



Don Pollard starts his 206-mile flight from Harris Hill in the sleek Air-100.

Howard Levy

The Air-100

By DON POLLARD

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I FIRST saw the Air-100 at Wichita Falls, Texas, during the National Soaring Meet. Observing the sailplane in flight, it was obviously a ship of superior performance. Fortunately, the designer, Raymond Jarlaud, chief engineer of the French Arsenal de l'Aeronautique was at the meet and I was introduced to him by the Assistant Military Air Attache to the French Embassy. In my conversation with Monsieur Jarlaud I expressed a desire to fly the Air-100 and compare its performance to American sailplanes of comparable design. I was delighted to learn that he was interested in the opinion of an American pilot, so arrangements were made for me to fly the ship on the last day of the meet.

I was towed into the air at about two-thirty in the afternoon, after promising to return by four o'clock in order to allow another pilot to fly. The lightness and smoothness of control while in tow impressed me very favorably. The release was made at 2000 feet. After going down to 1600 I encountered a thermal and climbed to 6000 feet. I then left the thermal and decided to confirm or disapprove some of the amazing performances claimed by the French.

My suspicions were confirmed in about thirty minutes; the ship does have amazing performance. In spite of the fact that it is a large sailplane, the control pressures are very light and very responsive. It is truly a pleasure to see sixty-feet of wing respond immediately to finger tip pressure. It is very stable in turns and has quite normal stall and spin characteristics.

The minimum sink appeared to be about 1.7 feet per second at 60 km/h (37.5 mph), which is superior to any sailplane flying today. The dive brakes operated very smoothly and were quite effective. By this time four o'clock was rapidly approaching and I decided to return to the airport.

My real opportunity to test the Air-100 came when I was asked to fly as the French representative in the Northeastern State Championship Meet at Elmira, New York, August 29 to September 1. Rather than discuss the four days flying, I am going to select the most outstanding flight, which was made on August 31 under fair soaring conditions. This flight was from Elmira to Asbury Park, New Jersey—a total of 206 miles, 7 hours and 13 minutes.

I was launched from Harris Hill by automobile tow at 10:57 A.M. to an altitude of 250 feet above the hill, Goal—Allentown, Pennsylvania. I soared on the ridge for fifteen minutes attaining an altitude of 1000 feet above release, and decided that this was high enough to start the trip. There were broken strato-cumulus clouds at about 2500 feet, with very little lift beneath them (about 1 to 1½ feet per second). I had been slowly losing altitude between clouds, and about ten miles southeast of Elmira I was down to 950 feet, completely out of the range of the cloud lift. There was a small ridge on one side of the valley which faced into the wind, and, flying over it, I found it was possible to maintain just what altitude I had left. After working this ridge for about forty-five minutes, I began