

Seven Hours in a Two-Seater

by Fred C. Barnes

ALTHOUGH we achieved several better performances later in the contest, the endurance flight that Lucretia Buxton and I made last Summer in the Buxton "Transporter" will always stand out in our memories as the most interesting and certainly the most enlightening flight we made.

This hop was the realization of an ambition. For six years we had waited for a chance to come to Elmira, and the thrill of seeing our dream come true was a sensation we shall certainly never experience again. The thrill of soaring back and forth along the ridge with more gliders than we had ever seen before sailing all around us, meeting well-known pilots in the air high over Harris Hill, was in itself worth traveling three thousand miles to experience.

We took off about eleven o'clock, Sunday, June 21, totally unprepared for any extensive flying, on what was intended to be a short cruise around to see what the country was like. We also wanted to get our hand in again, as we had not done much flying for several months. The wind was from the northwest and rather weak, and soaring conditions were considered to be rather poor over Harris Hill. However, once aloft, we found it comparatively easy to stay up. The first two or three hours we spent flying back and forth along the slope from Harris Hill to Hill Number Two. The time passed quickly, and we were kept pretty busy dodging the Franklins and getting an eye-full of beautiful New York scenery that even sunny California can't surpass.

About one-thirty in the afternoon, we started catch-

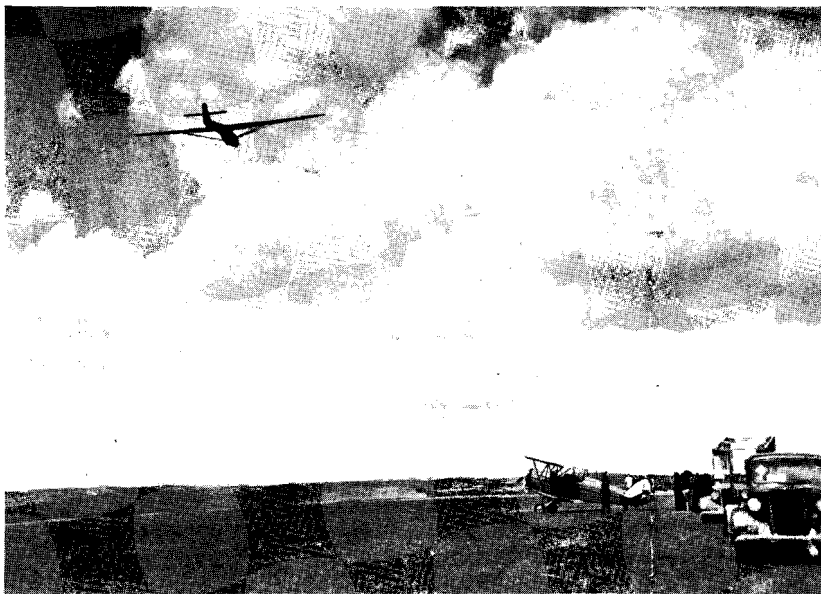
ing thermals and occasionally encountering clouds. We went through a series of ups and downs that would have made a roller coaster seem like a drive in the park. Never venturing very far from the ridge, we would work our way up to two or three thousand feet and then lose it and return to the slope to wait for another good boost. After several hours of this, we saw that Hank Wightman and one other chap flying a Franklin were the only ones remaining with us in the vicinity of Harris Hill. The others had apparently gone off on cross country attempts or had been forced down. Perhaps some had landed for dinner. It was a great temptation for us to do likewise.

Finally Hank Wightman sailed off in the direction of South Mountain, and shortly afterward, the other ship dropped down to a landing near the American Airlines Airport. We felt rather deserted, but with about four hours to our credit decided to stick it out for duration, although it was not exactly as pleasant as it might have been. The wind was quite cold, and after our dash from California in five and a half days and nights, we had almost had our fill of sitting and riding. However, we did manage to stave off our appetites with a couple of bags of peanuts which some generous vendor had tossed in just before our take-off. In the more peaceful moments we counted box cars on the passing freight trains, lustily sang many college songs and, in general, made quite a racket, which helped to keep up our soaring spirits and pass the time.

The thermals were, of course, the most interesting part of the flying to us, as we had done most of our soaring on the Coast, where the air is more stable, and we had

always relied on simple ridge soaring. We had also just installed a rate of climb indicator in the ship, and it was great fun watching the needle swing up and down, especially up. As we were not yet very familiar with it, we could not, of course, use it to the best advantage. We also made a number of very common mistakes. Our principal fault was not spiralling tightly enough when we encountered a good thermal and therefore losing much possible lift. Our previous experience had been to make fairly flat, easy turns to avoid unnecessary use of the controls, and consequently increased drag. However, as we later discovered, you can find enough power in one of those thermals to take up a barn door if you just get in them and stay there.

As the afternoon wore on, we stayed up between two and three thousand feet most of the time. Often we chased clouds, several



Start of seven-hour flight