

Montherme, 235 miles N, at the Belgium border. Best flight of day; Cuadrado, 267 miles NNW.

This day featured moderately good soaring intermingled with a few bad spots. The start, around 11:15, was extremely slow because I hung around with Pierre (also in a Breguet) a long time in the first thermal waiting to see which way he would head. I think he might have been waiting for me, because before we finally left everyone else was long gone and he and I were industriously circling in a downcurrent. We left at 90 degrees from each other, but met several times later in the flight. The first 20 miles NE were devoid of clouds but each thermal was dense with sailplanes. Occasionally lift in and under clouds got to 500 feet per minute. The severest downcurrents were under decaying clouds rather than in the clear spaces between clouds. About midway in the flight I was at 5,000 feet over the ground and faced with a moderate area of weak-looking cumulus. Shortly afterward I was at 200 feet starting my final turn in to a small landing field. Miraculously a tiny lift region appeared and I was able to circle several times, and quickly returned to cloud base at 600 fpm. It was a close squeak, and a good example that in a pinch good luck is more to be desired than skill or a super sailplane. The spot was over a tiny 100-foot hill perpendicular to the light wind and about one mile upwind from the only growing cloud in the region.

About 4:30 the lift petered out so I could just barely maintain altitude, and until the landing at 6:00 the rest of the flight was a struggle below 2,000 feet to stay aloft while blowing slowly northward. The landing was on a strip of field bordering a river winding through a narrow gorge.

July 2. 62-mile race S to Boutheon Airport at St. Etienne, 25 mph. Best flight of day: Saradic, 45 mph.

Towering cumulus and thunderstorm clouds covered the area, but lift in the lower layers was weak and on the first tow no one stayed aloft. At 3:30, as a dark potential shower cloud approached, I tried the second of my permitted three tows. It was only possible to get 300 feet into the base of this cloud mass at 3,000 feet, but under various flabby-appearing cumulus puffs I was able to stay aloft. Later another cloud grew "ripe" just as it reached the airport. By being aloft I was able to catch it at just the right time—after it had good lift, and before it became chock full of gliders. It was a bit dis-

heartening to see gliders being released from tow right into the lift, because I already had 35 minutes of flight as a handicap for any speed calculations, but it must have been more disheartening to pilots on the ground who could not get tows at the critical time.

The lift below cloud could not have been smoother. First 200 fpm, then 300 fpm, then 600 fpm, at which time I entered the cloud. The lift in this large smooth area increased steadily. At 7,000-9,000 feet there was icing, but above 9,000 feet there was only a steady, dense small hail or graupel about 2x4 mm. The hail kept making a great racket, and at one point I dimly saw the flash of a nearby lightning bolt. The lift stayed perfectly smooth and increased to 2,200 fpm at 17,000 feet. This must have been about the top of the first cell

the goal, aided by a little zero lift along the way.

The loss of performance caused by icing and terrific downcurrents associated with these storms caused grief to most of the pilots. Bill Ivans was wise and cautious and went to 25,000 feet from which altitude he was able to reach the goal directly. Philip Wills went to 22,000 feet, and during my long last low glide I saw him far below circling by a patch of sunlight (he made it). Stevenson got to 19,000 feet and landed 16 miles short. Cuadrado reached over 25,000 feet but did not arrive at the goal. I was extremely thankful to arrive at the airport, even with the slowest speed of the five pilots who made it. The moral of this flight is simple: when nature is so generous with altitude, accept her gifts.

July 3. Distance flight along a



Conspicuous here are the American entries, No. 1, No. 64 and No. 34. Also conspicuous in quantity are the towing planes. The latter easily launched all the competitors in less than thirty minutes.

because then the turbulence began. I set out straight on course then, and went through several more cells before finally breaking into the clear at 18,500 feet. I decided not to bother with putting on the oxygen mask because, after all, one certainly need not go higher than 18,500 feet to glide 60 miles in a sailplane with a 35:1 glide ratio. One lives and learns. I was soon down to 9,000 feet, then made several 1,000 and 2,000-foot climbs in weak clouds, and was nevertheless below 5,000 feet by the time half the distance had been glided. Ahead was nothing, so I went back into the last cloud and spent a long time getting up to 7,500 feet. From there it was a long straight glide to

straight line through Cuers Airport SSE, 245 miles to Hyeres Airport.

For me this was probably the most interesting flight during any contest. It lasted almost 9 hrs., and featured thermal soaring, then low slope soaring, and finally wave soaring. At the end of the flight I landed at 9:15 after dark at a Navy air station on the Mediterranean while jet training flights were under way. (I picked an unused portion of the field and slipped in unnoticed). At 9:00 as I was crossing the last rough mountains it was getting uncomfortably dark. Then I suddenly remembered to remove my dark glasses and dusk was delayed another 10 minutes.

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