ships carried 30 or 40 gallons of water with some toting 60 gallons.

Last year at this same contest, a task of 351 miles was flown. If the normal progression is followed, maybe in 1984 they WILL go for 1000 K. Incidentally, the most distant turnpoint (Tazewell) was only 81 miles away from the site.

This contest was without question the best I have ever attended and it will surely be on my calendar for another visit. The site is just great, the people are just great and the topography is awe-inspiring. I flew 1113 miles on the 5 contest days, failing to complete only 1 day (when there were NO completions) and, counting a practice day and a no-contest day, logged 29 hours for 7 days of flying.



We also were part of some experiments in sailplane racing, using an unlimited height start gate every day, using FAI turnpoint procedures throughout the contest, and one day using the "Silent Start" ground clock. Although there were a number of land-outs during the week, few were in fields and most resulted in aero-tow retrieves.

DECEMBER '83

### CONFESSIONS OF A CROSS-COUNTRY FREAK

In some of the earlier editions of our SSA Directory there was a section listing the 10 longest flights reported by a number of well-known US pilots. I have not looked them up for this writing, but some truly fantastic statistics were shown- with people like Scott & Striedieck obviously way up on the list. Well, of course I don't pretend to put myself in anything resembling that class, but, with several long ones added to my list in the past few weeks, I have checked my "Top Ten" and come up with a total of 3373 miles. Although only the top 5 of my "Top Ten" have exceeded Diamond Distance, it is gratifying to see that the 10 best now average well over 500 kilometers.

That surely does make me a "Freak" in ACA.. I guess. In our club only Bill Malpas could produce anything like that out of his log, although if you applied the 1-26 "Handicap Factor", maybe Ron Schwartz could. Though 2 others (Clack & Sampson) have had flights which exceeded the required 500 km, the ACA roster shows only 7 pilots in all who have achieved the Distance Diamond. We have about an additional dozen ACA members who have been credited with the GOLD Distance leg, but for the most of them it has been strictly a "one-shot" affair- not an afternoon's fun to be enjoyed more than once. (Without researching, my guess is that my own total of more-than-200 mile flights is somewhere between 15 and 20. Just this year (1983), there have been 7.)

Ergo, "The Fink" is a "Freak"...But let me tell you...It's a lot of fun. And what occasions this running off at the mouth (or typewriter) was my bid for the New Jersey Out & Return Record which came about on Saturday, 10/29/83. Like this:

After a week of being laid up with the flu, it was pretty clear that the 29th was going to be "some-kind-of-a-day" and on Friday I wrote out Declaration Forms for 2 possible tasks for Saturday, the choice to be made at Blairstown, depending on how I felt and what the day looked like. Well, it was such a powerfully windy morning that I decided to save both of my pre-written Declarations and write out another one. (What I had been most anxious to do was the 500 km triangle, but that morning began to wonder if the wind might not just be too much for that kind of a task- so I decided to settle for the "easier" 600+km O&R.)

I took the first tow of the day shortly after 11:00, "Doc" Solt waving me off just NW of the field. Plunged ahead into what seemed to be about a 35-40 knot headwind, but encountered minimal amount of sink until just downwind of the Upper Lake. This bad stuff was easily penetrated, however, and I reached the ridge higher than usual from a 3000' release. Turned left and made no more turns until reaching Hawk Mountain, about 57 miles and 40 minutes later. I don't remember flying any lower than 2000' MSL for this stretch and was indicating mostly 80-100 knots. This meant that I flew generally more than 3 to 500 feet above the ridge. Good sign!

As there had been gorgeous indications of cloud streets while running this initial leg, and here was one leading up toward Pottsville, I decided to make my upwind thrust right then and there. I probably didn't play my cards right, however, and left Hawk Mountain too low (about 2700') to get full benefit of the street. Though it was working, before I had achieved the right combination of altitude and proximity to the next ridge to "go for it", I was forced to retreat to Hawk Mountain. I considered making a second attempt at this maneuver but didn't climb fast enough to suit, so pushed on towards Pine Grove with a Hawk Mt. departure altitude of about 3300'.

Just before reaching Pine Grove, I encountered strong lift and used it to climb, circling, to about 5000'. This put me within about 1000' of the base of this cloud street, so I started upwind. Ran the street about 15 miles until well upwind of Mahantango Mountain. Here I turned left and proceeded to within about 5 miles of the Susquehanna River. Now I became the victim of my own lack of pre-flight planning. I had not done enough "homework" on the route and had not brought a Detroit Sectional, causing me to be uncertain as to which mountain was Tuscarora Mountain. I knew that I wanted Tuscarora, but thought it came much closer to the Susquehanna than it actually does. So...picking out what I thought was Tuscarora.. upwind I went once more...about 12 miles to what (later) proved to be Shade Mountain. Making this extra upwind jump undoubtedly cost me time, but it turned out to be an excellent ridge and away I went again at 80-100 knots.

About 30 miles later I was passing a highly-recognizable city, but of course didn't recognize it, having not yet reached the northern fringe of my Washington Sectional. Along in here I talked to Tom Knauff, who reported that I "sounded sorta close" and asked me just where I was. All I could say was that I was "lost...but making good time!" (That city later turned out to be Lewistown, PA- but all I knew then was that I was somewhere "NW of Carlisle".)

Some 30 more miles along the way I was beginning to wonder just when the Pennsy Turnpike would show up, as it seemed that I'd been across the river long enough to have reached Burnt Cabins. (Remember that I still thought that I was ON Tuscarora Mountain.) But, though feeling pretty certain that it would show up in time, I decided to "climb a tree" and take a look. From 5000' I could not only see the Turnpike, but also the Tuscarora Tunnel at Burn Cabins, and the fact that I was upwind one ridge. I was near Shade Gap- and could navigate again, using my Washington chart. The remaining 35 miles or so to my Turnpoint were flown with a combination of streets, thermals and wave, staying between 3500' and 5500'.

At exactly 4 hours from release (it was now 1510) I had taken 3 pictures of Potomac Airport and was starting home. My speed for this (300 km) half of the journey had been less than 50 mph, so I knew that I'd have to "move it" to get home before dark. But there'd be no more upwind jumps and no more getting lost, so I was reasonably confident of making it. Using my altitude to glide towards the now identified Tuscarora Mountain, I was soon ridge-soaring again. I passed McConnellsburg and the Saint Thomas VOR and came swooshing past Burnt Cabins at about 1535. Imagine my surprise to look down and see at least a half-dozen glider trailers on the airport!

Turned the radio on again to inquire who was flying in the vicinity of Burnt Cabins and found that it was a sizeable delegations from MASA at Fairfield. In just a few minutes I had passed 6 of them going in the opposite direction and exchanged a few greetings. Then "434" (Ron Schwartz), who was wave-soaring near Blairstown, called to ask how I was doing. The last "Progress Report" I had given Ron had been before crossing the Susquehanna, outbound, but, with only about 135 miles to go now, and the super ridge of Tuscarora working at 90-100 knots, it looked like I probably was "home-free". Even without a map!

As I neared the end of Tuscarora I climbed in wave to about 4000' and was not to use any further ridge for the next 60-odd miles, until I reached Hawk Mountain. My route was similar to that used outbound, crossing the river upwind of Mahantango and drifting downwind as I passed Bendigo and Pine Grove Airports. The wave remnants took me direct to Hawk Mt, which I reached at 1730 at around 3000'. Then it was back to ridge-running all the way to Fox Gap, where I climbed for my glide into Blairstown. Ever since Hawk Mt. I had called Blairstown every 10 or 15 miles, but there were no answers, so, guessing that everyone had gone in out of the cold, I was calling in the blind now..."Rat Fink, 10 miles" ... "5 miles" ... "1 mile" ... Right after the "1 mile" call, a voice which was obviously Tony Benson's said: "Rat Fink, where are you?" My reply of "Half mile" was enough to bring 15 landing witnesses out of the woodwork and at 1805 I rolled to a stop near my trailer amongst a sea of friendly, smiling faces.

The trip home showed an average speed of about 65 MPH, but could have been 75 or better with a little more use of the ridges. The overall speed of the round-trip came out to only about 55. If the task had been run to the capabilities of the day, it should not have been too difficult to have achieved 70-75 for the whole thing. Maybe faster. I cannot describe it as a "difficult" flight, yet by comparison with the recent 750 km task flown from New Castle at the South Region Four, it was more of a challenge.

So Flight #848 goes into my log book as the 4th longest flight of my "freaky" cross-country career and the one on which the following "Milestones" were passed:

10000 Miles in the H301*	While outbound near Lewistown
7000 Miles for 1983	Leaving Tuscarora Mt, inbound
30000 Miles Lifetime	Passing Little Gap, inbound

\* (In 17th month of ownership)

So, call me a Cross-Country Freak if you want...but, take my word for it, I'm having the time of my life...and can't wait to run that 500 km speed triangle. After this flight, that's the only New Jersey State Record that I have never held. Are you listening, Whisky Yankee?

MARCH '84

### A MONTH IN GEORGIA- (BUT NOT MUCH IN THE AIR)

I don't like winter any more, so with the prospect of a snowstorm in the immediate offing, I hitched up my trailer on January 9th and hauled my way to Cumming, Georgia, the home of EVANS' SAILPLANE REPAIRS. It's about 800 miles and 16 hours of driving and, though not completely out of winter's reach, it's warmer than NJ.

For the next 4 weeks I camped out at Brian's shop and got a number of things accomplished on the Libelle- most notably a refinishing of the wings and rudder, replacement of rudder cables and an annual inspection. Brian (who many of you know from his years in ACA) had a number of jobs in progress but was happy to have my work and also to let me do plenty of it myself. During my stay, in addition to my H301, a number of other gliders were in for work: a 16.5 Diamant, a Std Libelle, an LS-1f, and ASW-20, an ASW-15, and LS-3, a 2-22, an LK-10 and an RF-5B motor glider.

The first weekend there I went off with Brian to the Pickens County Airport (Jaser, GA) to pick up his Sagitta and to inspect the site where he (plus others) is trying to start up a glider club. He has an interest in a Ka-8 which is hangared there and which would become the club's single-place. It is quite hilly in this part of Georgia (nearby elevations of 35-4000 feet) and probably the site would produce pretty good soaring. The field, where a Citabria is presently available for towing, is at an elevation of 1520' and has 3600' black top runway with grass both sides capable of handling gliders. Only about a half-dozen power planes are presently based there, about 50 miles due north of the center of Atlanta and outside the local TCA. Just about the same distance north of the airport is the corner where Georgia, Tennessee & North Carolina come together in the Smoky Mountains. Brian's name for the club-to-be is NoGaSS, (North Georgia Soaring Society).

The Sunday before leaving to come home I trailered back there in hopes of flying, but never rigged because of unsettled conditions in the midst of a frontal passage. Brian took 2 sleigh rides in his Sagitta, but the only other glider pilot present (with his Nimbus 2) was of the same opinion as me and left his big bird in the box, too.

My stay in Georgia was not all work and no play, however, as I did trailer off to 2 other sites for a couple of flights. The first was to Peach State Gliderport at Williamson, where Derek Johnson & family (Elsie & Peter) are now based. This is primarily a commercial operation with several Grob 2-seaters plus an ASK-13 and a number of rental single-place machines, including glass. I found it to be nearly a 2-hour ride from Brian's and drove more than I flew that day. Peach State (strictly a gliderport) is south of Atlanta, just on the fringe of the TCA and utilizes a single grass runway. Since I didn't get there too early that day, it was nearly 2 o'clock before getting airborne. The day was windy and without cloud so I contented myself with a few forays of not over 15 miles upwind and crosswind from the site during my 2:09 flight, the first in the

Libelle in exactly 3 months. Most of the terrain in this vicinity is flat and rolling, but some hills were visible about 10-20 miles south. Since they have a house trailer bunk house, I thought I might spend a little time there later in my trip, but it didn't happen.

My only other flight in Georgia came the next weekend when I visited Monroe, which is on the eastern fringe of the Atlanta TCA and apparently the most popular site in the state. Two clubs base here, The Mid-Georgia Soaring Assoc. and The Lockheed Employees Club. A large T-hangar (which I toured through) houses about 10 gliders belonging to those clubs and there were others in trailers on the field. The operator, former National Champion Dave Culpepper, has his own hangar for his commercial set-up (both glider & power). Dave helped me rig and provided the tow with his Cessna 150-150. Although I said it is apparently the most popular site in the state, it wasn't popular enough that Saturday to provide me with any company in the air during my 2-hour flight which was under almost identical conditions to those at Peach State the previous Sunday. One other chap put his LS-1 together but fell out off tow and did not try again. That day there were nice looking clouds far off to the north & northwest, but way out of my reach. Perhaps I should have gone (by trailer) to the Chilhowee Gliderport, Benton, Tennessee that day- I heard a few radio transmissions from Chilhowee pilots describing pretty nice soaring conditions up there. But I had fun all by myself, driving upwind until I got too low to persevere, retreating and doing it again. Wind was at least 25 knots from the NW at altitude and there was a hint of wave in the air, but 5500' was my top for the day. Driving time from Brian's to Monroe was about 1:15, to Chilhowee it is about 2:00, Peach State also about 2:00, while the (new) Pickens County site is only about 30 minutes away. If Brian can get that one going on a regular basis, it will be most convenient and it could attract more Atlanta pilots from the other sites, especially if they live on the north or northwest sides of town.

Although the 2 sites from which I flew are the most active in GA, several others exist. This does not include Cordele, a site used for both Regional and National competitions but otherwise not a regular gliding site. And, from what I saw, most Georgia sailplane pilots stay home by the fire in January & February waiting for Spring to come. Derek Johnson was to operate his second wave camp at Andrews-Murphy, NC from February 11th to 18th, so perhaps they were all saving their time and money for that. That site looks like a great wave possibility from almost any wind direction and is only about 100 miles from the center of Atlanta.

Well, I too, am waiting for Spring to come, especially looking forward to April and May of 1984 for some possible record attempts. The trip to Georgia merely served to shorten the winter, get some needed work done, and add another state to the list from which I have soared. I can now count 39 sites in 13 states from which I have flown a glider.

Incidentally, since part of the Georgia work involved re-painting "BF" on my wing and tail in place of "RF", I guess I can no longer be known as "Rat Fink". What now? "Blue Fink"?

MAY '84

### YOU MIGHT SAY I'M BUGGED, TOO

Knowing full well that there is no chance at all of changing Editor Greene's mind on this score, I nevertheless feel compelled to enter (or end) the "Great Altimeter Setting Debate." I really do not see why there should be any debate or why Brother Greene should be "bugged" by the subject- Federal Air Regulations, by which we are all supposed to be governed, very clearly tell us what to do. AND IT AIN'T TO SET TO ZERO ON THE RUNWAY! (Unless you happen to be flying from a sea-level airport.)

The FAR's (in this respect anyway) are intended to have us all "speak the same language" and "play by the same rules". Unfortunately, Jack (and numerous others) choose their own individual languages and rules. But what can you expect from a guy who prefers his own hand-drawn maps to the generally-accepted Sectional Charts? There is probably an FAR prohibiting that unusual practice, too!

Everything we do in the air relates to altitudes and elevations, and it seems only logical that there be only ONE basic datum. The authorities, in their infinite wisdom, have chosen SEA LEVEL. I've been flying (off and on) for over 40 years and I have never felt any need to differ with the system.

Of course, in sailplanes we can't often hold cruising altitudes, but it's nice to know where you are with respect to those who do, and, if you're interested in relating your altitude to terrain elevations (as you often do if you fly cross-country) you don't have to mentally go back to how high your airport was when you set the altimeter to zero or how high you SAID it was if you chose some other untrue datum- as Jack says he sometimes does.

Although an altimeter does not measure linear distance above the sea, it's read-out should be just that and it actually comes very close to the truth. As everyone knows, an altimeter actually measures air pressure and converts this to altitude based upon an arbitrary relationship between the two known as the ICAO STANDARD ATMOSPHERE. Everyone who flies anywhere is expected to accept this relationship- again so that we all "talk the same language." From there on, the instrument does its best to tell you just how high you are- and, even though we rarely have an exactly "Standard Atmosphere" to fly in, the errors in converting from pressure to altitude are not truly significant. So why not do it RIGHT? (Even though Jack says there isn't any right or wrong.)

Looking at your chart, you know what the terrain elevation is and should have no trouble telling how high you are with respect to it. This gives you your "Altitudes AGL." Jack often writes or speaks of certain "Altitudes AGL." What he REALLY means is that (if he took off from Blairstown) he is so many feet above BLAIRSTOWN! He could fly just a few miles away to

a position over Mount Pocono Airport and report "2000 AGL" when in actual fact he would be about 450 feet Above Ground Level! He talks about ridge soaring locally at 1500 or so feet AGL- there is no connection to any such number and terrain clearance- it relates only to Blirstown Airport.

So if you think it's a free country and you don't want to comply with the FAR's, or your only interest is up and down over the same piece of real estate- go ahead- set it to zero. But if you're at a high elevation airport and you can't twist the knob far enough to back the instrument down to zero, pick something else. But why have SEVERAL systems when ONE does everything you need? And if you vacillate back and forth with various systems and THEN really want to know how high you are, how do you remember which way you chose when you took off? It's the same as always telling the truth- you never have to remember what kind of a lie you told.

P.S. Jack, since a 1-26 needs every foot of start altitude it can get when going through a gate, why would you want to start 300 feet low? And, say, wasn't YOUR first flight training in power?

\* \* \* \* \*

(By Jack Greene)

Knowing full well there is no chance at all of changing Brother Fitch's mind on this score, I nevertheless feel compelled to make a few final remarks and (hopefully) bringing an end to the "great debate". But before baring my fangs, let me congratulate Bob on presenting some excellent arguments in defense of his way of doing things- which (incidentally) I find absolutely no fault with. Now, as delicately as my easy going manner will allow (but not without some unnatural restraint) I have this to say.

Bob notes the FAR's tell us what to do (clearly) with respect to altimeter settings. Rather than review one quarter page of fine type, I refer you readers to FAR 91.81, dealing with ALTIMETER SETTINGS. First of all, understand that these rules were written for powered aircraft, and I find them not too clear. Essentially, there are a number of options, none of which say to set the altimeter at the elevation of the departure airport unless the pilot is operating without a radio. Sub paragraph iii (no radio) the altimeter can be set at the elevation of the departure airport- or- an APPROPRIATE ALTIMETER SETTING available before departure. I rest my case on this rather vague use of the word "APPROPRIATE", and choose to interpret this as meaning (for my requirements) a zero altimeter setting on the ground. As a matter of fact, at a recent national contest, about half the competitors followed this same line of logic. Now these knowledgeable fellows, and certainly this editor, would not knowingly disobey an FAR.

Now this little business about "hand-drawn" maps pains me. In fact, 'twas a cruel stab! For the record, there is nothing that comes close to our faithful sectional chart as a navigational tool, other than a compass. But yes; when contest, badge, or record flying, I do frequently prepare and use hand-drawn maps. The purpose: to indicate specific landmarks, clearly define to a large



scale the immediate area, to mark turnpoints and key navigational features, to mark the task for the day, compass headings for different legs, final glide circles, how turn-points are to be taken, start and finish line directions, and I could go on and on. I use a new little hand-drawn map for each task or day and can avoid marking up the valuable and expensive sectional. If I had to choose between the two, the hand-drawn chart would come in a very distant second. There simply is nothing to compare with a real sectional chart. Brother Fitch has seen and used my stack of sectionals, probably second only in quantity to that collection owned by Brother Schwartz.

OCTOBER '84

## IN SEARCH OF STATE RECORDS

The SSA has defined 10 categories for which you can establish or break State Soaring Records:

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 2 are for "ALTITUDE" | (Absolute & Gain)                                   |
| 4 are for "DISTANCE" | (Straight-Out, O&R, To-A-Goal, & Around a Triangle) |
| 4 are for "SPEED"    | (100, 200, 300 & 500-km Triangles)                  |

At one time or another I have held 8 of these records for NJ, but going into 1984, (and with who knows how many soaring seasons remaining in my life) I held only 6 of the 10. (Of course, I speak only of the "Single-Place, Unlimited" Records- which are the ones appropriate for me.)

This year I set the goal for myself to capture the other 4, hoping that none of the ones I already had would be taken away in the meanwhile. Actually 2 days of flying could have done this for me, as it is possible to get more than one record in one flight. All I needed was a distance flight to a declared goal at least 242 miles away (about 290 kilometers), getting me both the "Straight-Out" & "To-A-Goal" Records- then a flight around a 500-km triangle at about 45 MPH to capture both the "500 Speed" and "Distance-Around-A-Triangle".

Well it didn't happen- or hasn't yet- but I'd like to think it's not for the lack of trying. Here's how it has gone so far:

My log book tells me I've made 13 attempts at NJ Records so far this year and have achieved only one (partial) success. On these 13 attempts I have flown 59.55 hours and 2196 miles. There were 4 "Straight-Out" flights declared, 1 of which was an early abort and return to Sky Manor, 2 were failures (with landings at Fairfield and Frederick), and the other just barely resulted in a new "Straight-Out" Distance Record of 244 miles to Mt. Jackson, VA. (But a failure to reach my declared Goal of New Castle, VA.)

I declared 100-km triangles twice, both from Somerset! I was too slow to break my own record and the other was an abort and return, as it wasn't a speed day. I declared 300 (from Sky Manor) just once, aborting and landing out (at Hartung) while trying to get back. The one I really wanted most to do, the 500-km triangle, was declared 6 times. Twice I aborted and returned after making about 200 miles each time- once from Sky Manor and once from Somerset. One, out of Blairstown, resulted in a landing at Middletown after 230 miles. Another, out of Sky Manor, a landing at Wurtsboro after 220 miles.

The other two were heart-breakers, real near-misses. Both were out of Sky Manor and resulted in landings at Easton (18.5 miles short) and Somerset (16 miles short). On both of these days it was no doubt possible to have completed, either by starting a little bit earlier or moving a little bit faster- and, on both of these 2 days, if I'd made a Blairstown start, I think I'd have been "home free." Maybe I'll get a chance to try another one from Blairstown before the season is over.

But the Good News is: As far as I know, none of my other records have been taken away from me yet. So the only thing keeping me from a corner on the market is still 2 days flying!

It's interesting (and perhaps a little gratifying, too) to note that, of my 11 flights declared where it was at all possible, (forget the 100-km triangles) I did fly more than Gold Distance 7 times. Adding 4 others (3 in competition and 1 "for fun"), that makes 11 so far in 1984 that took me at least 300 kilometers. It's also interesting to note that all 13 declared flights wound up with landings on runways. Guess the ol' Cross-Country Freak is either getting smarter or more chicken in his old age!

Other than that, it's been a slow year. I'm way behind 1983, having logged only 44 flights, 151.70 hours and 4543 miles through 9/23/84. With my crewing jaunts to Ephrata and Rieti blanking out over 6 weeks of my summer, it looks like '84 will be the first year since '79 that I won't log at least 200 hours. But my record attempts have at least helped to build up mileage- if I don't log another mile for '84 it will still be my fourth biggest year in that department. Incidentally, on September 1st I passed the 2000-hour milestone for glider time while making my 890th flight, and am now only 1 or 2 cross-countries shy of 35,000 miles.

Checking on the retrieve situation, I find that Bob Templin deserves a whole flock of gold stars and "Attaboys" for picking me up at Easton, PA, Mount Jackson, VA, Fairfield, PA and Middletown, NY. The Almquist's are not far behind with Janet driving me from Somerset to Sky Manor (to fetch my own trailer after the latest "near-miss") and both Ron & Janet coming to dig me out of Frederick, MD. (That was a late night!) Plus Werner & Erica Beier for driving me from Middletown to Blirstown and another time from home to Wurtsboro the morning after my daughter, Dinny, had come to fetch me out of Wurtsboro where the 301 spent the night tied down. And not to forget Greg Abbey, who flew me to Sky Manor from Somerset following a "local flight" land-out.

Thank You, one and all. When I retire from this nonsense, I'm going to try and get even by being available as observer and crew for the rest of you.

DECEMBER '84

## IN SEARCH OF RECORDS AGAIN or FIVE MORE FAILURES

Since the October issue of Pinions, when I wrote the story of my 1984 flying in search of NJ State Records, I've shifted my base to Blairstown and, through 11/18 have made 5 more declarations and had 5 more unsuccessful tries.

Two of them didn't go anywhere at all; two of them resulted in out-landings short of success and the other was a forced abort and return to Blairstown. Let's take them in chronological order:

11/3 (Sunday): Declared Front Royal, VA for Distance-To-Goal Record. About 10-15 minutes after release I was about a mile and a half west of the airport at 800 feet above it, dumping my water. Spent the next 3 1/2 hours within a 10-mile radius of the airport, barely able to fly the "Tower-To-Tower-To-Tower" triangle a couple of times and once go upwind as far as Lake Paulinskill. It was a day of scratching, most of the flight time spent circling in 1-2 knot lift, rarely above 3000 MSL.

11/6 (Tuesday): Because Bob Templin had called me the night before, saying he was "available" and arranging for Kurt Staubach to come for an early tow, I declared a 500-K triangle and was off and running about 0930, having voted at 7:00 AM (It was Election Day). This flight had the interesting feature of running right into wave a minute or so after my start, and crossing Wind Gap in 14 minutes (or less) for my best-ever getaway. That first 18-20 miles clocked well over 75 MPH and speed stayed that good until Hawk Mountain, running the ridge. There I climbed for an upwind jump, but suffered a 15 or 20 minute setback when I chickened out on my first jump, retreated low to Hawk for another climb, then followed a street to nicely upwind of Sharp Mountain. Here I had intended to turn left and run some more ridge to the west before another jump upwind. However, another nice cloud street presented itself about at Pottsville and I sailed upwind on it at a comfortable 5000' or so, reaching Little Mt. (my final upwind ridge) about due north of the Schuylkill County Airport. I could now see considerable unfriendly looking cloud to the west over my first turnpoint, Penn Valley Airport, but I sped down the ridge to the Susquehanna River. Here the idea was to climb high enough to scoot to the T/P about 5 miles upwind, get the picture and scoot back to the same ridge. My original plan called for not less than 4000' MSL to depart for the turn, but, now, under a solid overcast and with raindrops on the glider, I was able to climb no higher than 2400'. After about 10 minutes of this, my alternatives began to emerge as (1): Give up and try to return to Blairstown or (2): "Go For It"- as the weather situation was obviously deteriorating and heavier showers were observed to the west and north. Trusting only to "blind luck" that the upwind foray might produce sufficient lift or lack of sink to enable a round trip, I started for the T/P. No luck- arrived over the field at about 1200' MSL (the field is 444'), dumped the water and landed. It was about 11:45 and my (earlier) good speed had been eroded to about 40 MPH for the 100-mile flight. Templin arrived about 6:00 PM so I had a long sit to think about what I might have done differently. Just maybe that first upwind stab from Hawk Mt., if pursued, would have made

enough difference in timing to permit getting in and out of the first turn. Then the second leg would have been very fast downwind to better weather. But still a lot of miles to do then for completion- some of them upwind again. Oh well...still consistent...now 2-for-2 on November failures.

11/13 (Tuesday): Ron Schwartz called me the night before this one to say that HE'D be "available", so it was the same declaration and off I went again- again at about 0930. Once more there was wave lift between the airport and the ridge but a low overcast (3500' MSL) with only tiny holes in it precluded any serious exploitation of it. The trip to just beyond the tunnel (about 40 miles) went fast and there, reaching some adequately-sized upwind-of-the-ridge wave windows, I climbed above the lower deck then a second layer to nearly 10000' while cruising westbound. Although I couldn't see it because of cloud cover, I reached the Hawk Mt. area in about 50-55 minutes from Blairstown and started upwind, hoping that there was a chance for some (unseen) openings near my T/P which would enable me either to see and photograph Penn Valley or make a descent and reach it. Don't know for sure how far upwind I went, but, seeing nothing but solid cloud under me and all the way to Williamsport (and beyond?), I reluctantly turned back downwind, returning to a hole through which I was able to recognize Snyders' Crossroads.

Now talking to Ron, who had launched to try and get his Diamond Climb, I perhaps helped to "lure" him in my direction. A short while later, climbing above a window near Slatington which he, too, was approaching from the east, I decided to move upwind toward an area of clear sky in front of the third and highest deck of cloud. We had not yet caught sight of each other when about 10 minutes later Ron called to say "The Slatington Hole is closing". Having turned my back to it and being above 10500', I made a quick decision that now was the time to leave the smooth air and go back to the rough "down under." I had 700 vertical feet to get rid of so I pulled the dive brakes while doing a 180 and, spotting the rapidly disappearing hole, dove for it. It filled so quickly that before I was as much as 1000 feet below the tops of that lowest layer I was in cloud. Ron, too, had been caught on top and was preceding me on an IFR descent, using a different technique. He lined up on a due north heading to settle through while I continued (to the best of my knowledge) to circle downward to the left. With only relatively minor airspeed excursions and no unusual G-forces I soon broke out at about 3500' MSL, still circling left- only to discover that I was 5-7 miles downwind of the ridge. Closing the breaks, I made for the upwind side, which I was able to reach with no real difficulty although I had told Ron I might have to land at Slatington Airport.

We then flew together to Hawk Mt. before returning to Blairstown, where we found Gordon Glover shortly after crossing the Water Gap. The day remained overcast with a lowering ceiling and only minor flecks of sunshine on the ground through very small holes. So much for the failure of another mission...Now 3-for-3... (My barogram later showed a high of 10850' MSL.)

11/14 Wednesday: The very next day was the one I would have chosen to fly had Ron not called me Monday evening, so here we were again, 434 & BF, with me taking off about 0945 in much stronger wind than I had anticipated and much less cloud (to the point of none) just as

I HAD anticipated. Going for the "500" once more, this day I fell victim to Blirstown's location downwind of the ridge...Releasing at 3000' above the field, I plunged forward at about 7-to-1 into the howling wind only to see the ridge rise in front of me, blocking my way to the "good" side. Before reaching the power line below the Upper Lake I had sunk to 1800' MSL and had no chance of crossing the ridge. A 180 returned me at high ground speed through the same violent air to be near the airport. Kurt was just then completing his exciting landing and after a few more minutes of futile flight with all of 150 feet gained at one point, I lined up to land from the west end. Landing was a test of airmanship, fortitude and luck but proved successful. So ended my 18 minutes in the air that day. It would have been "something else" on the ridge if ever able to reach it but I'm rather doubtful that the upwind legs of my triangle could ever have been accomplished with so much wind and no ballast. (I had no water either of these 2 days because of freezing conditions.) Mine was the only launch that day and made me 4-for-4 as a loser.

11/17 (Saturday): An early arrival at the airport served no useful purpose for a 500 try that day as there was no one around to tow, although by 8:45 Gordon Glover, Hal Matousek and I were all eager to fly. About an hour later we reluctantly went over to beg "Doc" Solt for a tow but when Cas met us at the door, paint brush in hand and said they were painting in the new addition, we backed out and gave up the idea without even seeing "Doc." Back on the field we hadn't even gotten out of the car when "Doc" rolled up in his truck and went to fetch an L-19. It then being too late for my 500, I rapidly wrote out a declaration for a Goal flight to Rutland, VT, which Templin (who had just arrived) witnessed. At 1018 was rolling on take-off, releasing less than 4 minutes later over the Lower Reservoir. About 20-25 minutes checking lift in the vicinity convinced me that it was "GO" for Rutland, so I lit out. Speed to Wurtsboro (all thermals, streets and a little wave- no ridge) was excellent at nearly 70 MPH- never below 3500' MSL- rarely using lift less than 5 knots. Near the Ashokan Reservoir I had an excellent climb from a "low point" of perhaps 3000' back to 6500' at an average of 7 knots taken later from the barogram. I flew north on the west side of the Hudson until crossing the river about 10 north of Kingston. There was now a greatly-increasing amount of cloud and wind, but, after a low of about 2500' near the town of Chatham, it was back to 6000'+ and a good deal of straight running in lift under black ones lined up in streets defined in the overcast.

I crossed the Mass Pike before one o'clock, high and delighted- except for one thing. I had flown over half of my mission in just about 2 hours (from actual departure time from the local B'town scene) averaging about 60 MPH- but I could now see some fairly heavy snow showers blocking my route of flight east of Albany and Troy. I made one attempt at an end run towards Troy, ran into snow and turned south-east towards North Adams and Mt. Greylock, then had to retreat south toward Pittsfield. I hoped that if I lingered for a while the snow might pass through, allowing me to continue on to Rutland, but lowering cloud and more snow forced me to change my mind and I retreated more to land at Pittsfield in light snow and heavy wind. Getting the 301 between a couple of hangars out of the wind, I waited for help to come from Blirstown. Dent Brome & Gene Krasnoff were my surprise benefactors, arriving just before

7:30 PM. After boxing the snow-covered bird and enjoying a good dinner, we were back in Blirstown at 3:10 AM. You can't win 'em all- but I'm beginning to think I can't win ANY of 'em as it goes to 5-for-5.

Mark Twain always said that in spite of everybody talking about the weather, nobody DOES anything about it. For all these 5 failures I naturally blame the weather and not my lack of skill. When is somebody going to do something about it? The weather, I mean.

JANUARY '85

### AIRPLANE RACING- ITALIAN STYLE

This past summer, acting as crew for Doug Jacobs, I got to see a bit more of the soaring world than usual for me- if only from the ground. As most everyone is aware, Doug flew an excellent contest at Ephrata, WA and won his second US 15-M Championships. He had won at Elmira in 1982, then placed 4th at Ionia in 1983. His victory at Ephrata automatically earned him a slot on the US Team for the 1985 Worlds' Championships and cancelled out plans to go direct from Ephrata to Hutchinson for the Standard Class Nationals. Instead of Kansas, SSA offered us the chance to go to Italy to compete in the Italian Nationals along with Open Class Champion Ray Gimmey. This was to give at least some of the American Team a "preview" of the scene for the 1985 Worlds'.

For me (as crew), this involved more of a European tour than for the others. Leaving 3 days earlier than Doug, I flew into Stuttgart, went to the Schemmp-Hirth glider works at Kirchheim/Teck and picked up a Ventus B belonging to Frau Holighaus. An Audi and a Komet trailer completed the rig which I then hauled over the Alps to Rieti, Italy, a distance of about 1000 km. This trip was a series of adventures unto itself, the details of which I shall spare you. On arrival, I looked up Ray & Shirley Gimmey, who had flown into Rome about three days prior but had not yet flown the ASW-20 assigned to Ray from the local club fleet. Also on hand or due to arrive in the next couple of days were some 36 Italian pilots and 43 foreigners. In all 18 nations were represented, including 22 pilots who had competed at Hobbs in the 1983 Worlds'. This obviously was to be a "Mini-Worlds", not just a Nationals.

Although some of the foreigners had previously competed from this site, for a good many it was to be the same as for us Americans- a chance to get some local familiarization before 1985's "Main Event." Many of the procedures to be followed in 1984 were the same as those planned for 1985- and, of course, the terrain and the climatology were unlikely to be changed. In spite of the odds that I may be the only ACA member attending the 1985 Worlds', should any of you have the opportunity, save some time for next summer- late July, early August- and go to Rieti. But you ask: "Where the Hell is Rieti?" Having been one of the four Americans on the scene in 1984, I can answer that and tell you a bit about what to expect.

Rieti, a city of 50-60,000 people, is the capital of the province of Rieti and is located pretty close to the geographical center of Italy, about 60 km NNE of Rome. It lies at the SE corner of the Rieti Valley, a generally flat, open area about 10 km on a side, sitting about 400 meters above sea level. As for the surrounding territory, "flat" and "open" it AIN'T! Like most of Italy, this is mountainous country. A short but winding drive NE from the city is Mount Terminillo, elevation 2216 meters (7279'). It will come as no surprise to you to have me tell you that Italy is a skinny peninsula country. But you might not know how skinny. You could fly across it anywhere from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Adriatic and come way short of earning your Gold Distance. There are few places along the "boot" where you are 100 km from the sea.



This crew person definitely looks forward to returning to Rieti next year. We won't be staying in the heart of downtown Rieti in '85 as I hear that we were lucky enough to get into a place that we went to for dinner one night and took a look. It is a more countryside setting about a half-hour NE of the airfield. Although I also hear that early practice sessions will be flow from another airport some little distance away and we may have to take up temporary quarters near there before the contest. Don't know yet what ship Doug will fly or in what class, but he has been offered an LS-6 and perhaps even a Discus. Y'all come.

AUGUST '85

### SOMETHING TO CREW ABOUT- RIETI, 1985

In July, 1984, when I drove home from Ephrata, Washington, I had with me the 15-meter National Champion's trophy- which, of course, had been won by Doug Jacobs- not me. Since the (one-shot) team selections procedure for the 1985 Worlds Championships automatically placed Doug on "Team USA", he immediately was eligible to go to Rieti for a "warm-up" contest. This you all heard about when you read "Pinions about this time last year and again at our 1985 Annual Dinner, where Doug acted as our guest speaker. It may not have been readily apparent to too many at the time, but I came home from Italy last year convinced that Doug had a real good shot at becoming a Worlds' Champion. He proved this emphatically during the 1985 gathering at Rieti. A hundred of the world's best pilots competed and Doug Jacobs performance was far and away the finest. But not all that great a surprise to his crew. Both his wife, Martha, and I knew that he had come there to win.

Flying a brand-new LS-6 in the largest class (it initially listed 47 entrants), Doug's name was at the top of the cumulative score sheet from wire-to-wire. Even after the first 2 days, when he had a perfect score of 2000 points and a lead of over 100 points, there were those who were heard to ask "Who IS this Jacobs fellow?" By the end of the 4th day and his 3rd win, his lead was 254 points. After the 8th day and his 5th win, he was leading by 772 points and I'm sure his competitors were now thinking more about fighting it out for 2nd and 3rd places than of beating Jacobs. (There was yet a very tight bunching from 2nd through 10th). Doug didn't win any more days the rest of the way, but just flew steadily, proving the consistency and ability with which he had earned his two previous National titles, winding up the contest with a 665-point margin over 2nd place.

To do this, he flew 12 tasks ranging from 238 kilometers to 575 kilometers, averaging 402 km, with a speed averaging over 60 MPH for the entire competition. Of course, he completed every task, including one day when nearly 80% of his competitors failed to make it back and 2 others when over half landed out. The previous 15-M World's Champion, Kees Musters, (who had won at Hobbs in 1984) finished 4th, 828 points behind Doug and the other medal winners this year were Kuusisto (Finland) in 2nd place and Goudrian (South Africa) in 3rd, the same placing he had earned at Hobbs. Only 163 points separated those three.

Those of you who think that the primary function of a crew is to drag the trailer out into the boonies to the scene of an outlanding and bring pilot and ship back to the contest sit must also be thinking that I didn't have much to do crewing for this kind of a pilot. Well, I did plenty of trailer-dragging- but it was all either before or after the contest- and all on ferry missions. I flew into Germany and picked up the car and trailer 4 days before Doug flew into Rome, then returned both car and trailer when the contest was over. The driving trip was over 1300 kilometers each way and provided plenty of adventures- too numerous for this account. But there were plenty of other duties involved in crewing and I'll try to describe some of them.

Apparently the soaring is none too great as you near the coast, so this limitation becomes quite restrictive on task-calling. In general, all turnpoints lie within a rectangle along the "boot", with dimensions of this rectangle about 25 km wide and 400 km long. Rieti is central to both of these dimensions. You never really get out of the mountains, many of which exceed 5000' and some go over 8000'. In addition, there are stretches which are totally unlandable. I almost think that Italy may have more miles of tunnels per mile of highway than Switzerland. And that's going some. Although close to 50 turnpoints have been designated for 1985 (and were those in use in 1984), the combination of shape of the task area and the normal sequence of thermal development sets the pattern for task-calling. Speed Triangles will be long but flat. You can expect races in average of 3-4 hundred km and normally send the contestants first to a T/P toward the SE, then back to a second T/P NW of Rieti, then home. This will be varied with some Out & Return tasks and quadrilaterals, but the basic pattern will remain the same. This year, just like 1985, there were 3 classes flying 3 separate tasks to different but somewhat adjacent T/P's with many nearly identical course legs.

Soaring conditions can be expected to be quite good on average. To go along with a normal thermal day lasting from noon 'til 6:00 there will be both ridge and wave lift. Some of the 1984 contestants achieved altitudes in excess of 5000 meters. Normal high temperatures at the airport will probably range up to 85-100 degrees F, prevailing winds will be south-westerly but, of course, dependent upon the synoptic situation. Visibility can be a problem- there is often haze- and thunderstorms can build over the mountains. Overall (in my opinion) the keys to soaring success at Rieti will be knowing how to fly the mountains and their orographic lift and NOT getting lost. Some of the designated T/P's are rather obscure. Contrary to the normal US procedures, where most T/P's are airports, in Italy you photograph church steeples, railroad stations, road intersections, lakes, etc and many have look-alikes not too far away.

There are differences, too, in other ways. Last year at Hobbs there were 109 contestants, with each nation allowed up to 6 pilots. In '85 no country will have more than 4 and probable total entry list will be about 90. The organizers feel that this is Rieti's limit. Though it is not at all like Hobbs, the airfield is well-suited for a championship contest. It is a grass field about 2 km N of town with 4 parallel N-S runways and an extension to the south end which is used for staging and take-offs. The 4 parallel runways are immediately adjacent to one another and approximately 200' x 2500' each, with the southerly extension adding perhaps another 2500'. The gliders are staged here in 3 files and all takeoffs are to the north (away from town). Because of wind, most landings are to the south, and the Italians make it their practice to assign a runway to landing gliders as they cross the finish line.

The East side of the airfield is off limits, it is occupied by the military. All along the western side of the field are buildings and hangars used by the local aero clubs. There is a large tie-down area with underground piping to bring water to a goodly number of outlets throughout the area. To the north of the tie-down area and to the west of the runways is the trailer parking area and beyond this to the north is the "Ground Clock." At the west side of the field is a large

camping area. South of the tie-down area there is a row of steel hangars, one of which is used for pilot's meetings. Another hangar next door provides a store at which you can buy groceries, cold beer and snacks. Also in this hangar is a temporary branch banking office and some of the staff manning a counter for scoreboard posting of start and finish times. Down at the extreme southern edge of the airport is a full-time "Ristorante-Bar" which offers drinks and complete meals, either indoor or patio style dining. For mid-day meals and some dinners they operate a sort of combined cafeteria-buffet with plenty of goodies.

Back to a description of the "Ground Clock." It consists of 9 large fabric panels arranged on the ground in 3 rows of 3. The panels are manually switched from white to black as directed by a computer. Unlike the Hobbs clock, there is no moving cursor and the time is changed only once every minute. Also unlike Hobbs, where unlimited start altitudes were permitted, (and many starts were made at 10,000' and above), the contest directors at Rieti imposed maximum starting altitudes. Usually this was set at 1500 or 2000 meters above the field and was policed by a "spy plane" loitering near the gate. I suppose the limit was set because of the difficulty in reading the start photos of the clock, (of course, don't know if either this or the same (Hobbs) clock will be used in '85).

Although this is a "Silent Start" system, crews were obliged to report their pilot's start time to the staff within 20 minutes of start so that times could be publicly posted on the scoreboard. I noticed that some crews seemed to like to keep their pilot's time "secret" as long as possible while watching the board intently and advising their pilot as to who had started and when. Since a start made just prior to the clock switching could lose up to a full minute's time, I made it my habit to drive out to the clock after our guys had launched, get the switch time synchronized to my watch and then give Doug & Ray a time back over the radio. This information was supposed to be available on a published frequency, but our guys seemed to like my way of doing it and it kept our whole team on a common frequency. Incidentally, no team frequencies were assigned- you picked your own from the 720 available. So long as there didn't appear to be any traffic on it!

With the racers out on course, it was often a good idea to drive up onto Mount Terminillo, about a mile above the hot and dusty airfield. Here there are a lot of hotels and villas that support the local ski area, great scenery, better radio communication and, naturally, a considerably cooler place to wait. You could often look DOWN as well as up on gliders making their way up the second leg of the course. But the crew always goes back down the mountain to see the finishes or to get the bad news that a retrieve is needed. Retrieves in Italy can be different and fun, but it's not as much fun as a "Good Finish". It is always music to the ears of the crew when his pilot makes the prescribed radio call of "In Arrivo". Especially if his time is looking good! During the '84 experience I had to go out for Doug Twice. He had found good fields both times in the midst of what looked like gosh-awful terrain. And there he was cementing international relations with the Italian locals.

A typical contest day started with breakfast at our hotel, the Villa Tizzi, about 10 miles from the Rieti airport. This was the exclusive home of about 20 members of Team USA plus nearly the same number from the French Team. After dining out-of-doors on the terrace overlooking the Rieti Valley from a few hundred meters above, Doug, Martha and I would drive our Opel crew car down to the field and right up to our tie-down to get the ship ready for the day. This involved untying, cleaning, adding the water ballast and towing over to our assigned spot on the grid. Often on the way to the grid there was a required weighing- to make sure we were under the designated maximum gross of 500 kilograms. We always were- usually coming in at about 492-496 kg (1085-1093 lbs). On the way to the grid we also selected our own tow rope from a pile in the hangar and laid it out in front of the ship. These tow ropes were of sufficient strength to tow the QE-2. Each end was equipped with tow rings on bights formed by doubling the ends back and securing with good old-fashioned cable clamps- no weak links. Before the launch Martha always draped the rope around on the ground in the shape of 4 leaf clovers.

Meanwhile, I had cameras and barographs to take care of. We used 2 Clock-Cameras and 2 Barographs, just to make sure. Camera handling procedure was for me to have 2 film cartridges officially stamped and dated at the Secretariat, load film, turn timers "ON", and photograph the Official Clock to have a synchronized reference. When Doug had finished the task at the end of the day, I removed the cameras, shot the tail numbers with all but 2 of the remaining frames, then went back to the Official Clock, shot the last 2 exposures, turned cameras "OFF" and turned the film in to the officials along with the landing card which I had made out. Barographs were mandatory on certain days. Before the first contest day all barographs to be used had to be turned in and calibrated by the staff by taking them for a ride in a tow plane- just how high we never found out. In any event, it was my normal practice to re-smoke my Winter the night before and re-paper Doug's Replogle. (I also prepared Ray Gimney's Winter each night that it was necessary). On mandatory barograph days I would take them to the Secretariat for sealing and then get them secured behind Doug's head in the LS-6. At the end of the task, I would then take them back to the Secretariat where the official would break the seals, take (and spray) the traces. I suppose someone subsequently made an examination of them, but for just what we were never too sure. Some days certain areas of Italy were given airspace altitude restrictions and perhaps that's what they were concerned about.

After placing the ship on the grid, we usually had a little free time before the pilots' meeting which was normally called for at 11:00. Almost every day, the day's tasks would be announced over the loud speaker about 10:30 so the pilots would know where they had to go prior to attending the meeting. Usually I would write down the turnpoints for the 15-Meter class and take the turnpoint photos out of the loose-leaf photo book so that Doug could have them at the briefing. During this free period I would also give the glider a thorough walk-around and prepare and install my patented ballast dump-hole seal.

Then off to the meeting to hear the announcements, watch Doug receive another day prize (he got 6 of them!), listen to weather briefing and watch Doug prepare his maps. These meetings were held in a large hangar with all teams seated together at their own assigned tables. Meetings seldom took more than 20 minutes and were followed by our own team meeting usually held at

the south end of the airport in the shade of some trees at the back end of the grid. Here, Walter Neubert, our coach, would give his analysis of the day and the task and suggest routes along the mountain chains. He had flown 8 contests at Rieti and won 7 of them, so he knows the area and its weather as few others do, is a first class competition pilot, has been on the German team a number of times in World Competition and was able to give our 5 pilots a considerable amount of advice. We had relief maps of the entire contest area and all tasks were discussed. Walter spoke in German, a language in which 3 of our 5 pilots are fluent. Jacobs, Mozer and Opitz needed no translation but this was done for the benefit of Gimney and Seaborn.

After a lunch of sandwiches and soda we usually had nearly an hour before the launch started. There did not seem to be any predictable normal rotation of the classes for order of launch and it seemed to me that the 15-M class was first much more often than one-third of the days. One day they were the only class launched! As you might expect, the first class to launch was likely to have the longest task. Twice the 15's flew tasks longer than the Opens and on 7 days our task was longer than the Standards.

Just prior to our hook-up and launch there was always more glider cleaning, checking or replacing tape, wing-balancing of water ballast and making sure that our pilot had everything. Then Martha would give him a kiss and I'd wish him luck and run the wing. Then back to the crew car with wing-stand and cleanup gear to monitor the team frequency. It was always my duty to check the time of the last launch in every class and advise the pilots when to expect their task to open. It was always on an even minute by the Official Clock and would be from 20 to 21 minutes after the last roll in the class. In the early days of the contest I was also giving time hacks every 3 minutes as 1-minute warnings of ground clock shifts. I discontinued this after about 4 or 5 days but continued to give the task opening information. Once the tasks were open several of us would attempt to spot starters and advise our team of who and how many had started. Recognition was not too easy as there was normally no limit on start altitude and typical starting heights would be about 6000' above the field. One day both Jacobs & Seaborn started from above cloud at altitudes of 12,500'-13000'.

After Doug's start, which he reported in code, I would turn in his start time to the Secretariat. This had to be done within 30 minutes of his start and was probably required so that they could load the data into their computer and print out start time lists that were made available to crews. With all classes out on course, there would be a few hours of not too much to do- go refill the ballast jugs, tidy the car a little, relax in the shade, and try to follow the progress of your pilot from radio reports. Usually back at the airport we would lose radio contact not long after the start and had to rely on relayed reports from our man on the mountain, John Byrd, who was Eric's crew chief. Johnnie would drive up to Mount Terminillo, a little over 30 minutes from the field and about a mile higher. There, as "Condor", he could get their reports and return information to them on winds, clouds and passing glider traffic. He'd also check out the topless sun-bathers, whom he reported as "Double Zeroes." Though each team had its own assigned frequency, there were numerous eavesdroppers on our channel so each day a code was devised to try and keep them guessing. Some days it kept some of Team USA guessing, too.

When Doug would report his final glide or imminent finish, Martha and I would get tail dolly and tow rope ready and move up to the landing area. We loved doing this because we knew a lot of the other crews who were sweating out their pilots were watching us. After Doug's finish and landing we'd tow the ship off the runway back to the tie-down. There I'd go through my previously described camera and barograph routine and we'd get the ship tied down, battery out for recharge, wipe the bugs off and cover her up. Now there was time for a cold beer while watching the others finish and make a quick check on how the standings might have changed for the day. Martha and I always tried to time the closer guys in our class so that Doug would know at once if anyone were gaining on him. It never really happened.

There was a lot more to being a crew not included above. Some samples of other things that kept me involved and out of mischief were: being an airport pick-up person (I made 3 round trips to the Rome airport- one to get Doug, one to bring Marty Opitz and Judge Lattimore and the 3rd to meet Martha's plane), acting as interpreter with the French team, manufacturing a new camera mount for the LS-6, manning an outpost along Ray Gimmey's Open Class course, standing guard over the glider after there were some indications of sabotage, helping with repairs to some belly scratches caused by gear collapsing on takeoff during the practice week, resoldering a speaker wire for the audio....and trying to keep our man "loose" when the inevitable pressure started to build as the contest was drawing to a close and he was becoming almost certain Worlds Champion.

There is no way I can tell the whole story of my entire stay in Europe (which kept me away from home for 37 days) or of the overall happenings at the Worlds, so let me finish this merely by listing all the final placings for the rest of Team USA:

Eric Mozer	3rd Standard
Mike Opitz	5th Standard
Ray Gimmey	7th Open
John Seaborn	33rd 15 Meter

All in all, a tremendous showing for the Americans. And, now, on to Australia! Perhaps in 1986- for sure in 1987.

JULY '86

## IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...

As you may have been aware, there are 10 categories for which you can achieve a State Soaring Record. 4 are for Distance, 4 are for Speed and 2 are for Altitude. For some time it has been my not-so-secret ambition to capture all 10 and, having written a couple of accounts for Pinions telling how the last 3 New Jersey State Records have been eluding me, it is with a genuine feeling of satisfaction that I can now announce that my ambition has at long last been realized.

Though it sure wasn't for lack of trying, until May of this year I hadn't gotten a record since June of 1984- when I took the "One-Way-Distance" away from Jeff Van Doren. It was high time to take the "Distance-To-Goal" away from Bob Clack and the "500 K Speed" away from Bill Malpas. (No one had ever been credited with the "Distance-Around-Triangle").

The Goal flight had to be at least 195 miles. Having declared a Goal of Front Royal, VA several times, it seemed only natural to declare it again on Friday, May 9th, but my stalwart volunteer crew, Bob Templin, said: "Aw, you can go farther than that today" so I declared the Shenandoah Valley Airport some 55-60 miles past Front Royal. That turned out to be a mistake, since the last lift of the day was found at Harper's Ferry and I was barely able to glide into Front Royal with no altitude to spare. The only thing wrong with the flight was the declaration. The trip was just a bit under 4-1/2 hours.

48 hours later, when partner Gene Krasnoff urged me to try another Goal flight, I had sense enough to write out the declaration for Front Royal one last time. On this nice Sunday with NE winds I was to have company for the mission- or at least a good bit of the time. Jim Paris was flying his LS-4 "1F" from Blairstown and decided to make the same declaration. It was a better day than the previous Friday and, after a slow getaway (on my part) we got to Front Royal a few minutes over 4 hours later. Jim and I had agreed before takeoff that we would share the claim in 15-Meter Class, he'd take Standard and I'd take Unlimited. It goes into the book at about 225 miles. That left only THE BIG ONE.

THE BIG ONE is the 500 K Speed Triangle- which I'd been trying over the last several years. Without making a logbook check, I'll guess I've flown over 3000 miles on declared 500's- maybe more- but until Tuesday, June 17th I had not completed the first one. Two of those flights (flown from Sky Manor) were probably over 500 K but both had fallen short of reaching my goal. Lots of them were over 350-400 K. As recently at 5/8/86 I had a super speed (over 60 MPH) for all the hard part of the flight but had to abort short of Wurtsboro because of rain.

Then on the third try of 1986 I made it- 316 miles to Williamsport and York on 6/17/86- and about 5 minutes faster than MALPAS had been over the same course in 1982. But not quite fast enough for a new record. (You have to exceed the previous record by at least 2 Kilometers per hour in order to qualify.) Obviously, I had to try it again. Since the very next day promised to be almost as good, I declared Williamsport and York again and was off and running at 10:33 on Wednesday, 6/18.



The ridge wasn't nearly as powerful as the previous day, but 30 minutes later I was climbing very rapidly near the Turnpike Tunnel at Palmerton. This great climb plus the look of the sky convinced me to start upwind for Williamsport right then and there. Although I usually start upwind from Hawk Mountain, this is a much more direct route. From Palmerton I used no further ridge soaring but just kept on truckin' upwind with thermals, streets and wave. Before long I thought I was high enough to glide across Bald Eagle Mountain into Williamsport. Downwash behind the ridge made it impossible to cross so I had to climb once more before going in for my pictures. I was about 15 minutes ahead of the previous day.

I then took a much more direct route to York than I had the day before and got there showing about 25 minutes picked up from that try. With 2 pictures taken there, and following pretty much the same path as Tuesday's flight but without as much help from wave, I crossed over into Pine Grove-Schuylkill Haven Valley in search of wave. Able to locate only the down part of it, I sneaked on to the Hawk Mountain corner with almost 2500' MSL. I flew the ridge fairly slowly (it's really a bit lousey as far back as Snyder's) until I got to the better stretch and hustled on towards Wind Gap. Just a couple of miles short of Wind Gap I took one last thermal climb-high enough to final glide the last 20 miles to Blirstown at good speed. My clocking was 6:38 elapsed for a speed of 47.62 MPH.

Since Mark Giuglianotti was also out flying a 500 from Sky Manor that day and made a speed of about 52 MPH, I won't be getting the "Unlimited" Record- only the "15-Meter" Record. I guess I'm a bit lucky that he can't get 15-Meter unless he saws off some of his Nimbus 2's wings.

So what do I go after next? Well, outside of pumping up a couple of my own records that aren't too great- like the 100 K and the 300 K Speeds- I guess I'll wait until somebody breaks one of the 10. A 750 K Triangle from Blirstown would make a nice flight on a good day and no doubt can be accomplished- maybe even a 1000 K O&R or Triangle. And there ARE those ones that Mark has taken in the Unlimited Class...

However, anybody needing an Official Observer or Crew should try me. Especially Gene Krasnoff- I'd love to see him do a 500 K in the "Lily-Belle" this year. Maybe in the fall. Right now I'm as happy as a clam.

NOVEMBER '86

FLYING FROM BLAIRSTOWN FOR THE DIFFICULT DIAMOND  
- 500 KILOMETERS

'Way back in 1974, when nobody had as yet flown a 500 K flight from our favorite gliderport, the only thing being considered seemed to be a flight back and forth along the Blue Mountain Ridge between Manada Gap to the southwest and Ellenville to the northeast. At first it was proposed to declare a flat triangle with an airport departure (and goal) and turnpoints at Manada Gap and a point on the ridge above Ellenville where an electric power transmission line crossed over a quarry.

I believe this triangle had been "invented" by Bob Neumann (probably with the collaboration of his cohorts Brome & Kretschmer) and may even have been declared and attempted by one or more of them. But after some prudent thinking about the unnecessary excitement and potential perils of an airport departure on a day when the wind might be blowing 30 knots, Bob had the brilliant idea of designating a "Remote Departure Point." This was in the days before this system had come into general use, but Bob had uncovered a "loophole" in the F.A.I. rules which gave him the idea. It seems that claiming a distance flight was allowed for an "uncompleted triangle" so long as the point of landing was no more than 10 kilometers off the final course line and so long as the requisite distance had been flown.

By declaring the start and finish of the flight at a point which he christened "Blair Auxiliary #2", the "Death Dive" for the ridge (from a release altitude no greater than 3500' MSL) could be eliminated. "B.A. #2" was in fact the field next to the Coppermine Inn and enabled the 500 K aspirant to ride on tow over to the "good side" of our local ridge, where the flight officially began upon release. At no time did he intend to land there or even to return overhead at the end of the flight for a photograph. This system had not yet been adopted. The intent was to return and land at the Blairstown Airport, thus complying with the requirements for an "uncompleted triangle"- having flown the necessary distance and landing at a point "not more than 10 kilometers off the final course line." Bob should be remembered and credited for this ingenious plan, which went a long way toward enhancing the safety of the departure and the likelihood of success of the task.

Thus it was eminently fitting that (on March 13, 1974) Bob Neumann became the first pilot to fly a Diamond Distance from Blairstown. In addition, by earning U.S. Diamond #279, he became the first member of the Aero Club Albatross to complete all the F.A.I. Badges. His Gold #562 was preceded only by Dent Brome's #461 earned back in 1969.

Less than 2 months later both Dent and I declared the identical task. On May 4, 1974 we each flew the 500 K course- Dent in the C-70 and I in the RS-15- both landing back at Blairstown, but only I got credit for the badge leg. It seems that Dent never located the second turnpoint, that elusive quarry atop the ridge at Ellenville. I located TWO quarries and photographed them both having arrived some 20-30 minutes after Dent, whom I saw in the air only once that day,

as we passed in opposite directions just south of Wurtsboro. If he had only waited in the Ellenville vicinity, we could have pooled our ideas on the turnpoint identification and he could have come home with A.C.A.'s second Diamond Badge. That day didn't give me mine- just a Silver Badge with TWO Diamonds! Not having either Gold or Diamond Altitude, I had to wait about 5 months for a trip to New Hampshire where I completed both Gold (#899) and my Diamond (#302). Since Dent had "goofed" in May, that gave me the honor of being the second in the club and Dent had to settle for third some 4 years later. He wears #419.

By the time Dent did his successful 500, however, we had changed the preferred northerly turnpoint to the "State Pen", a much more easily recognized landmark. Shortly after Dent and I had flown the task in 1974, four of us (Brome, Kretschmer, Neumann and myself) jumped into the Turbo 210 which I owned a piece of and took a survey flight to check more potential turnpoints at the north end. We decided that nobody could miss the "State Pen."

However, the same task remained as the "preferred routing" for all these many years since 1974. There were other spasmodic attempts, but only Brome's 1978 flight proved successful over that course. In 1977, a visiting pilot, Bob Drew flew and Out & Return to Burnt Cabins, PA- but never processed his claim for the 500. He flew that one in his PIK-20 at a speed in excess of 60 MPH. Perhaps his flight had something to do with Ron Schwartz's choice of task for the hard Diamond. I do not know how many times he had declared this flight and not made it, but on April 2, 1981 he had a day which he will never forget.

His day of 8:42 in "434" produced the fourth (accepted) claim for Diamond Distance flown from Blairstown. He also claimed a Regional 1-26 Record for an O & R flight- which still stands and furthermore is the longest O & R in a 1-26 that has ever been flown anywhere. 326 miles! BF will never forget that day himself- that was the day I did my 1000 K from Ridge Soaring. One clear message comes from Ron's flight- you don't need high performance glass to do a 500- if you have the skills, the weather and the right route. Ron may have tried that flat triangle along Blue Mountain- I really don't know- but, if so, that's not where he found success. If he never did, that leaves Jack Greene as the only 1-26 jockey who ever took a shot at it. Jack was not successful, but he DID make the longest flight of his career before he fell out about 25 miles short of the second turnpoint.

Now, in 1986, I'm trying to convince Jack (and any other 500 K hopefuls) that there is a better way than sticking to Blue Mountain. In our club, very few of us have ever flown west of the Susquehanna River after a Blairstown departure. Bob Clack made his Gold Distance with a one-way flight to Potomac, of course there is Schwartz, Tony Benson has landed on the other side a couple of times, and Bill Malpas did it at least once on a great long flight- but I am certain that my own explorations are by far the most extensive. I have flown across the Susquehanna at least 20 times (some of them one-way trips) but have also had more experience flying in those parts while competing or just ranging around from both Ridge Soaring and Fairfield. I therefore am qualifying myself as an expert and am going to tell you what I think is the best way to try for a 500 from Blairstown.

with, since 500-K is a reasonably long flight, let's assume that we wish to do it on a when we can take advantage of the improved average speed that flying along the ridges can offer. Before even thinking about a mission like this, you must have confidence that you are almost as proficient at ridge-running as you can be. You should have proven this to yourself by successfully completing a few 300 K ridge tasks with good speed. And you must know how to climb up and away from ridges; you should know how to recognize and exploit wave and cloud streets; you must know how to jump gaps and make upwind transitions. Running back and forth on the local ridge or even a successful 300 by the 4-leg method between Catfish and Snyders is not sufficient experience to go charging out on the task which I am about to suggest. I am not going to tell you that it is easy, a "piece of cake", just that my suggested route is the one which offers the best chance of success.

My suggested and recommended task is an Out and Return to Burnt Cabins. My recommended route is along Blue Mountain (Kittatinny Ridge) from Blirstown to Hawk Mountain and, perhaps, Bear Mountain), then along Mahantango to the Susquehanna, then along Buffalo Mountain, followed by an upwind transition to Tuscarora Mountain, then along Tuscarora to Burnt Cabins. The return trip is to be essentially the reverse. The upwind transition from Blue to Mahantango is the most difficult- it is about 25 miles, though it is probably more crosswind than upwind and may include ridge-running. From Buffalo to Tuscarora is only about a 6-mile jump, about the same as the jump from Hawk Mountain (Blue) to Second.

Please note that I have called the first jump a 25-miler. I recommend that you try to stay high all the way, while at the same time knowing that you have Second Mt. and Bear Mt. as back-up security in the event that you suffer a "sinking spell." Before you ever attempt this flight it would be highly advisable to explore this area as far as Schuylkill County Airport. You can do this in a power plane, but, better yet, do it on a thermal day. You MUST be totally familiar with the geography so that when THE DAY comes you will have no trouble recognizing the mountains as they unfold below you. Remember, your objective is Mahantango Mountain and, ultimately, Tuscarora.

Why do I recommend this route? Why not the good old Blue Mountain all the way to Manada Gap? Take it from one who has flown both choices many times- Blue Mountain has too many stretches of poor to nonexistent ridge-soaring. Those of you who have flown only as far as Snyders or Hawk Mt. are in for a rude awakening. In my opinion, the stretch between Snyders and Hawk is a "tiptoe" segment and it is followed by generally poor ridge all the way to Manada, broken by only short segments of "real" ridge. And if you choose to go north to Ellenville, you are faced with about 25-30 miles northeast from Blirstown which I do not consider safe to ridge soar. Then comes another 20 miles of "dinky" ridge between High Point and Wurtsboro with a good part of it having only a swampy lake at the base. Summing up the total stretch from Manada to Ellenville, a distance of about 160 miles, I categorize only about 65 or 70 miles as "good ridge". 'Nuff said? The recommended route has less than 20 miles of "bad ridge." And truly, jumping back upwind along Blue to regain Hawk on your return leg is

about as difficult as the transitions required on my recommended task. If you can regularly jump from the hope tower to our local ridge at Blairstown on a NW day, you can probably make the jumps my route calls for with less trouble.

So, you've done your homework, you've scouted the Pottsville-Schuylkill County area and you consider yourself ready to give it a shot. Here's how:

- Declare a Remote Departure Point (Catfish Pond or Tower or Blair Auxiliary #2)
- Declare your Turnpoint (Burnt Cabins)
- Declare you Goal (Same as R/D/P)
  
- Take your tow to the good side of the ridge and photograph your R/D/P.
  
- Proceed along Blue Mountain on the ridges you know like the back of your hand all the way to Snyders.
  
- Now slow up and start thinking about gaining some altitude. You may even want to start thinking about gaining height as far back as the Tunnel.

However it has gone to Hawk Mt., at this point you definitely climb. If you depart Hawk too low to be sure of gaining Second Mt. in search of lift upwind, do NOT burn your bridges behind you. You must always be able to return for a save on the ridge at Hawk. (But do not go upwind if you are running under a cloud street.) If you should stumble into wave, you may want to exploit it by not pushing forward to Second Mt, but choose to slide crosswind while climbing. (I have encountered wave in this area any number of times, once climbing all the way to 11,000'.)

In the case of a solid cloud street, under which you can drive firmly upwind, you may wish to exploit it straight ahead upwind. As long as you can remain comfortably high (I mean 5-6000') and the street is well-defined, you should continue until you KNOW that you have achieved sufficient upwind position to make your crosswind charge for Mahantango. Remember, just getting to the "good" side of Mahantango is enough.

Pretty much the same story holds true if you have proceeded crosswind over the Schuylkill Haven valley in wave- when your combination of position and altitude justifies it, go for Mahantango. If you should lose altitude too severely, there is always a ridge to save you.

If on the other hand, your departure from Hawk just barely got you to Second Mt. run it as long as you can stay comfortably above the crest. You will be looking for a thermal to climb again as you do this and getting ever closer to Mahantango- The Promised Land! I would not cross the Interstate (I-81) as you would then be increasing the jump distance to Mahantango. An intermediate jump to Bear Mt may be used as a stepping stone to Mahantango.

One of these 3 alternatives is almost certain to work and enable you to reach your objective of Mahantango Mountain just west of the Schuylkill County Airport. No matter how you work it out, this 25-mile transition is positively worth the effort. From there on the rest of the flight will seem to be easy. Mahantango is a red-line ridge with plentiful landing sites in its open valley upwind. It will be no time at all before the Susquehanna River comes into view. Decrease your speed somewhat and cross to Buffalo Mt, which is the extension of Mahantango on the west side of the river. Now you will be nearing the Juniata River and have no trouble locating Tuscarora Mountain about 5 miles upwind. An intermediate low hill, Wildcat Ridge, may save you if you depart Buffalo too low to attain Tuscarora. (I think Ron Schwartz has used Wildcat- I have not.)

Once established on Tuscarora, you are "home-free." There is one offset gap which requires only a little slow-down to cross when outbound- use a little more caution on the return leg. Beyond this offset it is only about 25 miles to Burnt Cabins and the only turns you should need will be to take your picture(s) and reverse course. Greg Abbey was surprised that the Burnt Cabins Airport didn't look too much like an airport- it's just an elongated grass field alongside the Pennsy Turnpike- between the highway and the ridge.

On the return trip, remember the offset gap about 25 NE of the T/P, and play it by ear. It is possible to eliminate Buffalo (on the west side of the Susquehanna) by jumping directly across the river to Mahantango. As you near Schuylkill County Airport and the end of Mahantango, grab the first strong thermal you run into and retrace your steps to Hawk Mountain, trying to avoid getting too far downwind. You don't want to have to use Blue Mountain west of Hawk. Use Second if unable to get high enough for a direct transition to Hawk. Except for you 1-26'ers, the leg from Mahantango to Hawk will probably be very easy. You might get as much as 60:1 on the downwind glide.

The rest of the trip you should know all about, so... Good Luck! Having had his first try at this route, Greg Abbey endorses it and very likely will be the first of our group to run it successfully. He may, however, have one or both of Bruce Brown or Dave Michaud trying to beat him out- I recently gave a "conducted tour" in a Cessna 172 with 3 members of the Central Jersey Club- all the way to Burnt Cabins. We returned via the alternative- using the Blue Mt. Method, Manada Gap and all. Nobody was impressed by that route, except UNfavorably! The end product of that day's journey was a video-tape. We have been promised a copy or a loan of theirs and we should get a chance to view it at one of our monthly meetings pretty soon.

A word or two about maps. By all means study the relief maps available both in "The Hilton" and the Eagle Ridge office. Next of course are the sectionals which everyone should have. But maybe the best are the 1:250,000's. STUDY!

MAY '87

## IT'S LIKE DYING AND GOING TO HEAVEN

If you've read my little story about the Gus Scheurer Trophy and getting to know the LS-6, the next step is to listen to my tale of Thursday, April 30th, and what it's like to go for your first really long mission in a bird with a high wing-loading. Seeing what was possibly the first REAL, HONEST cold front of the spring season come along, I drove onto the Blairstown Airport a little before 0800 that morning. Already there with his trailer open was Mark, who said he had arrived at 0530 and just waked Kurt Staubach up to help him rig. We got "GK" put together and then did the LS-6. Both Templin and McElwee had arrived, with Bob saying that Kochanski was on his way and would attempt the Burnt Cabins O & R for Diamond Distance-while "The Preacher" was going for a 300 K triangle in the 1-34.

I dragged the LS-6 over to the water hose with Bob T. helping, and while filling up saw Gordon Glover arrive. He too, wanted to do "300", using the 4-leg system up and down the ridge. As I did not want an aft CG, I put no water ballast in the tail. (It's capable of holding 5.5 liters.) With the wind and the wing-loading, I decided to take off from the far end of runway 25, so both Mark and I dragged down there. Mark copied my declaration for T/P's at the Potomac River junction where the South Branch joins the main stream and Piper Memorial Airport at Lock Haven, a task of just over 753 kilometers.

With a series of little aggravating delays, I finally rolled shortly after 1000. Releasing as I crossed the Start Line on Bob T's signal, the "Death Dive" for the ridge began from about 3500 MSL, at 10.06:39. Crossed "the Cliff" at about 2600' and entered ridge lift well above the crest. Since I had never flown the LS-6 on the ridge and had never flown it with water ballast, I did not follow my customary procedure of "Turn left and go for it!" Instead, I spent nearly 10 minutes on "our side" of the Water Gap getting acquainted. Mark was probably on tow as I crossed the Water Gap, but I was not to see him until after arriving at Hawk Mountain and after aborting my first upwind probe. We were then pretty much in sight of each other for the next half-hour as we transitioned to Mahantango Mt. The run down to Hawk had been at an average of 100 knots airspeed, 500-1000 feet above the ridge! I stayed off the ridges between Hawk and Mahantango, thermalling my way and, at the last step, finding a nice street to Mahantango, while "GK" went more upwind of Sharp Mt and got a bit low near Schuylkill county Airport.

As I dove down to run Mahantango, I once again opened up a lead on Mark, getting perhaps 15 miles ahead of him. Nearing the Susquehanna River, a strong thermal was used to climb to about 6000' MSL from which point I flew directly upwind with little sink until it was obvious that a crosswind dive would secure Tuscarora Mt. While doing this, I saw Mark come along and cross the river. As he had loaded only 20 gallons of water, the LS-6 (the "Six") was clearly superior at these high speeds- throughout the day. Just as I had been doing, I never "ran the trees", staying mostly at least 500' above all the way to Burnt Cabins, which I passed about 2-1/2 hours from release- about 2:20 from actual departure.

When we had left Blairstown the cloud cover was heavy, but as we proceeded SW, it thinned out to a widely scattered condition, being especially sparse toward the end of Tuscarora. This made me decide to make my upwind transition from just north of McConnellsburg in the direction of better looking cloud. Mark flew by under me as I was making the first climb for this push. I kept working my way up and across wind, even finding a short crosswind stretch of wave running. In somewhat this same area Mark again got a look at some of the dense forests from close range. I was never lower than 3500' (as I recall it) but had a little bit of trouble climbing near the first turn, where I was soon joined by Mark. He got away from the T/P before me and started his upwind run to fly the "back ridge" past State College all the way to Lock Haven, but we both easily attained the "Main Line" and raced north to Bedford Gap, with the LS-6 again demonstrating its edge in performance as I overtook and passed him, going as fast as 125 knots, but still well above the crest of the ridge. Just short of Bedford Gap I started to thermal, Mark joining me immediately. Taking only a couple of turns I flew a mile or so farther upwind to another strong thermal, "GK" staying with the first one. Mine was probably a little better and had the upwind advantage, so after crossing Bedford and racing up the ridge to Altoona Gap, once more I was able to get well ahead. I had already climbed through 4000', ready to push upwind when Mark came along here, resulting in my passing the Howard Reservoir some 60 miles later before seeing him again. And this time I was at 6500' MSL, starting my run to the picture-taking quadrant at Lock Haven.

On the final, glorious DOWNWIND leg we apparently chose fairly different routes. I decided to stay fairly close to the course-line, saving miles- with an aiming point on "our" ridge of Lehigh Gap, while Mark hit it at Hawk. Either I didn't press hard enough or his choice was better, as when I next caught sight of him he was ahead and passing the Little Gap Ski Area. I passed the 1-35 about this time- Bob T. now flying- but flew by him perhaps 500 feet higher and 50 MPH faster. Was able to pass "GK" once more crossing Wind Gap and finished maybe 2 minutes ahead of him. His speed for the 753 kilometers was on the high side of 70 MPH, however, while I must be content with 69.18. My time was 6:46:02 and I was on the ground before 5 o'clock, tired but very elated.

In retrospect, it's probably too bad that we didn't declare the 1000-K triangle; the day was certainly up to it. But perhaps with a little earlier start! Also in retrospect, I may never get another chance to make such a high speed task and very likely should have pressed for speed. You readers may find it hard to swallow when I say that I made no deliberate attempt to go the maximum. But if you consider that I delayed many times unnecessarily, never ran the tree-tops, did not use all the ridge mileage the course afforded and even circled in lift far below the normal 6-8 knots the day offered, there is little doubt in my mind that I could have shortened the task time by 1 hour! That still would have been only slightly faster than 80 MPH for the day- a speed which is pretty slow by the standards of professional ridge-runners. Karl Striedieck has put in a claim for a national record for his task flown that day. Though I do not know what speed it will show, my guess is over 90 for the 800 K triangle that he and Tom Knauff were flying. (I'm told that Tom did not complete.)



So...what do I think of the LS-6 now? By comparison with the 301, it belongs in that high-speed regime that you can attain only with high wing-loading. I probably took off on this task at a gross weight of nearly 1100 pounds and it just simply loves to go fast. All you 1-26ers in the club will find it difficult to comprehend when I tell you that it will probably achieve as good a glide ratio at 130 MPH as you can get at 50. And it still climbs- and climbs well. I'm still more "at home" in the Libelle, which is such a delight to fly that everyone should experience it at least once, but though the 301 was far ahead of its time, it came along before people really considered that you could cruise all day long at speeds over 100 knots. In our more normal lift conditions, the Libelle 301 is not far behind any sailplane with its same wingspan- and will outperform many of them. But for all-out racing, when the lift is very strong, the LS-6 don't give nothin' to nobody. (I'd still much rather rig and de-rig the Libelle, though!) And I think I'd much rather land it in the proverbial pea-patch!)

Yet, for this antique sexagenarian, it IS like dying and going to heaven to be lucky enough to own and fly a machine like this little gem from Egelsbach. What do you say about "Top of The Line, State of The Art" now, Jack?

JULY/AUGUST '87

JUST ANOTHER DAY IN THE LIFE OF YOUR AVERAGE SOARING PILOT  
(by Jack Greene)

Sometime in the middle of the afternoon, I think it was Saturday, I left my shop in Boonton with 020 in tow and headed for Harris Hill, Elmira, for the Sports Class Nationals. My schedule had me arriving at the El Monte Motel early in the evening with sufficient time for a quick cleanup and then over to the bar for some timely refreshments. It was of little consequence that for the past week or ten days, there had been an annoying little squeak from the rear of the car, definitely from the right side, and positively in phase with the wheel rotation. I was concerned with bigger things and would take care of this little problem in about two weeks when I returned. In the meantime, my mind was occupied with bigger things- like how I would give all that glass a hard lesson in what a well flown 1-26 with a handicap of 1.61 could do. Just a touch of luck and a finish in the top ten would certainly be in order. Why even a top five finish was within reach.

Approaching exit 19 (Hacketstown) and at about 60 mph, the vehicle and trailer took a quick and very severe "S" like zig-zag. This abruptly brought me to my senses. Cleverly surmising that all was not well, I gingerly worked the vehicle towards the side of the road and lightly applied brakes. I was greeted with strange noises and very poor steering response. Only seconds later, there was a severe lurch and then a horrible screeching noise- like raw steel on hard concrete. Suffice to say, I quickly ground to a stop. I was greet by a horrible sight. The right rear wheel had broken loose (severed the axle) and was wedged in the fender cavity at a 45 degree angle. Additionally, the brake shoe was on the road and mostly worn away.

A trooper happened along and quickly summoned a towing vehicle. The car would be towed to Blirstown and a new strategy developed. While pondering my dilemma, who should happen along but Ron Schwartz towing Bob Fitch's LS-6. This had to be my lucky day. He would dump the LS-6 at the airport and come back to retrieve 020. In due time, this actually happened. And on arriving at the airport, still another (I thought at the time) lucky twist of fate. Bob Templin was on the site and immediately offered his van for the two weeks I would be at Elmira. All my equipment was transferred to the van, the electrical connections were rewired, and now well after dark, I was once again on my way.

Again, my mind must have been wandering for within 5 minutes, I was thoroughly lost- in Blirstown. Where did I go wrong? Anyway, I drove around winding roads and up and down hills for an hour and a half. I do recall being on Belcher road for the longest time. I went through three different tunnels (or was it the same tunnel three times) and was totally disgusted. Every house light was out so I could not ask for help. What do these people in Blirstown do after dark? With the gas gage now on empty, I luckily stumbled upon a sign which pointed the way to Blirstown. But my relief was short lived as I now ran out of gas. No problem with this as I always carry a five gallon reserve. The only problem was that I had to take the glider out of the trailer to get at this reserve tank. And fortunately, Bob had left me with a very handy

flashlight. After some considerable struggling, I had the gas running into the tank. Of course, that tinkling watery noise had its usual effect and it became imperative that I seek relief. Not wanting to put down the precariously balanced container of gas, I thought I could handle this additional complication if I carefully manipulated my vital parts. All was "running" smoothly until I lost control of the flashlight and it dropped to the road, separating into several pieces and of course, leaving me in blackness. Even the batteries rolled down the road. This flashlight was important. After much groping around in the dark, I did find all the parts, put them back together, and it worked.

I was again on my way and quite pleased with myself for I actually found Blairstown A/P. This time, I was much more careful and though it might be hard to believe, I was soon on route 94 and headed for route 80. I believe it was now after midnight. Just before reaching 80, Bob's van decided to quietly die. No fuss, no muss, it just quit. I did not have enough speed to roll to the side of the road and had to push the van and trailer off the road. But I was in a bad spot. What to do. I called Ron Schwartz to get Templin's number, woke Bob up, he picked me up and we stayed that night in the Hilton. And once again, good fortune smiled on me. Jacquie D. was on the scene planning on leaving for Elmira the next morning to crew for Ed Replogle. We could drive together and tow 020 to Harris hill. At that time, I could have her car for the ten days as she would be using Ed's vehicle during the contest. No more breakdowns and everything worked out fine- except for the weather at Harris Hill. We managed to get a 5 day contest (10 scheduled days) and only one really decent racing day. Thank's Jacquie for the very generous use of your vehicle.

CONCLUSION: My vehicle has been repaired. Towing fees (two tows- not aero) came to \$250.00. Bob's vehicle has been repaired. 'Twas a broken timing gear. The Sports Class Nationals was a great contest (if one ignores the weather) and I would do it again. I was the top finishing 1-26 (there were two) somewhere below the middle of the pack. Bob Fitch was 6th and didn't fly the first day. He should have won the contest. I used a variety of crews and of course (with three off-fields) I ran into one extremely ugly farmer- in the same field with Bill Watson. And that should wind things up.

JANUARY '88

## A LITTLE WALK IN THE WOODS

Sunday afternoon, in search of wave over the Blairstown valley, I was crossing the ridge at high speed at cloud base (5000'). Looking down, I spotted a white glider in the trees below the Upper Reservoir. Turning on the radio and reporting this to Blairstown Ground, I was advised that this was 139, who then responded in person with the message that he was okay but unable to climb out. Since he had already been there for some time, his predicament had been reported by others and the rescue was about to leave the airport.

After landing, I discovered Jack's car and trailer standing in front of the Hilton. Thinking this rather strange, I considered driving it to the road down below the scene but was quickly advised that the plan for Sunday afternoon was to proceed no further than getting 139 and its somewhat abashed but totally un-bashed pilot down to terra firma. When this had been accomplished (as described in the Sunday account) there was shortly a large group in the Eagle Ridge office, telling war stories and starting to plan for Monday's removal of the wreckage.

Knowing that this was going to be a really monstrous task and that the manpower supply would probably be a lot scarcer, I certainly didn't look forward to Monday as a day at the beach, but along with Hal Matousek and Bob Templin, decided to stay at the airport overnight to be ready for the scheduled 8:00 AM assembly.

In the morning Bill Marsa joined us for breakfast and soon Jack arrived- alone. Since one of the previous evening's ideas had been that Jack might recruit some manpower from his own shop this seemed like a bad omen for the day ahead. Bob T. had called home and asked Bryan, his stepson, to take the day off from school. Bryan not only did this, but he brought along a buddy, Gene. Now we had 7, which shortly became 8 with the arrival of the recently retired Howard Rodhe. A phone call to Ron Schwartz found him off on a trip, but as our small party departed the airport, Kurt Stauback was recruited now we had 9- a bare minimum, especially considering the age and frailty of a couple of us!

Templin, Stauback and the two teenagers drove to the bottom of the mountain by the river with two cars and the trailer, while Fitch, Greene, Matousek & Rodhe piled into Marsa's 4WD wagon to go to the top of Yards Creek. At 9:07 our crew passed through the guard gate with the key to open the higher road barrier. Passing a half dozen muzzle-loader deer hunters, we drove to the end of the line at the north side of the Upper Lake. After a relatively easy hike we arrived at the crash scene about 9:50, where our first task was to remove the horizontal tail and duct-tape it to one of the wings. Likewise, the (broken) canopy was taped astride the aft fuselage. Then, as we awaited the arrival of the foursome that was climbing up, we proceeded no further than aiming our three separate loads downhill for the descent.

Since Bobby knows these woods better than anyone, and he had assured us that we could use some old logging trails for the trip down, we didn't want to start in a wrong direction. On their ascent Bobby and his team would check out the best possible routes. It was about 10:30 when they got to us with the sad news that there wasn't any easier way than down the fall line. I mentally noted that it would be nice if there weren't to be too many falls, but feared the worst. So there we were, with 3 bodies per load and a very tough stretch just below us. I didn't expect to reach the trailer appreciably before dark if we had very much terrain to cover like what I could see 50 to 75 yards below.

This was the steepest part of the mountain, however, and as it turned out, only the first 100 yards were really difficult. I'll claim credit for the idea of how to get through the worst of it. Since the footing was so precarious, the likelihood of serious injury to either the loads or the bearers appeared to be high if we tried to walk them down. It seemed smarter to have the bearers form a "bucket brigade", planting their feet in reasonably secure spots and passing the loads along hand-to-hand, one load at a time, using all available hands. As you were relieved from the high end, you could slither and slide to a new location lower down where you could once again find a decent foothold.

Of course this took a bit of climbing back up as well as down before we had all 3 loads down over the bad stretch. Even the healthy young ones were panting. Just before the bucket brigade operation was completed our team grew in size by one with the addition of Pete Angelou, who had parked at the bottom and climbed up. Now we had 10. At this point, (Although I didn't realize it) the worst was over. Now we broke our squad of 10 into 3 teams: Angelou, Marsa, Stauback & Templin got the fuselage, Gene (Bryan's Buddy), Greene & Rodhe got the right wing, and Bryan, Matousek and I got the left wing. Our threesome proceeded tip-first with Hal and me at the tip and Bryan at the root. Holding his end high with his forearms up and his elbows locked proved the easiest for him. This height, combined with the downhill slope angel shifted the CG closer to our end, where, of course there were 2 of us. The way we worked it out, Hal carried most of this weight most of the way, while I discovered that reaching across the wing and grabbing Hal's shoulder to clamp the wing between us stabilized it from tipping. I could also hold back the tip to keep the wing from beating us down the hill.

The rest of the way was mostly a question of picking our route down the direction which looked the clearest and easiest, stopping frequently to rest. The other wing team pretty much followed our trail while the fuselage team bore off quite a bit to the right. They apparently ran into one of those logging trails and were able to roll on the wheel much of the way without having to carry much more than the tail weight. With the road finally in sight, our team re-converged with the fuselage guys and arrived at the trailer virtually simultaneously. It wasn't even 1 o'clock!

When the second wing arrived somewhat behind us we found out why they had lagged. They had become a 2-man crew when the instigator of all this "fun" had his legs give out. He was hobbling but still able to move on his own. That was indeed fortunate since Matousek had announced at the outset that "we aren't going to be like the Marines" and carry our wounded out. You'd have to make it on your own.

Well, we all did, and in spite of a few falls and increased pulse and respiration rates there were no serious casualties to the crew and only minor additional damage to the glider. Although this was by far the most difficult retrieve in which I ever participated, including some overseas adventures and the infamous Ray Clapp tree-top job 14 years ago, it could have been a whole lot worse. And, just like the rest of them, we'll all be able to look back and talk about them with more fun than regrets. It will be added to the "Joy Of Soaring" in ACA.

But...LET'S NOT REPEAT IT!

Go for a low NOTCH, not a low CROTCH!

MAY '88

## ABOUT CROSS-COUNTY SOARING AND OUTLANDINGS

This piece was inspired by Jack Green's 100 and counting story in October's Pinions. In light of his revelations therein, a more apt title might have been: 100 and counting on it, but apparently any birds on Jack's ancestral tree were ostriches, not eagles, as towards the end of his talk he says: "...when I depart the airport, the thought never enters my head that I may not return..." Very strange, since his own meager statistics revealed that he is about 75% certain NOT to return. And even more shocking is his outrageous W/R Ratio. (Weeds to Runways.) APPALLING! He says: "...maybe less than half a dozen of my landings have been of the airport variety...", making his W/R ratio at least 17-to-1. WOW! Then he naively asks: "What does this all suggest?" Does he want an honest answer from his readers? Unfortunately, he did not supply us with enough hard data on his own X-C flying to be truly analytical, but, to most of us, using his own words, it suggests "a rather woeful picture."

If any part of Jack's motivation for writing that story included an intent to inspire newer club members to become cross-country pilots, I'm afraid he's done just the opposite. A story suggesting that such results are typical demands a rebuttal- and that's what I intend to give.

In the first place, since Jack has made only "140 attempts" at X-C in 16 years of soaring, he cannot describe himself as a "serious" X-C pilot and therefore, should not be taken too seriously. Jack and I started soaring the same year (1972) and, with only a few more than his current total of attempts, I had completed my 1000-K diploma. That was on my 148th X-C, almost 7 years ago. I now list 418 attempts and a total X-C mileage approaching 50,000 miles.

These numbers should qualify me as "serious." Over this same span of years I have accumulated about half the number of outlandings as Jack, but he is uncatchably far ahead of me in Weed Landings. With a total of 59 "Weedies", my career W/R Ratio is 1-to-1, and for the last 6 years it's about 0.5-to-1.

But the principal value of any set of statistics is to derive useful information. We need to know how difficult these tasks are which cause out-landings and we need to examine chronological trends- is our X-C technique getting any better with experience? Difficulty can best be measure by task miles flown and type of glider used. (Of course, geography is a factor, but we assume we are all talking about New Jersey.) Since Jack has flown only the 1-26 throughout his X-C career, he has been forced to limit his horizons, but, even so, he should have been able to tell what he's getting for all these visits to the weeds. My own (limited) 1-26 experience follows:

21 X-C attempts	22 Outlandings
4 Completed Tasks	
14 "Weedies"	8 Runways (Away)
1064 X-C Miles	

Naturally, since I only flew the 1-26 regularly my first season of soaring, most of this was done as a rank beginner. \*(I even had 2 land-outs on local flights that first year, plus another in the 1-23...NONE in the years since.) My career miles/Land-out in the 1-26 average only 48 and Miles/Weedie only 76, but during my first year the numbers were 30 and 45, respectively! My 1-26 W/R Ratio has improved from the 1972 2-to-1 to 1.5-to-1 for all years since. Miles per Land-out has gone from 81.3 and Miles/Weedie up to 135.5, so I have shown some improvement in all those parameters. We can't tell about you, Jack, you didn't give us the numbers- do you want us to guess?



SEPTEMBER '89

## THERMALS AND THINGS

One of the contest tasks at the 1989 World Championships in Austria this spring was a "Cats' Cradle", in which the objective is to fly as many miles as possible during the allotted 6-hour time limit. As this involves a large number of different turnpoints of the pilot's own choice, which must be claimed on the landing card in proper sequence, I asked Doug before launch how he intended to keep track of them all. Martha answered this one for him by saying: "Not to worry- he remembers every thermal he ever worked!"

On Wednesday, 8/9/89, my log book showed a total of 1170 flights and 2875 hours. On the basis of those numbers, I'll guess I've worked in excess of 20,000 thermals during my soaring years since 1972. I definitely cannot remember them all, but on that Wednesday flight there was ONE very special and unforgettable one of the couple dozen I worked. I want to tell you about it.

My intention that afternoon was to fly an O&R to MASA Gliderport in Fairfield, Pennsylvania in order to return the Gus Scheurer Trophy to Somerset, where it had been first put up for grabs in 1987. A one-way flight (landing at Fairfield) would have been sufficient distance to claim the trophy, but I wanted to make it a round-trip, a distance of 307 miles. Roll time behind Al's Super Cub was 1243 and after releasing at 2000' and making my first climb, I departed Somerset at 1255. It was obvious to me that I'd have to average better than 60 MPH along the outbound leg or abandon the task, since I did not want to plan a return later than 1800.

The day looked pretty nice with a couple of thermals along the way producing 5-knot climbs to near 6000'; and the first 50 miles went by in less than an hour. Beyond Pottstown the scattered clouds changed to broken, but I was still making fairly good time as I passed south of Lancaster. Further changes in the sky lay ahead of me- I had glimpsed almost 50% cirrus cover to the southwest and was now flying under 80-90% cumulus- bases about 6000'. As I crossed the Susquehanna River east of York and checked my watch, it was decision time. Now 1445, with 50 miles to go to Fairfield, I had averaged only about 56 MPH ground speed. As this was not good enough to cover the remaining 200 miles, I turned back for Somerset.

With the clouds suggesting a more northerly line of flight than outbound, I flew back directly overhead Lancaster where I still had 6000' on the altimeter. The lift was becoming scarcer and weaker as I limped along to a point about 10 south of Reading, losing altitude. At this time I could see sunlit ground to the east beyond Pottstown and headed for it. A short time later, encountering an unusual amount of sink, even reaching Pottstown Municipal didn't seem a sure thing. Gliding on, however, I arrived there (still under almost solid overcast) at 1800' MSL. (The runway is 256' MSL.) About 4-5 miles east was the power plant on the river with a column of steam rising straight up from the large spool-shaped cooling towers- just northeast of the airport was a large brown patch of earth with a bit of sunlight hitting it. the choice was easy, I told myself: "You can't make it to the power plant- try the brown patch", already fearing

I'd have to land on runway 25. Exploring over the brown area, I got a tickle of lift and started to circle with the radio turned on 122.8. Twenty minutes of grinding got me all the way up to 2500' MSL and I was contemplating a foray to the power plant. But then it happened! While circling I had noticed what at first I thought was a flock of pigeons or sea gulls down near the surface. Soon it was apparent that the flock did not have any wings but it was climbing toward me. In just seconds I was surrounded by trash, paper- plastic bags- toilet paper- newspaper- and who knows what. The air came to life with vengeance, the audio got almost as excited as I did but various were not needed to fly this lift. There must have been at least a thousand pieces of this stuff flying around me and the thermal developed into my best for the day. I cranked over now, guided by the paper gaggle and climbed at 6 knots to 6000'. I was concerned that I would get my wings plastered with all this trash but could not leave such gorgeous lift and luckily did not hit any of the junk.

I would estimate that the cloud of trash was at least 1000' in diameter but I could never locate exactly where it all came from. But- was it ever welcome! Off with the radio- forget about the power house- you can now strike out northeast to sunlight- on course for home. Gloom had changed to complete confidence all because of a cloud of trash. In the past I'd circled with small bits of papers, leaves, cornstalks and rubber balloons, but never anything like this! It was not yet 1620 and Penn Ridge, Van Sant and Sky Manor soon went by. My final glide was working out beautifully. Overflying Somerset at about 1500' I saw the 2-22 on tow and decided to extend my flight a little longer, finding a decent thermal of 2-1/2 to 3 knots under a smallish cu. The 2-22 soon came in above me (I guess they don't take 2000' tows) and we climbed together for a while with the LS-6 doing noticeably better. I got close enough to see that it was Lou Rehr and a student before breaking off for a fast run to Flanders and back. When I returned and entered the pattern, Lou had already landed and after I was on the ground at 1538 he came over to remark that he wouldn't have believed an LS-6 could out climb a 2-22. I didn't have the heart to tell him that the same glider had just been outclimbed by a trash heap!

As an afterthought- even though the trophy try was unsuccessful, the flight produced my 78th cross-country of more than 200 miles and that one UNFORGETTABLE save at Pottstown. We'll go to Fairfield and back another day- with water ballast next time.

JANUARY '90

### HOW DUMB CAN YOU GET?

November 11th and December 7th are two dates which have some significance in U.S. history. On the first of these dates (in 1918), the U.S. came out of WW-1. On the second (in 1941), we entered WW-2. Those dates in 1989 each had some small significance for me. It seems that if my 12/7/89 flight had been made on 11/11/89 it would have been a new NJ Record for 300 K O&R Speed at 66 MPH. But doing it when and how I did it, it wasn't worth a thing, considering that on 11/12/89 that low-down scoundrel known as "U-Momma" pushed the record speed up to 69.64 MPH.

Not wanting such an undesirable character to hold one of "my" records too long, my Pearl Harbor Day ('89) mission was an attempt to get back. The winds were blasting out of the NW and there were cu's at about 5,000 feet, so even though it was too cold for water ballast, it ought not be too hard to do a "300" at the required 71 MPH. Although I have a faster route up my sleeve, going to UM's T/P at the end of Mahantango Mountain and getting home in a little under 3 hours would do it. Having made the slower upwind leg of this flight in 57 minutes once and "always" getting there in less than an hour and a half, it should be a piece of cake to jerk the rug out from under "U-Momma" after his 25 days of glory.

So why did I write out a declaration for Manada Gap and return? I guess it was a whim- I really do know better. Didn't I write that Pinions story recommending that you *never* use "our ridge" (Blue Mountain) any farther west than Hawk Mountain? Nevertheless, away we went, the flight starting out on a weird note as Greg headed straight for the ridge. I had to slide out to the side and "steer" him back to my airport start line. The dreaded "death dive" for the ridge was a pleasant surprise as I cleared Sunfish Pond by 1000 feet. With no circling and never really getting down on the trees, I got to Hawk in about 35 minutes, speed averaging nearly 100 MPH. climbing off Hawk to almost 4000 feet, I departed on a diagonal across "The fingers" toward that lousy stretch of ridge beyond Port Clinton. Soon I was getting lower and lower, wondering if I could bring myself to actually try to run that slope (it can hardly be called a ridge.) In spite of not having the guts (or stupidity) to try it, I moved slowly along it. I spent a lot of time at and below 1500' MSL and wasn't making any speed. It took over an hour to get to Manada from Hawk and it's only slightly over 40 miles.

Flying beyond the T/P, I turned left for a picture. I was so low I couldn't even see into the Gap and wasted more time (from a low of 1300' MSL) climbing. Got three photos as I kept asking myself if it was fun yet. Knowing I had to finish in 2+46 or better to beat UM, I came to the conclusion that it wasn't- time was a 'wastin'. There was only about an hour left as I crept past Swatara Gap, where I-81 goes through. Kicking myself for ever declaring this task, I tried to stay high all the way back to Hawk, running down the center of the valley. Diving back to Hawk, I arrived at about 2000' with maybe 20-30 minutes left. It was hopeless.

My time ran out as I zapped across the Little Gap Ski area at about 100 knots. Negotiating Wind Gap and Water Gap without stopping, I spent a little time in the local area of Blairstown, looking unsuccessfully for wave (so it shouldn't be a total loss) before landing. Afterwards, though haunted by the feeling that the Manada Gap task might have been fast enough if I'd really stuck the wing next to the trees, I couldn't get over how dumb it had been to declare that task. The Pottsville stretch ain't pretty, but its ridge is a ridge and it doesn't last long before you get to Mahantango, the promised land, which makes it all worthwhile. It could have been done on 12/7, but I guess I got what I deserved.

As a post-script, I have to mention my Henry Combs-like ambitions. For those who don't know Henry, he's the California pilot with close to 100 flights exceeding 500 K, whose name you see so often under "Other Long Flights" in Soaring. Henry is well into his 70's and still doing his thing, which is to have more 500's than his age. The Pearl Harbor Day mission made it 82 300-K's for me- and I ain't quite that old yet!

OCTOBER '90

## LETDOWNS WE HAVE KNOWN AND LOVED

Perhaps Aero Club Albatross's most never-to-be-forgotten "letdown" came on Sunday, December 13, 1987. This one really involved a whole bunch of related letdowns. It all started when Jack Greene made his high-speed letdown in 139, trying for a "Schwartz Notch" near the Upper Reservoir. Moments later he experienced an emotional letdown as he found himself stalling into the treetops.

In an hour or so came his third, when he was let down to earth at the end of a rope supplied and manned by his many rescuers. The fourth letdown involved 139 itself being extricated from the trees and returned to terra firma. The fifth and final one came the next day when a band of about 10 volunteers made the letdown off the mountain with the de-rigged sections of the glider.

One of my own most unforgettable letdowns occurred 13 years earlier up at Mt. Washington in New Hampshire on October 22, 1974. Having had a Silver Badge with two Diamonds since the spring of that year, I had taken the club 1-23 to the only wave camp I have attended, seeking to finish off my FAI badges by acquiring the Gold and Diamond Altitude legs.

Late in the afternoon after nearly six hours of wave soaring, I was about ready to quit without having gotten high enough for the Diamond. I was quite cold, the oxygen pressure was getting quite low and the frigid battery no longer worked the radio.

Suddenly, a large, long wave cloud began to form behind me- downwind. I was sitting in the Mt. Washington primary wave; this was clearly secondary. It took only a couple of minutes to drop back to this cloud, whose base was about level with me- the top towering above. I cruised the upwind face in strong lift, and it wasn't long until I had topped the cloud and continued to climb rapidly.

I now had more than enough height for the Diamond, but since the lift was still good and the oxygen was still holding out, I scraped the frost off the canopy and quit only when the lateness of the day and the lowness of oxygen pressure made it imperative. The altimeter showed 28,700 MSL.

Now came my letdown. With the 1-23's extremely powerful dive brakes fully deployed and sliding on the down elevator, the descent rate was close to 3,000 feet per minute. A very frozen pilot and extremely frosty glider were soon on the ground. I had done it! It was only my third year of glider flying and now I had become the club's second 3-Diamond pilot!

Oh yeah? I had another letdown coming. When the barograph was removed from the back to the glider, it was making only the feeblest of ticking sounds. When it was unsealed and opened, the trace revealed that only the first 6-1/2 hours of flight had been flawlessly recorded.

Probably due to less than complete winding of its clock, drum rotation had essentially stopped and the great final climb into the stratosphere and the high-speed letdown had made only an arc on the trace!

Talk about a letdown! Well, the good news is that, while NOT good for a badge claim, the trace would be submitted for a Lennie Pin. It seems that Bob Neumann (the club's first 3-Diamond pilot) had flown his C-70 that day to a New Hampshire state record of 31,900 feet and signed an affidavit that he had witnessed me and the 1-23 in flight well above the 25,000 feet required for the Lennie Pin.

And the further good news is that (with the barograph always wound to the limit) each of my next three flights at Mt. Washington that week produced Diamond climbs- though never getting higher than 23,000 feet. Nevertheless, I had gotten what I had gone there for - U.S. Diamond #302, ACA's second.

NOVEMBER '90

## LETDOWNS WE HAVE KNOWN AND LOVED- PART II

An outlanding is always a letdown. I have now made 137 of them, 72 on runways and 65 not. Some of us have had them on "local" flights, which should be classed as a shameful sort of letdown. I committed this shameful deed twice in 1972 in my first month of club flying, both times while trying for the 5-hour duration out of Somerset.

Number 1 was on my sixth club solo flight. The wind was strong out of the northwest, and before I knew it my thermaling had taken me and 157 downwind beyond the Somerville Circle. With this being only my 40th glider flight, I wasn't too sharp, and as we all know, the glide ratio of a 1-26 into the wind isn't too sharp, either.

The airport kept disappearing from sight as I tried to beat my way back up 287. The up-shot of it was a landing on the lawn of the American Hoeschst building and a phone call. I hadn't even flown an hour!

The next time, about three weeks later (also in 157) I managed to stay up about two hours before I ran out of lift and ideas and landed in a big field just west of Pluckemen. The club was beginning to wonder about me. These letdowns were soon offset by doing the five hours in May at Blairstown, flying 257.

A special sort of letdown comes from an outlanding which causes damage to the glider. You never forget these. As a result of my 65 off-airport letdowns, this has happened to me seven times, with five of them requiring more than superficial repairs, including two totaled gliders.

Though it can happen in any type, the 1-26 pilot is less likely to damage his bird because of their shorter wings, their rugged and simple construction and the slow speed and ease with which they land. I have had 20 outlandings in 1-26's (most while in my silver Distance days) but have never so much as poked a hole in the fabric.

One further thing of help to the 1-26 pilot is that he gets a lot of practice in out-landing. Most of his cross-country flights end up that way! This is not to say that there exists a sort of "Schweitzer immunity." Plenty of them have been broken, too. Just check ACA's history of damaged club gliders and you'll discover a lot of Schweizer pilots with that "letdown feeling." The funny thing is I can't recall any club gliders damaged on cross country flights.

It is while flying X-C tasks that you should normally expect these unforeseen letdowns. One of a somewhat different nature happened to me in April two years ago. It was a ridge day and I had declared a 300 K O&R for a State Record. The task was aborted at Hawk Mountain because of snow ahead in the Pottsville area, and I was returning to Blairstown.

After crossing Wind Gap, a heavy snow squall was observed upwind of and approaching the Water Gap. Since I could see that the Bangor to Blairstown valley route was clear of snow, I stopped and climbed to about 3,000 feet. I then crossed the ridge and headed for the airport, thinking I would detour the snow on the downwind side.

About as I was crossing the Delaware River, however, I was enveloped by it. When you first enter snow you always think you'll be quickly through it, so I didn't consider a retreat to Easton, which may have been reachable. But my forward visibility was a scary letdown and me uncertain of reaching Blairstown Airport.

I couldn't even be sure I was keeping the wings level as I tried to fly a compass heading toward the runway. The ground reappeared dimly between Hinesburg and Vail as I dropped below 1000 feet MSL, still no forward visibility- no airport in sight. It had to be a contact approach in IFR conditions.

The only tall obstruction I could remember between me and the runway was the Divilbliss radio tower. I was now about 200 feet above the ground and still at least a mile out- but with at least 80 knots of airspeed. The airport did not appear until I got there.



JULY '91

### WHEN IS A RECORD NOT A RECORD?

Since that day of infamy in July of 1990 when the Scoundrel took "my" 300 K triangle speed record, I've declared for this category maybe four or five times with no success. U-Momma did this record at 60.23 MPH and also captured "my" 300 K O&R for speed at 69.64 MPH in November 1989.

Monday, June 17, looked right for another try at the triangle, so I declared Perkiomen Valley and Schuylkill County airports as turns and took off about 1:30. I dove across the Blairstown start line at red-line at 1:57 and was on my way, taking the first (getaway) thermal about three miles out to 4500' MSL. For the next 30 miles strong lift kept eluding me as I went from cloud to cloud, cruising 75-80 knots.

Then just as I was wondering if there was any strong lift, I ran into a honey right near Lake Nockamixon. It was 6 to 7 knots to 7000' and I figured there probably was a decent chance for a record.

I pushed my speed up a bit and flew on to the first turn with only two more stops for circling in 3-4 knot stuff. Took the picture from about 5500', estimating my speed at about 62-64 that far.

The second leg clouds looked good, but I never again found any really strong thermals, settling for 2-1/2 at times. As I approached Blue Mountain just west of Hamburg, I could see much heavier cloud development ahead on the way to Schuylkill County.

Since I have often found great soaring under real black stuff, I was hopeful. Near Schuylkill Haven, I found 4 knots to 7000' and ran to the turn under an almost unbroken overcast, thinking I was behind schedule, but hoping to make it up with a fast final leg home.

For those who don't know, a new speed record must exceed the old one by at least 2 kilometers per hour, or 1.24MPH, and before takeoff every aspiring speed record pilot should always do the arithmetic required to tell him exactly how much time he has to complete his chosen task.

For this 193 mile triangle of mine, no arithmetic had been done, although prior to climbing in, I had told those at the launch that I needed at least 71 MPH, having confused the two 300 K record speeds!

I tried to do the "time allowed" calculation in my head while enroute and came up with about 2:40 -it was actually about 3:07, which would have given me another 27 minutes.

Anyhow, I got the picture of Schuylkill County from about 6000' just under 2 hours from start and lit out for home thinking I had to fly the 75 miles in 40 minutes or less. This forced me to fly very fast toward the sunshine and scattered clouds to the east, hoping to grab 2 strong thermals to get me across the finish line.

It wasn't hopeless yet. The first two thermals I hit didn't meet my requirements so I pressed on at 100 knots. It wasn't long before this started to look like a high-speed straight-in to Arnor Memorial Airport, so I stopped for a 2-knot climb (I should call it a save) which got me high enough to make Beltzville if I didn't run into that "honker" I needed for a final glide to Blirstown.

A mile short of Beltzville I found a good one of 4 knots (no honker) but I started it from about 2300 (not much above pattern altitude) and watched the clock run as I climbed. It was now hopeless to make it in 2:40 or better, so I took the climb all the way to 6800' and cruised home at 80, after calling to say I had a final glide but no record. What a BOZO! As it was, I could have made a finish at a task speed of about 65 MPH.

I didn't even discover my error for 48 hours. The day after the flight I ran the barograph all the way around the task to check the start height, times at check points and climb rates achieved. I then wiped off the trace and re-smoked the foil for the next time.

The next time was on Wednesday, the 19th when partner Gene Krasnoff was at the airport. Telling him my sad tale of Monday's 65 MPH attempt, he looked at me funny and said "I was Michaud's observer that day and his speed was only 60!"

Confirming this with KK's latest printout of records, I was so disgusted with myself that I said I'd give it another try that day if he didn't want to fly. He didn't, so we got ready again.

Wednesday wasn't like Monday so I declared Sussex-Princeton-Snyders's Tower and took off. This time I knew how much time I had available to get around but I didn't get very far around. With essentially no cu's and a lot of haze I went through the gate, climbed to 4500 and departed.

Thermal Number One after leaving downtown Blirstown didn't show up until 5 miles past downtown Newton, having cruised at about 75 with a 10-knot tailwind.

Now just high enough to squeak back into Newton Airport, I ran into lift of about 1 1/2 knots. This quickly convinced me to abort and try to get back- if I could.

By the time I left this weak lift I had already dumped 45 seconds of water and was 17-18 miles from home, into wind. The glide computer said I could make it back, but I began to wonder when I crossed Blair Academy at 1500' MSL.

At Blairstown on May 2, 1982 there occurred what was probably the greatest one day assault on NJ Records ever seen. Without prior consultation with each other, speed records for 3 different length triangles were broken by Bob Clack, Jim Paris and myself. Mine was the longest, a 300-K to the Prison near Perk Valley and Schuylkill County at 49.6 MPH. Two days later I recaptured the one Paris had flown, the 200-K, with a Snyders-Penn Ridge triangle at 61.8 MPH, my fastest speed yet. This record (the final one of mine in the HP-18) lasted for nearly 10 years until Ken Kochanski, showing no mercy for an old man, took it away with his ASW-20.

The Summer of '81 I had retired from work. I had also retired from power-flying some years earlier and was soon to retire the HP-18. Not on purpose, mind you, but it seems my buddy Malpas challenged me to a 1-on-1 race around a 300-K triangle as a record try. The upshot was no record but an HP in the tree-tops near Hazelton, PA. Two weeks later I bought Ed Replogle's H301 Libelle and began my "Glass Bird" career. Though it was my 3rd glider, it was my first factory-made one. The first record attempt with it was in August, resulting in reclaiming the one Clack had set in May. I think we both flew the same triangle (Flanders-Culvers Lake- 100-K). My speed was 55.55 MPH. During the Fall a few tries at 100, 300, and 500 triangles were made- but no new records. Flew all Winter that year ending it with 1550 hours and 22,548 miles accumulated.

In 1983 I returned to Blairstown after flying the Libelle in Florida during February. My first launch back in NJ carried me to what is still on the books for Absolute Altitude and Gain of Altitude. It was March 13th and lots of Club members were flying the local ridge. I decided to chase what I have christened the "Elusive Camelback Wave." From well above the clouds up near Camelback I made a downwind jump into the Blue Mountain Wave. At the start of my flight I had established a "low" of 1800' MSL, so, when the altimeter got to 16,800', I left 2-3 knots of wave lift near Bangor for a nice round gain of 15,000'. It was quite a bit short of a Diamond Climb, but with a really good "Schwartz Notch" of say 800' MSL plus an oxygen system (I had none) I firmly believe it was there that day. One of these days Schwartz will prove it can be done from Blairstown. The only other NJ Record of 1983 came my way on October 29th with an O&R to Potomac Airport, just across the Potomac River in West Virginia. This 378-mile flight was my first long venture beyond the Susquehanna River and, lacking a Detroit Sectional that day, I missed Tuscarora Mountain on the way out and took almost 4 hours to reach the T/P. Since there were no speed records for O&R at that time it didn't matter- so long as I got home. Now that I knew the way and there were no more upwind jumps, I was able to do it in about 2.5 hours. After 10 years this record still stands. 1983 was the biggest year of my glider life; its 93 flights, 320 hours and almost 7200 miles bringing my year-end numbers to 1870 hours and 30,082 miles.

Late in 1983 the thought of 2-Place Records in the "Flying Anvil", the 2-33, had come alive once more. In 1980 I had shared one with "the Turkey", Ron Marcols. We flew thermals for 140 miles and an "almost" O&R. There was one more with Tony Benson for less than 15 miles. In December of '83 Bob Holland and I declared O&R to the corner at Hawk Mountain on a ridge day but landed on the way out- just past Snyders. We were treated to some pie and coffee by the old couple across the road while waiting for Tim Solt and Bill McElwee to arrive for the

retrieve. Exactly 4 weeks later Jack Greene and I tried the same mission ending up (or should I say "down?") in the same field- but did not get any pie. I guess the old folks didn't want us to make a habit of this. The only 2-Place Record claimed that I was ever a part of came in the Spring of 1984- when Templin and I actually got to Hawk and back without landing out.

That year ('84) I was flying from Sky Manor and Bob was doing a lot of crewing for me while recovering from an on-the-job-accident. On the day of the "Anvil" flight a solid low overcast persisted so we put the 301 back in the box and drove up to Blairstown. It was a good ridge but (as I remember the flight) we never got much above 2000' MSL. It is still a record at about 120 miles. That's all there's been for me in the 2-seater category, but I must mention the try with Max in the Lark. We flew a (mostly) ridge flight from Millbrook to Swarta Gap and back for 180 miles- but no record claimed- even though it was declared, pictures were taken and the barograph worked. If you want to know "How Come?", ask Max.

The only record for me in 1984 was a Straight Distance down into the Shenandoah Valley to a landing near Mt Jackson, VA. This operation started from Sky Manor with good ol' Templin crewing and following (?). It seems it wasn't really a very good soaring day and after we lost radio contact, Bobbie decided to hold short of Harrisburg so as to not over-run me. (I had come close to landing at Reading while he could still hear me.) Later when we got together, he couldn't believe I'd gone as far as I did. At the end of the flight, when gravity was having the final word, I looked down at a nice field under me and was surprised to see it had a hangar and a wind-sock! My 244-mile jaunt is still a record after 9 years. Closed 1984 with my totals at 2060 hours, 35,129 miles.

No records in 1985, unless you could call being Crew Chief for the 15-M World Champion a record. I had started to crew for Jacobs in 1984, my debut in this role involving trailering his borrowed Ventus to Ephrata, WA where he won his 2nd National title. After Ephrata and that 5000 miles of trailering I flew to Stuttgart and trailered Birgitte Holighaus's Ventus to Rieti, Italy for DJ to fly in the Pre-Worlds. For the real thing in '85 I flew to Frankfurt to pick up Rudy Mozer's brand-new LS-6. With it Doug scored his runaway victory as an "unknown." That certainly constitutes a record for ACA- two round trips over the Alps with gliders in tow. Finished 1985 with 2210 hours and 39,277 miles.

In 1986 there were a few records achieved. On April 9th I let Templin talk me out of my intended declaration of Front Royal, VA. He said it was a "wimp call" so I changed to his suggested Shenandoah Valley Airport, quite some distance farther. Where did I land? Front Royal- and it was all I could do to get that far. Two days later, in company with Jim Paris, I declared Front Royal. We both got there okay for Goal Records- 225 miles. In June I flew the 500-K triangle, Williamsport-York at 47.7 MPH, and my third came in July on the 300-K triangle, Prison-Schuylkill County at 59.9 MPH. My fourth was the 100-K triangle, Easton-Mount Pocono at 57.2 MPH in August. A week after that one I reversed direction and got around at 61.7 MPH, but had a screw-up with the time-tick- so no claim. Closed out '86 with 2379 hours and 43,912 miles.

I dumped the rest of the water, flew to the airport and entered a downwind leg. At 900' MSL with the gear and flaps down, I flew into lift. Since I'd had a rather short flight, I turned in it and after considerable scratching was able to pull the gear up and get away for another couple of hours, making an upwind visit to Little Gap and Templin's Turkey International.

It was *not* a record day. But you can bet your tail wheel that I'll know my time constraints on every future record try.

DECEMBER '93

### STATE RECORDS ANYONE?

During the 22 years that I have been flying gliders I've probably made more than 100 attempts at establishing or breaking NJ State Soaring Records. A whole lot more than half have been unsuccessful. But, as you've often heard me say, there's as much fun in the trying as in the accomplishing- for either Badges or Records. I believe my first try was in July of 1976, at which time I had about 400 hours and was flying the RS-15. Four of us from ACA had begun to build this Schreder kit in the Fall of '72, my first year of soaring and my first in the Club. I flew this glider for my Gold Distance in 1973 and for my Diamond Distance in 1974. As a result of the infamous "Flagpole Affair" the ship was hors-de-combat for almost a year, but a couple of weeks after the 2nd anniversary of this debacle, a 200-K triangle was declared and completed from Blairstown to Snyders to PGC. Because NJ Records weren't much in those days, this 35 MPH flight got me my first one.

After almost 2 years of building both glider and trailer, the HP-18 took to the skies in 1977. By the Spring of '78 my 100 hours in this beauty had brought my total glider time to over 600 and I was eager to try another record. On April 8th, with no crew previously arranged for, a Goal flight to Frederick, MD was declared and completed from Blairstown. That 165-miler was good for 2 records- both Straight Distance and Distance-to-Goal. A phone call brought John Dellicker to my rescue. I'll long remember that late night retrieve. Thanks, John. In the 15 years since, I've tried to go "Straight Out" less than 10 more times- but they are fun flights.

That same year I boosted the 200-K Triangle Speed way up to 40.1 MPH, again using Snyders-PGC as T/P's. Over the next 2 years there were a few tries at triangles and O&R records but the next claim had to wait until 1980. I was approaching 950 hours when on June 21st I completed a 300-K triangle at the blazing speed of 40.79 MPH. This one (to Sky Haven-Schuylkill County for 197 miles) included a pretty low save directly overhead the runways of the Wilkes Barre Airport, accompanied by a weird radio conversation with the tower and approach controllers. More than a dozen years went by before flying that far in that direction again. That came this past Spring when I joined Doug Jacobs on a try for Elmira, but turned back at Towanda. Ending 1980 I had 1037 hours and 12,605 X-C miles for my 597 flights. No records went into my book for about 2 years in spite of a few attempts. Along with Bill Malpas, my attention had turned mainly to the thought of going for the 1000-K Diploma. since at that time the rules did not allow 4-leg tasks, both of us had come to the conclusion that our chances of accomplishing this from Blairstown were slim. We planned on doing it where so many long flights had already been done- Bald Eagle Ridge. Toward this end a bunch of trips out to Ridge Soaring were made in '79 '80 and '81 with Bill, Bob Templin, Dent Brome and Steve Sampson. The third time I actually declared, and made a start, I got it. On April 2, 1981 I became #16 US, #33 World to earn the coveted Diploma. The almost 11 hours flown that day was both the longest duration and distance in my career. Year ended with 1267 hours and 17,042 miles.

1987 opened with me traveling "Down Under" to crew for DJ at our 2nd Worlds, where one bad decision kept him from repeating his Rieti win. On Day 6 his final glide fell just short of Benalla and cost him about 500 points. He took the Bronze Medal, but was a mere 270 points behind the winner. It was there in Australia that I learned there was a new glider in the future for the duo of Krasnoff-Fitch. As soon as the LS-6B that Doug had flown at Benalla got back to the States, Gene and I took delivery of Doug's "old" LS-6A. We picked it up at Wurtsboro the first week of April. I had a half-dozen flights in it (including a land-out at Sussex) by the time April 30th came along. This was truly a "ridge honker" day, and although I had never flown the bird on the ridge nor flown it with water, a 750-K triangle was declared. Mark Giuglianotti was there that day and copied my declaration for a NJ Open Class Record in his big Nimbus 2. I wasn't truly at home in the LS-6 but still managed NJ Records for 750-K Triangle Speed and Distance-Around-Triangle. Without ever really pressing, my speed was 69.3 MPH for the 468-mile mission. In retrospect, I kinda wish I had pressed or, better yet, declared a 1000-K triangle. That kind of day doesn't come along too often. Ten days later on June 10th I backed down to a 100-K triangle- Lehigh Gap-Philipsburg, 73 miles. On a ridge day this was intended to be a 1 thermal flight, taking a good one near Wind Gap after running the ridge to the first turn and back that far. I must admit to using several, but the flight only took one hour for a speed of 73 MPH. Six years later both of these records still stand. Sort of a personal record was achieved when (at Jack Greene's urging) I did a Diamond distance flight in a 1-26, using the St. Thomas VOR as my T/P on a ridge flight. Jack should have finished his 3rd Diamond that day, too. Believe it or not, that was in August! Now State Records for O&R Speed had been introduced and I got the first one on October 4th, an O&R to the end of Mahantango Mountain, 215 miles. My speed for this 300-K was a little over 62 MPH. When "the Scoundrel" went after this one with his LS-6, he shattered my record. But stay tuned. Year-end stats: 2585 hours, 48,440 miles.

JANUARY '94

## STATE RECORDS, ANYONE? (PART 2)

In 1988 on April 8th I got the 500-K O&R Speed Record. This was to the Burn Cabins Tunnel and back. I had "invented" an easy-on-the-observer method of making a start for a speed task when it was a ridge day. You take a 3000-foot tow and are given a "Mark" from the Official Observer as you approach the Start Line. You then release and make the "Death Dive" for the ridge. I believe I used this method that day- but I never got to the ridge. Less than a mile from the ridge I ran into wave and turned left. Running in wave until past Snyders, it was then necessary to climb and jump upwind. Using several waves as I went upwind, I climbed well above the clouds in the vicinity of Schuylkill County airport, only to discover that the undercast was solid as far as the eye could see along my course line. Forced to dive down through a small window at high speed, I discovered that I had over-flown Mahantango Mountain to the next upwind ridge. I screamed across the valley to Mahantango and reached the Susquehanna, now under the fairly low overcast, in less than an hour from start. I later calculated my speed to that point at 112 MPH, but took an excessively long time to get to Tuscarora and ridge-ran to the T/P. With that delay plus difficulty getting back across the Pottsville area, my finishing speed had degenerated to a mere 64 MPH. Still good enough for the State Record. This one, too, has been taken away by "The Scoundrel." With so may hard-driving ridge-runners flying out of Blairstown, I doubt that I'll ever see this one again. But that getaway start was unforgettable and will be tough to top. Numbers at year end: 2802 hours, 53,447 miles.

1989 was not my year for breaking records. There were a few tries- but nada to show for them. Perhaps my year's statistics are indicative: 40 flights, 142 hours and 2295 X-C miles- the lowest in each category that I'd had in 10 years. Oddly enough, however, my 170-mile average per X-C flight was the highest I've ever had, even though I didn't log the 440+ K flight I shared with Bill Malpas out of Angers, France in his club's Janus. It was the longest 2 seater ride either of us had ever taken- and the best. Another oddity: The 2 longest flights I ever made from Somerset were made in August that year, 230 and 237 miles- one to the Susquehanna River and back and the other to Fairfield, PA and back to Reading. Both of these were Scheurer Trophy flights, the latter one successful. Year-end numbers 2944 hours, 56,842 miles.

1990 made it two in a row without State Records. True, I was away from NJ quite a bit. I flew the Open Class Nationals at Mifflin County, finishing well down as usual and then left for Minden, where DJ won his 3rd 15-M title and I had my only flight for the month of June, taking his brother for a ride in a Grob. Flew only twice in July before going to Dansville for my 2nd Regional of the year. (I flew Chester before the Opens.) My log book does show a few tries with "No Start", "Abort" or "Too Slow" comments. One different attempt was my 100-K triangle in the Pilatus, trying for a Standard Class Record. No good at 45.6 MPH. It was in October that the previously-mentioned adventure with Max took place. Now with 1246 flights logged, totals were 3122 hours, 62,676 miles.



1991 produced my second-highest mileage total (6587) but not much in the shape of records. There were lots of tries, but those same old comments were all too frequent in my log. One of them was the "Boo-Boo" that I described in 'Pinions. It was that Perk Valley-Schuylkill county "300" which I quit on during the last leg when I had a very wrong idea of the required time-to-beat. I actually had the speed to beat "U-Momma's" time but I just came home without making a finish or entering a claim. In April "One-Kilo" and I flew the "wrong side" of the ridge past Hawk farther than I'd ever gone but had to turn back because of rain showers. We hadn't declared anything, but it showed the potential of the near side. Exactly 2 weeks later I declared for Manada Gap and got there and back but it wasn't very strong and my speed wasn't good enough. But now I'd covered the route- I'll be back, UM. My only 1991 record was claimed for the June 7th 500-K triangle to Howard Dam-Lancaster, breaking my own previous record as well as Mark G's Open Class record with a decent speed of 59.9 MPH. My contests in '91 were the Caesar Creek 1-26 Nationals with Kevin Cullis as a team and Harris Hill Regionals. It was in June of '91 that I completed my 100th flight in excess of 300-K. Now with more than 850 in the LS-6 I had 3327 hours, 69,263 miles.

In 1992, with a few earlier undeclared but nice flights the year really got going on April 5th. Arriving at the gliderport a little late that Sunday, I discovered that the "Kilo Boys", Kochanski & Templin were off and running on 4-leg 1000-K missions. With an undeclared flight myself I went out as far as Mifflin County and Honey Grove, doing more wave soaring than ridge-running. I never actually saw either of them but was not far to the north when Ken turned Schuylkill and was close to Bobbie when he roared by Honey Grove, S/W bound. My 292 logged miles looked small compared to their 620+ but they were no happier than I at the end of the day. After all, this was a Blairstown FIRST! Even before the rules were changed to permit the 4-leg task I had come to the conclusion that the "1000" was possible out of Blairstown on the right day. By now we knew a whole lot more about the ridge systems and the transitions that are required than we had known in the late 70's. As you all know, Ken got his Diploma but Bobbie failed on pictures. Not to worry, One Kilo, I was in my 61st year when I did it- you've got plenty of time. But speaking of picture failures, my nice 300-K on May 28th was the first time I ever lost a record claim with my camera. My speed of 67.8MPH was all for naught because of an awful photo of Perk Valley. All the rest of my 1992 tries went down the tube for the usual reasons. One that might have had a chance was an abort at Hawk after a "wong side" run at about 110 MPH that far. I had made a very late start (1633), I had no crew, it looked awfully gloomy ahead- and I just quit. I couldn't help remembering picking Bobbie out of a field near the T/P when Eric Mann and I rescued him on a canceled Little Guys Day. But I'm getting CLOSER! Wait. Contests flown in 1992 were the 1-26 at Midlothian where I completely ruined our team's chances of retaining its title by going 14 miles to a landout on a POST task on a pretty good day, plus Dansville, which almost weathered out. My 159 hours that year managed to include 9 more better-than-300-K flights, bringing my total to 111 of them. Hours now 3486, miles 73,995.

So here we are in 1993 and what started me to write this whole mess. The day after our April Club meeting was Good Friday and the wind was blowing on the wrong side of the ridge. The night before, knowing this was the forecast, the closing session at the bar revealed that Benson

& Matousek were planning 500-K flights by the 4-leg method. Much to my surprise when I arrived to do my 300, they were still on the ground. It was about 11 o'clock and I thought they would have been well on the road. Almquist had towed off just before I showed up, also seeking the 500. By the time the LS-6 was rigged and ballasted they were all gone, with me still under the impression that their tasks were of the 4-leg variety, as discussed the night before. As I made out my declaration for Manada Gap along came Schwartz. He wanted my co-ordinates to use for his own O&R and it looked as though we'd have traffic galore running back and forth along the ridge. I launched, ran to the Gap and back, ridge-testing, and then climbed up for a return to the start gate. Made my start at about 3000 MSL and it was off to the races. Crossed Wind Gap in about 9 minutes from start, confident that this was the day. A bit surprised not to encounter any of the earlier guys, I reached Hawk in just about 25-28 minutes. (Way over 100 MPH.)

My pre-determined departure altitude for the upwind transition at Hawk had been set at 3000 MSL, so the next 20 minutes were spent trying to thermal up that high. With the average speed eroding rapidly, I finally left at about 2600. The crossing went easily, with a lack of both sink and terror. Just turned the corner and got back on the step, though somewhat slower. About now I turned on the radio to find out what was going on with the other "traffic" and was able to hear Tony and Hal down near the Susquehanna and still S/W bound. Seems that they were doing O&R's, all 3 of them- and they didn't sound too happy about it. Able to fly 2-300 above the crest at 90-100 knots, I continued to my turn at Manada, took the picture and started for home. It had taken a couple of minutes more than an hour for the (approximately) 98 miles. Still moving well and approaching Hamburg, I started to talk to Clack in "VL", who was S/W bound towards Hawk. When I asked him if Schwartz had made his start ahead of him, he didn't think so. That seemed strange to me but the question was answered in a minute or so when here came a 1-26 about 100' lower. It was the old 1-26 master, himself, apparently maintaining radio silence. We rocked wings at each other and passed. The downwind jump at Hawk required only a speed reduction and a couple of circles in lift. Now it was just a matter of running for home.

The ridge lift wasn't quite as good as on the way out but I still cruised well above and made good time. Nearing Wind Gap I was able to contact Pete Angelou, my Official Observer and advise him to stand by for a finish in about 10 minutes. This side of the ridge is so nice! Left it near Tilp's and crossed the finish, water streaming. The speed figured out at 97.76, not quite the 100 MPH I'd hoped for- but the out-bound delay at Hawk was to blame for that- plus my conservative style of ridge-soaring- never on the trees. When I landed I was told that the folks at Blairstown weren't sure I'd make it back since the trio of Almquist, Benson & Matousek had all bitten the dust, the later pair a good 150 miles from Blairstown. Schwartz got home perhaps 2 hours later to claim 1-26, Standard and Sports Class Records. His raw speed was 56 MPH, better than U-Momma had done with his LS-4 and he told me his delay at Hawk was almost twice mine and that his downwind jump took him well below the crest. It was also learned later that Almquist had made a downwind jump from Hawk on the way out. An interesting alternative- but in his case it didn't work out, as he landed in the Pine Grove vicinity trying to

regain the main ridge. there was another Sports Class Record claimed that day when Matousek discovered that his land-out was far enough away to give him credit for Straight Distance of 205.58 handicap miles- all things considered, quite a Good Friday!

Now that the year is almost over, that's probably it for 1993. Who will get the first record for 1994? And who will get the first one with a speed above 100 MPH? This will probably happen in 1994 on the same task as mine and Ron's. Assuming no December flights for me, 1993 will close with totals of 1282 flights, 3614 hours and 78,707 X-C miles and showing 122 300-or-more flights. It's been fun.





