



This picture of "Mom" and "Pop" Krohne and "The Comet" at the West Odessa Airport, Odessa, Texas was made after completion of Golden C. flight from Odessa to Hereford, Texas, 210 miles. Note the happy smiles. Picture was taken by Jack Stafford, of the Odessa Spring and Axle Company. Jack is the man who put up the \$150 goal prize won by Dick Johnson when he flew from Grand Prairie to Odessa Aug. 12, 1950 to set a new goal record and cinch the National Championship.

MY GOLDEN "C" FLIGHT

By WALTER J. "POP" KROHNE

August 25th, 1950 was a red letter day for me, when my flight from Odessa to Hereford, Texas, a distance of 210 miles, completed the requirements for that long desired Golden C, which I had been trying to get since my first introduction to soaring.

When Steve and Ginny Bennis opened their Gliding and Soaring school in Sanford, Florida, I was their first student, receiving my C certificate in January, 1947. Later that year, when the 14th National Soaring Contest was held at Wichita Falls, Texas, I completed my Silver C and had visions of possessing the Golden C before my first year of soaring ended.

With that in mind, I took my L-K along when Mom and I went from Texas to California to visit relatives. We found it convenient to spend a few days with Ray Parker and Bill Putnam, who were operating K Field, near 29 Palms. Tall thermals were plentiful and I was able to make my Golden C altitude on my first try for it, and could have made it nearly every day, as it was very easy to get 15,000 to 18,000 feet without ever having to enter a cloud. But I was not successful in my distance try, due chiefly to my inexperience in cross-country flight—the conditions were there, but I made some errors in judgment while attempting to fly from 29 Palms to Bishop. Instead of detouring around the Pass, at Randsburg, and keeping in the valley where thermal conditions were good, I thought I had enough altitude to fly directly across and that would save considerable time. But to my sorrow, I encountered heavy downdrafts when it was too late to retreat, and had only 300 feet above terrain at the high point of the Pass, which made me feel that I was almost scraping the roof tops of the town. However, the terrain sloped to the valley rapidly and I was able to get about four miles away before I had to set the ship down, in the mesquite, near an abandoned mining camp. Then I had a four mile walk, back to Rainsburg, to call for Ray Parker

to retrieve me. It was too late for him to come that evening, so I had the unique experience of spending the night in this desert mining town.

I found it took about all of the intestinal fortitude I possessed to make this flight across this desolate desert, near the high Sierra Mountain ranges, over mesquite, sand, rocks and dry lakes, where landing spots were few and far between; where a premature landing might put down miles and miles from any town or habitation or even roads; where the day temperatures were not less than 100 to 130 degrees in the shade, but you would find no shade except under the wings of your plane.

I always took a vacuum bottle of water and a few sandwiches, a compact first-aid kit, some matches and a few pounds of flour, on these flights. The flour to be used to make a signal such as a large X or circle, whereby a search plane could spot the site more readily. Fortunately, I never had to resort to this, nor to building a mesquite signal fire, though I was prepared, in case the necessity should arise. Time would not permit me to wait for conditions to be right again, on this trip, and I had to leave the desert, still lacking my Golden C distance, but with some thrilling experiences and with a great deal more knowledge of things to be avoided in making cross country distance flights.

In 1948 I tried again, in Texas, during the Southwestern Meet at Grand Prairie, but my many attempts met with failure. Again, in 1949, this time flying the German-built Minimoa, a fine ship that at one time held the National distance record, I tried many times to get that 187 miles I needed. The hours aloft would easily have allowed me to make it had I flown the "Minnie" at faster speeds between thermals, but I still had a lot to learn, such as errors made in flying under overcast; flying into the open, over areas where

(See Next Page)