

AND TALKS - - - - -

her first official record. The barograph chart was later sent in to claim the first official altitude record for Australian women glider pilots.

Of course, the establishing of a record was in itself not important, but it was the start of some really excellent gliding publicity over the Australian Broadcasting Commission and in most Australian newspapers next day and all through the next week, when Nancy and I were trying to establish a dual women's altitude record.

Later in the day, Fred took his wife up for her first glider flight and did aerobatics and streamer cutting. With Nancy and me in "Brolga" and Fred and Kevin Moloney in "Explorer," we flew back to Bankstown in the calm evening air, long gentle shadows dozing under the trees. Way off our port bow the Blue Mountains drew deep purple draperies over their flanks; to the starb'd, the Pacific Ocean lay motionless, while the colours of opals played dreamily on its wide surface; except for low down on the horizon, all the colour had been scoured from the sky and the first faint stars shone pale and tentatively.

Next morning, at Bankstown — from which aerodrome we operated all the week—unavoidable delays kept us on the ground just too long. The wind was 10/15 mph, 5/8th rather feathery cu. and a little al. cu. lent. Fred towed Nancy and me in the direction of Richmond. We were 25 minutes on tow, Nancy piloting to leave me fresh for thermal sniffing —an excellent arrangement which I can recommend. Civil Aviation officers had told us that, in an emergency, we could land at Richmond Royal Australian Air Force Station —which news had sent us hurriedly scurrying out of the cockpit for lip-stick and combs. We hoped to get back to Bankstown, of course, but still, you never know!

And, on the way, we began to feel very dubious about getting back to Bankstown in free flight. The clouds looked very flaccid and feathery round the edges. At 1500', near Richmond, we dropped away from Fred. I couldn't find a thing to use. "Ex-

plorer" scuttled all round the sky while our friend, Ernie, piloting a Puss Moth with a "Sun" photographer aboard, cursed us bitterly. One moment he was at stalling point, next second he'd be flat out trying to catch us.

Maybe I wasn't good enough, maybe the lift wasn't there. Never know, do you? But anyway, I sidled in to Richmond, blandly ignoring the control tower and sneaked in for my first landing at a RAAF Station.

As it happened, I was delighted to have the chance to drop in, because I knew an old friend of mine was stationed there—Flt. Lt. Viv Plumb, one time member of the old pre-war Myer (I think) Gliding Club. I'm not so sure whether the RAAF was equally delighted to see us as it turned out they had Dougs chuffing everywhere, but anyway, they were very nice to us and Viv was gratifyingly staggered to see me, suitably impressed, also, by "Explorer". Viv is a Douglas expert and, when he saw us coming in, at first thought we were one of his DC3's in trouble. The Schweizer's resemblance to a DC3—probably the best-known aircraft in Australia—is indeed marked and has been commented on by many people, particularly when she is on tow and a poor little Tiger Moth is apparently dragging a big air liner around the sky—and nobody can THINK why!

Fred towed us off again from Richmond, after a conference and we felt we'd left some good friends there.

It was obvious that it was too late to get any altitude from a low release, but we thought we might be able to get some height in cloud, provided we stayed clear of aerodromes or air routes, as requested by Civil. However, as each objective was approached, it coyly dissolved before our eyes.

With Nancy at the controls again, I had a remarkably enjoyable trip, taking photographs and basking in the sunshine. At 4500', we had a magnificent view of Sydney, laved by her blue waters and insinuated into the encroaching bushland, the great harbour bridge still dominating

the scene, even from our altitude. After half an hour, we gave up and turned back towards Bankstown. Near Prospect Reservoir, silvered now by the lowering sun, we cast off. The sky was completely covered by cirro-stratus—or something. There was no lift but we had a pleasant half hour drifting around before heading back towards Bankstown.

I am very ashamed to confess this, but Nancy and I became so engrossed in trying out various maneuvers, that we turned with 2000' to last us a distance horribly close to eight miles. By flying over marshy areas and along the river, I cut our sink to a minimum and we didn't have to use any of the paddocks we kept picking out. Then, too, I was still not accustomed to the greatly improved performance I had in the Schweizer. All the same, even a mile away, I still thought we would have to do a down-wind landing and the hell with the traffic-pattern and the wind-T. But, astonishingly, we arrived back of the DeHavilland factory with a clear one thousand feet.

It was my first approach to and landing on a controlled and busy aerodrome and Nancy was busy in the back seat preventing me from doing absentminded right-hand turns and beating my height off in typical casual glider fashion. Again, the higher performance had me concentrating closely to judge my landing. I used the spoiler-brakes like a throttle. It was fun to see Control gunning the red light at an Auster and making him wait off the runway while we came in and put the Schweizer down where Control like it put down.

Always, when taking off or landing at Bankstown, we were very much aware of our responsibility to the rest of the gliding fraternity. Civil here has not clamped any regulations down on us and for this we are truly grateful. I feel that it's up to every glider driver in the country to fly ALWAYS with that freedom in mind. As long as we continue to operate safely and sanely, and co-operate courteously and readily with Civil when it's asked of us, then we

Fred Hoinville and Grace Roberts in "Explorer"



Fred Hoinville (dark glasses), Flt. Lt. "Viv" Plumb

