

COMPLETING DIAMOND "C" NUMBER 1

By JOHN ROBINSON

The requirements for the Diamond "C" Soaring Award are: Distance 310.7 miles, altitude gained 16,405 feet, and goal flight 186.42 miles.

My qualifying flights are:

July 19, 1946—325 miles, American Distance Record flight from Wichita Falls, Texas to Barstow, Texas.

Jan. 1, 1949—33,500 feet, Absolute Altitude World Record 24,200 feet, Altitude Gained American Record, Bishop, California to Muroc AAF Base, Calif. (Records all single-place sailplane).

July 1, 1950—221-mile Goal flight from El Mirage Field, Calif., to Overton, Nevada.

On the first day of the 1950 West Coast Championship Soaring Contest at El Mirage, Calif., my take-off was not early. It was after 12:30 p.m. when I was towed up on my sailplane "Zanonia" behind the BT towplane to start on a declared goal flight to Overton, Nevada, 221 miles distant. If I made it, this flight would complete my qualifications for the Diamond "C" Award.

I found a few thermals and started out ENE at a good pace. Bill Ivans in his Schweizer 1-23 and Lyle Maxey in the Prue 215 had taken off one half hour earlier, and both had disappeared in the same direction, which was encouraging.

About 30 miles out I was scratching around for any lift at all, for thermals were few and far between. Near Barstow, Calif., at 40 miles out, I gained altitude slowly, and reluctantly turned my back on the airport there and headed for Baker. (Later I learned that both Maxey and Ivans had to land in the Barstow-Daggett area.)

Progress was very slow to Baker, and it was 3:30 p.m. before I passed this 90 mile point. Then a good thermal to 10,000 feet sent me gliding hopefully toward Clark Mountain, 7903 feet high beside the highway, 30 miles ahead.

Several nice looking Cumulus clouds drew me on, only to slap my face with a complete lack of updrafts for three clouds in a row. Soon I was diving thru the Mountain pass at 7000 feet, determined to at least reach the valley on the far side for a landing on the dry lake. One more little cloud near the mountain held my only visible hope, and then I found a real "Elevator".

In less than ten minutes I was boosted to over 17,000 feet and my speed and spirits increased together. Now I found plenty of thermals and altitude to burn.

Over Las Vegas, Nevada, a huge thunderstorm was dissipating as I reached it at 4:30 p.m. My best chance to continue was to get back up to 16,000 feet over Las Vegas, dive thru the remnants of the storm cloud and glide the last 50 miles to my goal. There were no other clouds in sight, and the storm was too large to fly around. From 14,000 feet it took an hour of playing weak lift on the edges of the dying storm to gain 2000 feet.

1000 feet altitude was sacrificed to the downdraft in the stormclouds, which by now were only a thin curtain hung across the sky between me and my goal. This left plenty of altitude for the long glide and a little reserve for possible downdrafts, and I was ready for a smooth slide in the early evening.

Instead of clear air, I was confronted with a beautiful cloud street of cumulus stretching ahead directly over my goal. I flew in a straight line under them and in 40 minutes I was sneaking in over the airport at Overton with 13,000 feet altitude to spare.

Not being able to shed this altitude instantly, I went on a 40-minute gliding tour of Lake Mead, returning to Overton and the airport just before dark.

Mr. Richardson, the airport manager was very helpful in matters of communications, refreshment, and comfort, etc., while I waited for my long suffering crew, Les Heibert and Dick Eldridge to arrive with my car and trailer.

REPORT ON "EXPLORER"

By GRACE ROBERTS

(ED. NOTE: You have been listening to long-winded men shoot the breeze about gliders for so many years that I thought you would enjoy this breezy letter from a girl. She suggested I use only part of the letter, but how can you shut a woman up when she is talking about **gliders?**)

This is a report on the first Schweizer TG3-A to explore the Australian skies. In this country, we have been starved for good gliders; our Grunaus, and ships of similiar performance, have given wonder service for many years now and I am not belittling them in any way—I am too grateful for the many joyous hours of soaring in them to do such a thing. But, in all Australia, the only machines we have which could be termed high-performance are

three Olympias and two Slingsby Gulls. To these we can now add the Schweizer, owned by Fred Hoinville and operated within the Hinkler Soaring Club, of which Fred is President—and Geoff Richardson's newly-modified and very elegant "Golden Eagle." Probably none of these would be classified overseas as high-performance, but they'll do us!

Fred test-flew the Schweizer at Bankstown and Camden aerodromes, near Sydney, New South Wales, on Sunday, August 27th, 1950. On the test-flight, the Schweizer gave us a hint of things to come by gaining a thousand feet after release. News of the test-flying was eagerly awaited all over Australia, as eagerly as we had awaited the Schweizer's arrival. Official news was good—but Fred's personal news about "Explorer," as she had been christened, was rather

dampening for the enthusiasm of a feminine pilot. On tow, the controls were so heavy that Fred thought it would not be possible for "Explorer" to be soloed by a woman. As things turned out, it can now be disclosed that both Nancy Ellis and I immediately and separately made up our minds that we COULD solo it, that what we lacked in strength we could make up in feminine guile. All women know that there are ways to overcome lack of strength. Fred and Nancy and I had for some months been writing back and forth about Nancy and I attempting to establish some Australian records with the TG, hence our secret determination!

During the next couple of weekends, "Explorer" was flown by members of the Hinkler Soaring Club, piloted by Fred Hoinville or John (Continued on Page 15)