

at 3500. Slowly the altimeter wound on up to 4500. The airspeed read 10, with occasional spurts to 70 and then back down slowly to 10. The lift gave way to normal sink and we emerged from the cloud long enough to catch a glimpse of solid heavy rain ahead all the way to the ground. I could see the residential build-up of Syracuse directly below. All I needed now was a little faith in my navigation and continuation of my luck. Into the rain we went straining eyes for a glimpse of Onondaga Lake to the left of our course, the last sure landmark needed to locate the airport. Straight down were city streets. They looked very wet — and close! Soon, dead ahead, was the distinctive triangular pattern of the runways at Hancock Field. It was in the bag now but with no particular excess of altitude. A call to the tower on 122.5 and the answer came back at once, loud and clear on 119.9; OK to land. There was no need to circle, so the pattern was entered downwind and a 180 degree turn lined us up with the grass strip along the runway, per Clarence See's instructions. It was still raining pitchforks. I waited in the cockpit until Clarence appeared with car and towline. The old 1-21 was soon safely parked on the ramp in front of Clarence's home hangar. It's mighty nice to have helpful and understanding friends at the end of a flight. A telephone call to Headquarters assured me that this was a contest day by virtue of Del Miller's 41 miles. It looked very doubtful that anyone else would reach Syracuse now but there were several ships out and unreported.

I had time to disassemble the 1-21 before my excited and happy crew arrived and we quickly went through the now familiar routine of loading up for the trip back to Harris Hill. We nervously kept an eye on the sky, which had now cleared up quite completely, but there were no more landings. A few calculations showed me to be in the lead with 1000 points for the day. Back at Elmira, glides to the valley were paying off at the rate of 13 points per mile as a result of my having once more made the slowest flight of the day to the goal.

The barogram for this flight shows a long, gentle climb and descent in the wave; then three definite thermal climbs, and the final glide to landing. This was unquestionably a luck flight. But I recall, somewhat smugly perhaps, that there were two or three ships cruising around the area

when I took off and at least half of the contestants were holding back waiting for better conditions. At least three could have been launched in the 15 minutes before my 1:00 o'clock departure. The old saying, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained" can be applied to soaring as well as any other activity.

Sixth Contest Day — July 9th

The heavy rains of the day before had left the ground so wet that conditions looked rather unfavorable at the pilot's meeting time. But Barney predicted that dryer air would be coming in and there would be a thermal working stratum to about 5000 feet. Winds would be from the northwest at about 20 knots. The Board announced the task as a 200 km triangular goal race to Tri-Cities, Cortland, and back to Harris Hill. At take-off time things looked somewhat improved over the earlier prospect, although the cloud cover was still rather heavy. It appeared that the first leg of the triangle would be fairly easy but the other two would be tough, with a strong quartering head wind.

I got off at 1:00 o'clock and found absolutely nothing throughout the entire climb and descent almost to hill-top level. After ridge soaring for about 45 minutes I contacted the first thermal. As my altitude built up I debated whether to land and take a fresh start, since this was a speed event. But it seemed too risky because it was already late and I might have to wait for a take-off. The second thermal took me within sight of the first turn point but I stopped to take advantage of a huge cumulus whose base was thickly populated with a variety of sailplanes. I left for a quick pass over the turn, made the identification, and came on back to replenish altitude and consider the next move. I had already noticed that the sky was relatively clear off to the north toward Cortland. I waited perhaps ten minutes for some sign of improvement on course but none appeared so I reluctantly headed away from the now decaying lift of the last big cloud and out into the clear area on course. For nearly 30 minutes it was a straight, steady glide, the only break in the monotony being an occasional area of sharply increased sink. Finally I was at the level of Harris Hill in the little valley north of Endicott. A weak thermal took me back up to 3500 feet asl and I had an opportunity to observe the strong wind which was blowing me relentlessly toward the

Broome County Airport. I was determined not to let the comfort and safety of an airport prevent my making every inch along the course that I could. About this time I found myself keeping company with a gay little 1-26! Every time I get into trouble there is someone around to enjoy my discomfort. I gave him a good view of my tail section and in a few minutes was on the ground on a side hill at Nanticoke, 15 miles north of Tri-Cities. In the last hour and a half I had averaged an astounding ten miles per hour!

Total flight time this next-to-the-last day: 2 hours 45 minutes. Mileage: 53. Average speed: 19.3 mph. Pretty sad, and that's the way I felt until a little later when I found that I was still in the lead. But Fritz was really pushing me now, only 234 points behind. We were soon back in the sack for a good rest before the last day—an open day, tomorrow.

Seventh and Last Contest Day July 10th

The forecast left little doubt that this was to be an exciting climax to a hard fought contest, and the first one in my recent memory which was not pretty well settled before the morning of the last day. We were now in a cool air mass and a valley temperature in the low sixties would start thermal activity by 10:30 to 11:00 o'clock. An expected high temperature in the mid-seventies would provide plenty of energy and the lift would go to 7000 feet later in the day. There would be few cumulus, mostly dry thermals today, with a probability of towering Cu at Washington, D.C. Winds would be 20 knots at low altitudes, increasing to 30 to 35 knots higher up, and the direction would be 320 to 330 degrees. There would be an area of divergence due south, so that direction should be avoided.

I prepared for take-off at noon, with an announced goal of Leesburg, Virginia, some 220 miles south-southwest of Elmira—the home airport of Arthur Godfrey. He had planned to visit Elmira during the Contest and hadn't made it so I thought it would be appropriate to visit him. There was only occasional weak lift after I released, and cloud base was barely higher than release altitude. I spent half an hour in the vicinity of Harris Hill below release point. Finding some lift under clouds south of the Hill I drifted on downwind. I regretted this very soon as I sank below release altitude again in about 2 minutes. I was below release height