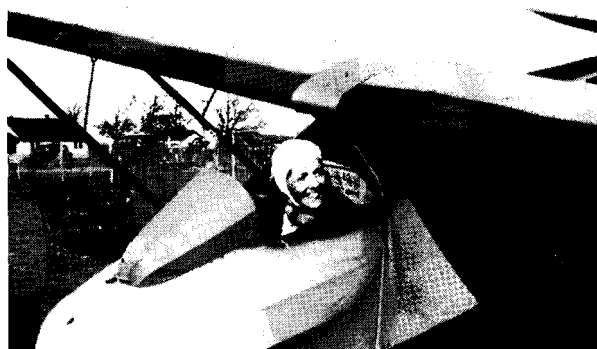




Albert Farrenkopf



Leora Stroud

Above: Helen Montgomery in the XYZ Franklin
Left: The author landing at Triangle Airport

Thermal Soaring Over Flat Country Near Detroit

by L. D. Montgomery

A few years ago, Randy Chapman was flying a Mehlhose utility glider at Pontiac Municipal Airport. Upon leaving the towline at 600 ft. altitude, he caught a strong thermal and went up to 4,000 ft., without the aid of a rate of climb indicator. Though the day was fairly warm, Randy found that he was uncomfortably cold up there in his shirt sleeves. His glider became cold and, when he came down rapidly after a 40 minute flight, condensation on the cold craft left it dripping with moisture.

Randy's flight has been an inspiration to others, and often I have heard it said that it should be possible to make many thermal soaring flights near Detroit in spite of the fact that the greatest abrupt rise anywhere within 200 miles (unless one crosses over into Canada) is 160 feet. Earlier than Chapman's flight, 4,500 ft. had been attained over Grosse Isle in a primary glider, in what must have been a very strong thermal.

This past year, members of the XYZ Soaring Club had been getting occasional lift over Williams Lake near Pontiac Airport, but this was probably not thermal lift in the ordinary sense. All gliders were eliminated

from Pontiac early this spring, and then, one Sunday, XYZ members were turned back at the gates of Selfridge Field. It seemed that the only thing remaining for us to do was to try flying out of a subdivided area which we had spotted about a month earlier and which was left rather vacant by the ravages of the last depression.

There were five cinder streets 1.45 miles long, and no houses had been built in the area. A few scattered trees eliminated some of our "runways" (flanked on each side by ditches) and there was a mudhole halfway along the only usable runway which kept us from attaining more than 1,200 ft. by auto towing. We used nearly 4,000 ft. of wire, so that we could place the tow car just beyond the mudhole, and then drove the 4,000 ft. that remained.

On my first flight, there was a light breeze of about 6 m.p.h., and I had the good luck to strike lift soon after leaving the tow line. Perhaps more out of the spirit of play than anything else, I started to spiral tightly right there. To my surprise, my variometer continued to read approximately 1 ft./sec. and even showed signs

(Continued on Page 13)

The author in the Franklin

Leora Stroud



A typical Sunday in May at Triangle Airport

Albert Farrenkopf

