

for an average speed of 40 mph plus. It was a fairly satisfactory day, considering the \$200 prize and the fact that it boosted me up to 5th place. But Maxey was still barely in the lead and Fritz Compton really driving with his spectacular flight of 320 miles to Plymouth, Mass. Schreder, too, had moved up from 8th place to 4th with his outstanding 305 mile goal flight, passing me up in the process. Lucky thing that tomorrow was a rest day. We could all lick our wounds and plan new strategy for Monday.

Fifth Contest Day — July 8th

Forecast: a few soft Cu after the temperature gets to the upper 80's (if it does) and usable lift at an 85 degree temperature in the valley. Winds; light from the southwest—cloud base at 3500 to 5000 feet, less than 2000 above the Hill to start. A probable weak wave condition might make some fair flights possible.

The task for the day was announced as a speed goal flight to Hancock Field at Syracuse, N. Y., for the Brace-Mueller-Huntley Goal Prize. There was mumbling in the ranks of the pilots about this being a good no-contest day, but Barney forecasts soaring and the Board says fly. So be it.

Out on the flight line the weather was gloomy and so were the pilots. The sky was completely overcast. I reluctantly signed up for take-off at 12:50 P.M. As my time approached I became more and more apprehensive about the chances to stay aloft. There were several take-offs and most of the ships soon landed back on the site. Some wandered off and disappeared but no one seemed to pay much attention. At 12:45 I was the only one scheduled to take off until 1:04 so I requested and was granted a delay until 1:00. As I departed at that time it seemed that I would be back on the ground within half an hour. We climbed in silky air to 2000 feet, just under the cloud deck. As I released and cruised around quietly, I noticed a slight, regular, rippled appearance of the underside of the cloud layer. There seemed to be a general area of gentle lift or zero sink over most of the valley. As I awaited developments I gradually climbed to 2500 feet. At length I observed a wave-like roll or undulation in the under surface of the cloud deck; it seemed to run from southwest to northwest and was approaching from the northwest. I nursed my altitude and waited for the proper moment to leave my zero sink

area and make a dash for the wave. When it looked feasible for me to get there without too much altitude loss I headed for the roll. As I approached, my rate of climb picked up to from one to three feet per second. The drift carried me east across the Chemung County Airport to Horseheads, where the altimeter finally read 3000 feet above Harris Hill. A decision was going to have to be made very soon whether to turn back or to keep on drifting. This was the crucial decision of the Contest, although I didn't know it then. It was partially made for me by my waiting so long that it was questionable whether I could make it back to the Hill, so I stuck with it and began to think of minimum contest distance.

again found myself enveloped in a rain shower. It was heavy this time and as I noted the variometer needle passing zero in the right direction again I also caught a glimpse of the airspeed needle in unaccustomed motion. As I watched it in fascination the reading slowly but surely dropped to a low of ten miles per hour. I put the nose down instinctively but knew at once what the trouble was—rain in the pitot tube. This was not so good! If my luck continued there would certainly be more instrument flying before I could reach Syracuse. I would have to rely on aural speed indication from now on.

The second shower took me back up to 3000 feet and I abandoned the Cornell airport and headed northeast



Stan Smith and Lyle Maxey, the defending National Champion, confer over their charts.

Photo: Elmira Star-Gazette

Just beyond Horseheads the wave line became undiscernible and a rain shower developed north of me about where it seemed that the wave line ought to be. With turn-and-bank and horizon turned on I headed into the east edge of the rain. It was more hunch than anything else but it was the direction I would have gone if the rain hadn't been there and there weren't any evident clues to lead me elsewhere. There was gentle lift in the rain and with the 3000 feet I was still holding it looked as if I could make Ithaca. There were a few distant splashes of sunshine on the ground east of Ithaca and the cloud in that area held a vague suggestion of cumulus. I steered a course about half way between Ithaca and Syracuse. As I passed over Cayuga Lake about 5 miles north of Ithaca, I changed my safety goal to the Cornell University Airport up on the hill to the northeast. There had been no lift now for almost ten minutes and I was down to 1500 feet as I

toward a slightly darker cloud area. There were showers all around now but perhaps the darker appearance marked a cumulus! I was soon rewarded by slight lift, increasing to as much as 5 feet per second at times. It felt like a thermal and I treated it like one. As it decayed and I headed northeast again I caught a glimpse of the tip of Skaneateles Lake ahead through the murk. A glance at the map told me that half the distance to the goal was behind me. Perhaps it was not impossible after all. North of the lake was a solid wall of heavy rain. The SW breeze was blowing me steadily toward Syracuse. Another soggy thermal took me back up over 3000 feet and I got a location fix between the southerly tip of Skaneateles Lake and a small unnamed lake northeast of it. The map showed about another 25 miles to go. I needed about 6000 feet to make it. If I could get 4500 above Harris Hill it might be possible. One more thermal and I was on the gages