

THE 5th CONTEST DAY

1957 NATIONALS

by DEL MILLER

No doubt, from the reports you got on the contest, you may be under the impression that it was a very poor day for soaring. Well, that it was, but had the other pilots taken off sooner there should have been more to complete the task.

I was slated for the first take-off that day; not that a little later time might have been nice, but I had little choice in the matter being 2nd to last to select take-off time.

There seemed to be no hurry. Dick Schreder told me he didn't believe anyone would make it, but I replied in the opposite.

As usual, the last few minutes were going too fast. However, I got underway at perhaps a very opportune time; or was it? No! Any day I should have earned just as many points.

On my tow there wasn't much lift. Bill Frutchy was piloting the PT23 tug. I thought there might be better lift south of Harris Hill, but when he was about to drag me back over the Hill I released just west of it. About one 360 without a sign of lift so I headed on course. Over the airport some slight lift was worked with poor results.

I played with that lift until the wind drifted me over the hills NE of the airport. Altitude was being lost all the while so I decided to get over Horseheads. A bonfire near there indicated a strong surface wind. That fire was south of the town and its smoke was not rising, but I thought it might be blowing toward a thermal. After an anxious glide there I was glad to find enough lift to at least hold on for awhile. Here I decided to take it easy while it was possible. Soon, however, the rate of climb neared 100 fpm and that rate was possible much of the time by almost continually changing position. Dick could have soared perhaps better than I in that one, its diameter being rather large. Since the wind was blowing toward the goal, much could be gained by just hanging on.

I suppose about 4000 feet asl was attained on that thermal. During the climb I recall noting the release altitude going by. Heading for Cayuga Lake, where a small ridge could sustain me indefinitely, the altitude was

again rather poor. On a flight some years ago, under somewhat similar wind conditions, a thermal was found just before getting to that ridge. This time a little thermal came along near the edge of it about a minute after getting there. Lift increased steadily; near the top it was close to 400 fpm! This on a poor day! 4000 feet was all it was good for. Here I had a wonderful view of the wave-type storm. It was not far away and for a short time I headed toward it, but soon changed my course to NE toward some sunny areas quite far away. Occasional light lift was worked without success, so I glided over Cayuga Lake, this time not finding any lift until on the other side. A glance back to Cayuga Lake caused me to be quite happy since there was now a heavy shower there. However, if good lift didn't come along soon, a landing was imminent. The lift on the east side of Cayuga Lake might

as well have been passed up, because it was not long before the landing was made near a macadam road. A glide of 1 or 2 miles more could have been made; but that would have been quite a risk since it was down hill and impossible to see if there were any good fields there.

Further remarks:

1. The persistent overcast to the west and a fair amount of clear sky to the east of it, leading toward the goal, was reason enough for me to select the earlier take-off time.

2. No uneven wind speeds were noticed until about 15 minutes previous to my take-off.

3. Since the storm was a warm front type I just couldn't imagine any lift being there.

It is my hope that hereafter the contest rules will require a greater number of flights exceeding the Silver C distance requirements in order to qualify a contest day. My guess is that it should be four.

E. M. G. A. M.

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