

TRIANGLE FLIGHT

By W. S. IVANS, JR.

As part of the cross-country training I had been undertaking in practice for the World Competition, it appeared worthwhile to try a triangular flight from Elsinore to K Field thence to El Mirage and return to Elsinore. Although conditions were not too promising, with considerable wind in the desert areas the preceding day, I decided to make an attempt on Sunday, May 13th. Shortly before noon we listened to reports of ground weather at several CAA stations in the desert area, and the winds seemed to be lower today. This confirmed our decision, and Sterling Starr, my sterling Crew Chief, had everything ready for the long and rugged trip by road. Frank Kerns and Paul Lafrenier were on hand to assist in pre-take-off operations and to wish me luck.

Take-off was at noon. Three minutes later I released at 1300 ft above the ground and began to climb at 500 ft per minute in an excellent thermal. It appeared that perhaps I had started a little late since the thermal carried to almost 5000 ft a.s.l. A half hour later in the vicinity of Hemet I was thinking perhaps I had started too early, since I was down to 700 ft. above the ground. Then I hit some weak lift and struggled back to a safe cruising altitude. Things improved from this point until reaching the Banning Pass, where I encountered a fairly strong headwind from the east. Lift in the pass was very weak and at one time I radioed Sterling to be sure to check Banning Airport if we lost contact since a landing there seemed to be a reasonable probability. I chose to fly past Banning and almost directly north into the complex structure of San Gorgonio mountain hoping to find some relief from the headwind and possibly some ridge or thermal lift. I found the usual turbulence along with some strong but very intermittent lift, and it was a full half hour before I had progressed to a point where I could make a dash for the next safe landing area—in the vicinity of Morongo. My crew by this time had pretty well caught up with me, and were able to check some possible

landing fields which I had spotted from the air.

At 2:30 P.M. I was over Morongo at 6300 ft. and there appeared to be a fairly strong drift to the south. Thermal strength was quite good, and I seldom had to work lift with less than 400 ft. per minute. Maximum altitude in this area was about 8000 ft. Soon my turning point, K Field, was clearly in view. I instructed Sterling to take the road toward Giant Rock and the Lucerne Valley region, while I went beyond and circled the turning point at 7700 ft. a.s.l. at 3:12 P.M.

From here on, progress was really

first day I received it. Besides the tuning feature, which allows one to listen to the various omnirange stations, towers, etc. (besides the crew frequency), this set has an array of five crystals for transmitting to LF range stations, omnirange, towers, unicom, retrieve cars and to emergency monitors. Besides the many virtues of direct contact with crew, valuable weather information can be obtained in flight from the various CAA stations. As a matter of interest, the people manning these stations always seem to be delighted to talk with a glider pilot! On flights in which contact was temporarily lost owing to interfering terrain or delays in the retrieve operation, I have radioed messages for my crew to several successive CAA omnirange stations. This expedites matters considerably, and in one case permitted me to schedule a landing at a point quite remote from telephone communications, though accessible by road.

Well, I tried drifting south to the



Bill Ivans in his high-flying Schweizer 1-23. Bill's log book for the last two months reads more like an airline pilot's log book both in hours flown and in miles traveled.

slow. There appeared to be a direct headwind of considerable strength, and despite the fact that I worked lift of no less than 400 ft. per minute, my ground speed was less than 20 miles per hour. Sterling had an easy time of it driving slowly ahead, checking fields, and often waiting for me to catch up. We had radio contact every quarter hour, and several times I had to report positions almost identical to the last! Incidentally, the radio I used on this flight is my new tunable Skycrafters, which has behaved impeccably from the

San Bernardino range hoping to strike better lift and hence increase my forward speed. However, this proved to be no better than flying out over the valley. There seemed to be an exceptional amount of downdraft between thermals, and I spent what seemed like a disproportionate amount of time in circling. Most of this leg was flown between 6000 and 8000 a.s.l. Toward Apple Valley there seemed to be a dead area; there were no dust devils in sight and the smoke from the cement plant at Victorville was

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