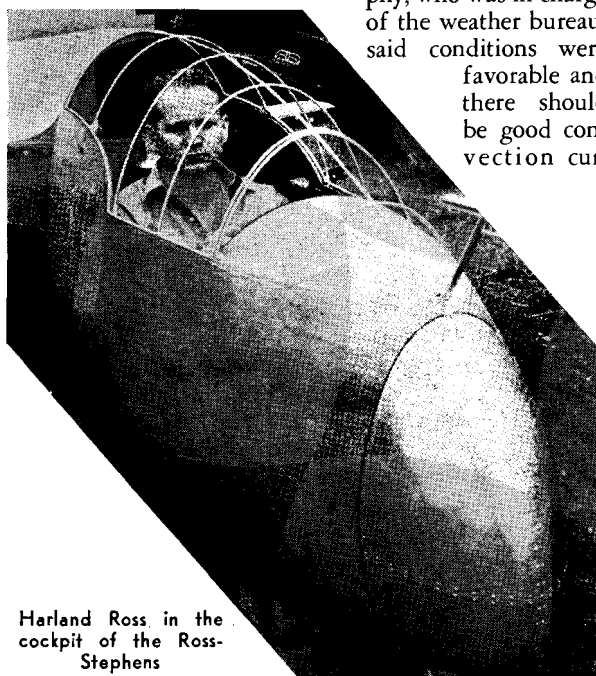


# Soaring ACROSS the POCONOS

By HARLAND C. ROSS

I WAS awake early on July eighth, the eleventh day of the National Soaring Contest, and was pleased to see the windsock indicated a good northwest wind. Springing out of bed, I hurriedly drew on my clothes and dashed out of the door in search of the meteorologist to get the radio weather report. Ethan Mur-

phy, who was in charge of the weather bureau, said conditions were favorable and there should be good convection cur-



Harland Ross in the cockpit of the Ross-Stephens

*Cy La Tour Photo*

rents' all day. After breakfast, the trailer was wheeled from the hangar and the beautiful Ross-Stephens sailplane was assembled. By nine o'clock several ships had made winch towed starts, to test the air conditions, but always had to land after a glide over Harris Hill. However, as it grew later, I noticed each flight indicated more thermal activity than the preceding one.

Peter Riedel arrived on the hill and was looking the conditions over very carefully. As I stopped to chat with him, I noticed his map had a line drawn from Elmira to New York City. I laughed to myself, guess we both had the same idea, a goal flight.

At eleven o'clock, Reidel was airplane towed aloft and,

after cutting loose, he slowly climbed toward the cloud base. I prepared to start at once, as the conditions seemed right. I was towed from Harris Hill, and we started east toward some large cumulus clouds, where I cast off at eleven-fifty, as my altimeter was reading 1900 ft.

Soon I encountered a thermal and spiraled up at six feet per second. Even at this late hour the thermals were not as strong as I had anticipated. After loitering in the vicinity of Elmira for about forty-five minutes, I reached an altitude of thirty-five hundred feet above my point of release.

I glanced at my map and saw that the airways radio beam, from Rochester to New York City, paralleled the wind direction, at my altitude, so decided to follow this compass course toward New York City, a distance of 185 airline miles.

In the distance I could see the occasional flash of the sun on the wings of a wheeling sailplane and knew that Riedel was taking the same course. By this time I had arrived over Sayre, Pennsylvania, but was losing altitude, so turned back toward Waverly to wait for clouds to arrive, which gave me a good lift back to 4000 feet. While climbing in this thermal I noticed two other sailplanes, Chester Decker in the "Albatross" and Emil Lehecka in his "Rhönsperber", spiraling below me at an altitude of about 2000 feet. The reason for this maneuver of one pilot following another, is that the following pilot can take advantage of the strong up-current in which he sees the leading pilot circling.

About five miles ahead I could see Riedel spiraling beneath a cloud, and I thought, "Here is my chance to follow a German expert," so I lowered the nose of the ship until the airspeed was reading 70 miles per hour. At this speed the sinking velocity was 61½ feet per second, so I was forced to lose 2000 feet in this long glide. As I flew beneath the cloud at 2500 feet, Riedel was entering the cloud base at 5000 feet, and from that time on I was never able to locate him again, despite the fact we landed only a few miles apart.

I had climbed only a few hundred feet when the cloud began to break up and form a down-draft, so the only thing to do was leave at once and seek another up-current. This occurrence was very untimely because I lost valuable time in regaining the lost altitude which had been sacrificed a few minutes before. At this stage, the map indicated 40 miles from home and bearing

(Continued on Page 12)

