

The first 120 miles of the flight were conventional thermal soaring. The clouds dwindled until there were just a few puffs to help one step gingerly SE across the Rhone valley near Valence. I felt lucky to reach the mountains SE of Valence at 5:30, and assumed the flight would soon be over. Various sailplanes were far ahead of me. The wind was strong from the N, perpendicular to some of the ridges which projected from the mountain area into the Rhone valley.



Photo: Heimgartner
A fitting climax to a truly wonderful performance! Here Paul MacCready is crowned World Soaring Champion.

The combination of a little heating and some slope lift gave some turbulent short-lived climbs which permitted me to slip from ridge to ridge. After about 30 miles of this I found myself with two other Breguet 901's in a tiny bubble or eddy of rising air at 1,000 feet, over some sharp, rough hills. We three fought to stay up in the turbulence for several minutes and then as the lift disappeared one headed off toward the valley and soon landed. The next slowly got about 100 feet below me and also had to land while I was just able to reach a tiny ridge several miles S.

The beautiful two-place HKS was circling tightly at this ridge, so for the next 15 miles we flew together from ridge top to ridge top. At 6:15 we eventually got to high Mt. Ventoux, with an observatory at its 6,000-foot peak. It was quite a thrill to sweep up the side of it with the wing often 10 feet from the slope.

The slope current took me readily to 6,300 feet but lift was weak above that. Nevertheless, there was occasionally some lift of 50 to 100 fpm; since each 100 feet up meant another kil-

ometer of glide it seemed wise to squeeze every last foot out of the lift area. Slowly, very slowly I got to 8,500 feet on this "slope" soaring in thirty minutes, then sank to 8,000 feet, and finally reached 11,500 a little after 8:00 (one hour and forty-five minutes over the windward slope of Mt. Ventoux). The 11,000-foot wind was approximately 35 knots. During this slow climb I could see three or four sailplanes soar up the slope, gain a little altitude, and press on downwind. I wondered how they made out. It turned out that Ivans, Wills, and Saradic all got good lift in the lee of Mt. Ventoux and easily reached Cuers (stopping there because they were assuming the task to end at Cuers rather than to be distance along a line through Cuers). Ivans got to 21,000 feet in the lee wave. When the HKS and I started downwind from Mt. Ventoux we got in the first wave in a few miles and climbed at 350 fpm back to 11,500 feet. I encountered waves regularly then every 5 miles or so and would either circle or fly sideways in the upcurrent so that I was still at 10,000 feet when 30 miles SSE of Mt. Ventoux. From there it was a straight glide through the dusk to Hyeres.

Hasse and Heinzel in the HKS did not have a map for the last half of the flight because the weather forecast had been so dismal that no pilot expected to go far. Late in the evening they came across an airport and landed safely after a 225-mile flight. It must have been quite some experience to be mapless in the gathering dusk at 11,000 feet, over the rugged mountains of southeastern France in a fast sailplane which requires a tail chute for landing. Even with a map and a slow landing sailplane I was a bit worried.

Over the windward slope of Mt. Ventoux I climbed in what must have been the lee wave of some mountains to the north. It was logical to expect a good lee wave south of Mt. Ventoux, but it seemed safest to stick with existing lift, though weak, rather than take the good gamble of trying for a stronger uppercurrent further south.

July 5. Triangle Race. St. Yan-La Palisse-Roanne-St. Yan, 75 miles. 27 mph speed.

This was a standard, weak thermal flight with no unusual incidents worth

NOTICE

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describing. A 200-fpm thermal this day was considered good. The first half of the flight was done between 2,000 feet and 3,000 feet above the ground. Then the going got rougher and I was once below 1,000 feet on the second leg. I judged the last long glide just right and dashed across the finish line at 100 feet with the fastest time of the day, zoomed up and landed before the applauding crowd—with the landing gear still retracted! Oh well, the Breguet 901 lands nicely on the skid on a smooth field.

July 6. Free distance flight to Mollinges, 80 miles E. Best flight of the day: Toutenhoofd, 155 miles.

This was my poorest scoring day, but for my next seven closest competitors it was even worse so it still improved my contest standing. The weather everywhere was weak. In common with many pilots, I headed straight east with the gentle wind and tried to decide as the flight progressed whether to veer north or south of Switzerland. There were no clouds over the valley around Macon, 50 miles on course, and at one point there I was with Bill Ivans and a



Photo: B. Woodward
Frenchman Gerard Pierre, the previous World Soaring Champion, fared less well this time and finished eighteenth, also in a Breguet 901.

Jaskolka at about 1,000 feet. Reaching the hills on the east side of the valley, I struggled NNE along the ridge tops hoping a little ridge lift might give some thermals enough boost to get me east back into France past Geneva, Switzerland. I scraped along slope after slope with the wing tip practically in the trees, and finally just could go no further and landed in a deep valley.