

## ALIBI

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If we could pull this one off, it would be worth nearly 100 Points. The plan was for Gene to drive his Lincoln Continental to the Towanda Airport, get the manager to spot us, then circle the car in the runway so we would know when to return home.

Things were going swell—the lift in dry thermals was terrific and Towanda showed in less than one hour. But, we made one miscalculation. The road to Towanda was being repaired—this we did not know—and it took my pal 1 hour and 45 minutes to drive down. Imagine how long that 45 minutes seemed to us just circling in clear blue air, hanging onto a bit of wispy cloud here and there, waiting for Gene's car to show and give the signal. When it did, at 5:15, there was still the remains of a cloud street which lay East and West, but a lot to the South. It seemed the best way back and when we reached it, was not too bad. The end of this little street carried to Troy some 20 miles south of Elmira.

With 6,500 of fuel, we started stretching our glide, as it was 6:30 and hopeful thinking to wish for any lift from here on in. However, we did encounter some zero sink along the way back and it seemed luck was almost with us this time. I could see Harris Hill when I had to do a 180 and pulled into Pine City 5 miles south of Elmira. This flight scored us some 50 Points, but we actually covered over 80 miles not including the 45-minute delay. Starting at 3:30 and ending at 7:15, this flight was, for me, the best to date.

Monday was a task day, but the Contest Board had given so many goals to pick from, it was as Bill Coverdale moaned "a thinly veiled open day."

Hagerstown looked good to us and with a take-off time just one-half hour later than the leaders, headed South on course, just a bit concerned about that stretch of rough country before Williamsport. However, Clarence See joined us near Cantors some 35 miles out, and for the next 100 miles, we hunted together. It was such fun that the rough country slipped by unnoticed and because this was Clarence's own backyard, our navigating was in his hands.

'Alibi' and I just floated along, sometimes squeezing Clarence in a thermal, but all in fun. Just to be sure, we checked our position a few

times, and did become somewhat concerned at being 12 to 15 miles to the East of T.C. Meant to ask Clarence about this, but never did; no doubt he had a good reason, knowing the country as he does.

Things progressed real well until just before reaching Carlisle. Clarence was out ahead several miles, working a dry thermal, and when I arrived, it just was not there. It must have been weak for him too, because several times his shadow momentarily flicked over my canopy, but 'Alibi' and I were fighting to stay aloft and no time was had for sight-seeing, so he left us. We finally did get back up, but it was tough and only after staying with zero sink for long periods of time.

We had entered a different air mass. Small moist thermals that were sometimes vicious and rough as any

town, and sure enough, first a bit of zero sink and then in a broad turn, a bit of lift on one side. We were low enough and hoping hard enough, that even the passing of 'Alibi's' wings might have helped to break it loose. At any rate, it built up to a good strong thermal, but hard to work. Fuel in any form was precious now, so we stayed with it until 4,000 M.S.L. turned up. Then with a fond and I do mean fond farewell, we said goodbye, and unhooking with considerable excess airspeed we shoved off for Hagerstown. Nothing to do now but steer a straight course and shoot a standard power pattern. With spoilers wide open, we landed beside 'Bennis the Menace,' the only other boy to get that far.

Steve failed to name Hagerstown as his goal; and Clarence fell short by one-half mile in the heartbreak



National Soaring  
Champion Trager of  
Detroit, Michigan,  
in the cockpit of his  
sailplane 'ALIBI.'

Staff Photo

Arizona babies, but only good for about 3,500 feet and widely separated, would replenish our fuel supply. But, in each case we deemed it necessary to milk every one and to conserve our altitude in every way. Along with this battle of tight spiraling and low cruising altitude, we were forced to make the decision of whether to continue on a straight course to Hagerstown, which would take us over ridges running some 30° to our heading, or to alter course to the West and stay above a well defined valley. Although the latter course added some 10 miles to our flight, it appeared to be much safer, so to the West we went, never over 3,000 and too often under 1,000. This really slowed us down and for a long time, and I was sure we would never make our goal; I even had the wheel down several times in preparation to land. This was our plan when we sailed over Chambersburg. We did hope for a little bubble of warmer air over

glide of the Meet. When the chips were counted, 'Alibi' scored the heaviest and skipped up another rung or two.

Well, things were looking up a bit. Even 'Alibi's' ground crew was getting the 'win fever.' Today is open. Johnny Bierens is doing a better job of taping up 'Alibi's' under wing centersection. Someone else is finding out what color take-off card is necessary, relieving 'Alibi's' pilot of all unnecessary last minute mental strain, etc., which allows him to concentrate on what course to chart.

Most of Wiggins' weather indicates a course to the Southwest, and the boys on top gallop off in that direction. But 'Alibi's' pilot did some cross country that-a-way in the Bonanza awhile back just under the cloud base and over the pine tops, and the rough terrain was still etched in his memory. Besides, the 'high' that was just edging into Hagerstown yesterday, should be a lot further East by now;