

ACROSS NEW ENGLAND BY SAILPLANE

by F. P. BUNDY

Monday, April 29, dawned clear and dry,—a fresh new airmass overhead. It would obviously be a good soaring day, but I didn't give it much thought as it was a work day and one must keep at his work. However, about mid-morning, Hal Bovenkerk, my partner, dropped into my office and commented about the wonderful weather setup for a long flight and said it was my turn in the 1-23D. I said I would think it over.

About 11 o'clock Hazel, my wife, phoned to comment about the beautiful soaring conditions and asked if Hal or I were going cross-country. "One of us will," I said. Her offer to wash the dirt and dust off the ship before noon was enthusiastically accepted.

By noon I had decided to take the flight, hoping to at least improve on my greatest cross-country distance of 55 miles, but setting my goal as Barnstable Airport near Hyannis on Cape Cod—a Diamond C goal flight.

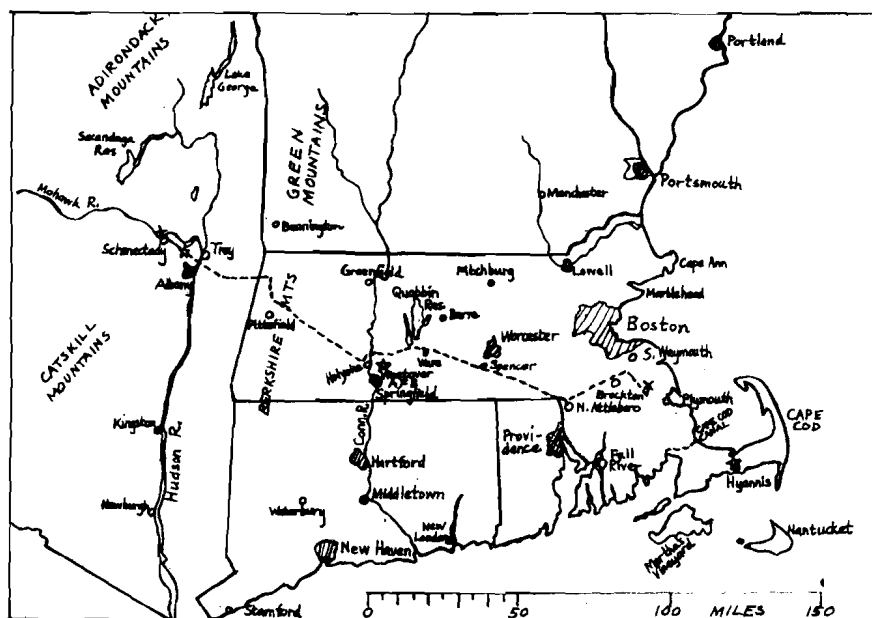
Jim Norton aero-towed me from Schenectady Airport at 12:30. It was immediately obvious that there was strong lift,—and sink,—available. I released at 2000 feet in a strong thermal and climbed fast to about 4800 feet. This lift suddenly disappeared and all I could find was strong down until finally at 2300 feet some lift was encountered which carried me up to 4000 and quit. This time I dashed off cross wind toward the G. E. Research Lab holding and gaining a little altitude. Again down. I had been flying nearly an hour already and it certainly looked like it wouldn't be good enough for cross-country. So I decided to make a big circle over Schenectady and Scotia to lose altitude, come in, and call it a noon flight. At 3400 feet over the city I encountered some good lift and circled in it to see if it were "solid". It carried me to cloud base at 6200 feet near Albany Airport. This decided it,—although it was 1:45,—I would try! I radioed Schenectady Tower my position and altitude and reported that I would fly cross-country eastward.

I glided toward Troy where at 4600 feet I hit a thermal that carried me

up to 7000, then a short glide and another thermal over Averill Park to 7000 feet. The next lift was above Cherryplain by the first high ridge of the Berkshires. This was good for 7600 feet. This was the life! No concern about landings at this altitude! Then I dashed for the fattest cloud above the main ridge south of Mt. Greylock. Here was lively air with general lift and turbulence. By flying southward parallel to the ridge below I could gain. At 7800 feet, cloud base, I cut east again. I flew 80 to 85 MPH to get through the "down" on the leeward side of the mountain.

of gliding in reduced sink followed by a strong "down" from 6000 to 1000 feet (with 2000 foot country below). The speed circle was calling for 90 MPH and I was letting the ship go that fast. If the "down" would quit I could still make it across,—however there was a little field below that I could land in if necessary. Then suddenly strong lift! Oh welcome stuff! Not a cloud in sight. Just a dry thermal, and it pushed me up to 7500 feet. I could glide way beyond the Connecticut valley now!

Next came a moderate thermal over Mt. Tom north of Holyoke, then I headed eastward along the south side of the low mountain range that runs eastward from Northampton. No sinking air along here, no clouds, but fair lift now and then. NE of Westover A.F.B. at 4:00 o'clock, a moderate thermal put me up to 7000 feet. Then another over the west dam of Quabbin Reservoir to 6600 feet. From here I could see Hiller Airport at Barre and thought I would land there



Map of lower New England showing track of Bundy's flight.

For the next 20 minutes I had to work every little bubble I could find just to hold altitude. I remembered Hal's advice not to push ahead too fast. "Just take it easy". Below me was Windsor where I had had to land on my Silver C distance flight in 1954. Finally things picked up a little and I got up to 6300 feet and decided to strike out across the 25 miles of high "wilderness country" between Windsor and the Connecticut valley. Another thermal carried me up to 6800 feet, then 10 minutes

if necessary, and headed a little that direction. I flew right over the Ware Airport where I had had to land during a contest at Hiller, Labor Day weekend in 1955. I continued to glide, on course (120°) but encountered no lift. At 2800 feet, scanning the countryside for Spencer or Leicester airports I hit some lift at last,—a dandy dry thermal which carried me clear up to 7800 feet. What a pleasant surprise at 4:30 in the afternoon!

There were some clouds to the SE now and I began to do some