

deepest crevasses, and thunder rumbled and echoed from the lofty overhanging cornices. Enough latent heat of condensation had been given off by it to heat a city for a whole year. My mountain was higher than any in the world, yet it was right at my own back door. It hadn't been there a few hours before, and an hour hence would be only a memory . . . perhaps the most wonderful part of my whole adventure was that I am the only man who ever climbed this particular mountain, and the only one who ever will.

The storm had drifted north with the winds aloft, and at the time I broke out of the south side I was about ten miles north of the point of entry. I circled around in the clear for perhaps five minutes, and lost 1,000 feet. While flying close to the cloud, there was slight lift, as though the air surrounding and close to the cloud was being pulled into it by the rising air within the cloud.

I re-entered the cloud at 9300 feet, intending to go as high as I could and then glide north to try and cover my Silver C distance. Much to my surprise, I found nothing but descending air in the cloud, taking me down at about 400 feet per minute, or about twice normal sinking speed for the ship. The rain was heavy, but the turbulence light, as I crossed the cloud, breaking out on the north side at 7,000 feet. I estimated that the cloud was about five miles in diameter, and I was on instruments approximately six minutes. Flying close to the north wall of the cloud disclosed only descending currents, indicating that clear air was again being pulled into the cloud, but now with a downward inclination, just the opposite of the condition when the cloud was in its earlier stages of development and still building. I was amazed to find that a cloud, which a few minutes before was almost solid "up" was now at least at this level, all "down."

Leaving the mountain at my back, I glided downwind where I tried to find lift in several small Cu's. They were all dissipating, however, and I found no lift in any of them, and it was growing late in the day for dry thermals by the time I got down to their level. I worked a few weak ones, but was finally forced to land in a baseball field at Henning, Tennessee. The baseball field was across the highway from the airport shown on

my old sectional chart. The latter was now, in post-war days, a cotton field.

The flight had taken one hour and forty-five minutes and had covered about fifty miles. I could see the anvil top of my mountain, seeming distant and unscalable far to the south. I found on my return home that while I was groping within its depths, my cloud had caused considerable damage in its passage over the city below.

In summary, my observations seem to indicate that the cloud as a whole was rising while in the simple cumulus stage, and that it was entraining air through its sides, and the air had a vertical, as well as horizontal, component as it entered the cloud. In its later stages of development, the top seemed to continue to build while the lower half seemed to contain only descending currents, and was entraining clear air into it horizontally and downward. I believe that had I not left the cloud, I could have continued to climb until stopped by ice or lack of oxygen. The prime lesson learned was that such flights should not be undertaken without proper instrumentation and equipment, and that a cumulus cloud can become a full grown thunderstorm in half an hour. In my opinion the minimum instruments should include two turn and bank indicators, one electric, and the other a vacuum instrument, manually operated by pumping air through the vent side with a rubber bulb or cockpit pump. The airspeed should be taken from a well in the nose with the pitot line pointing toward the back of the well, so that it cannot fill with water or ice-up. In addition, oxygen equipment should be carried and all equipment should be properly secured. The pilot should be a proficient instrument flyer, needless to say.

When I climbed out of the ship, I was a tired but happy man, surrounded by a group of colored baseball players with big eyes. They thought that the sailplane was a Jet, because it didn't have an engine, and that I had crashed because it wasn't sitting upon landing gear. On the way home, in thinking about my mountain, I thought about soaring pilots going to the Alps to soar, to Bishop to fly the Big Wave, and to the desert to climb 15,000 feet in dry thermals. Then I realized that they, as well as I, were offered a greater challenge right in their own back yard than in any of these far-off places. In any soaring area of the world, on a hot

summer day, you can look up and see these mountains. They have been measured as high as 60,000 feet with radar—twice the height of Everest.

As these thoughts passed through my mind, I knew that I would climb again. I knew I would have to sit on top of the world in a silent ship again. Why don't you try it? I bet if a fellow climbed high enough, he would find gold or even diamonds.

SSA DIRECTORY

The SSA is to publish a Directory of the SSA Membership as of February 28. We plan to include a list of the soaring clubs, the time and place of its regular meetings and the address and telephone number of three officers and key persons. Also the name and price of its publication, if any.

If you know of any new clubs formed within the last year, please let us know about it, so we can contact them. We are anxious to cover them all.



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