

considered turning due north with the wind but decided finally to stay with his original flight plan.

One could speculate that had he altered course to due north, this flight might have covered a distance just short of 300 miles. But Barringer was evidently a man who, once committed to a course of action, was likely to see it all the way through.

His fortunes improved considerably the next hour and a half. He flew rather consistently at about 3,000 feet and covered 50 miles in this 90 minutes. The cumulus clouds developed rapidly with some build-up. A sampling of the clouds showed them to have rather severe turbulence, after which he abandoned any thought of cloud flying.

Cloud bases were going up and finally reached 6,500 feet which was his high point of the flight. He experienced only two 1,500 foot lows during the remaining period of the flight. Lift ranged from 6 to 13 feet per second. It was a matter of hopping from cloud base to cloud base.

At 3:00 P.M. past Oklahoma City, over the town of Cushing, he realized that he was 165 miles from take-off with 4,000 feet in hand. The National Distance Record was breached (158.29 mi.).

A little more than an hour later, his pre-determined destination was attained. He was over the large Tulsa, Oklahoma, Municipal Airport at 4:25 P.M. with 2,500 feet. He estimated that another thirty to forty miles of distance could perhaps have been covered. But this was the day's work he had cut out for himself and his sensational flight was completed as planned.

The entire aviation world thrilled at the news of this amazing 212 mile flight, over almost perfectly level country in a sailplane and from a start at 950 feet above the Wichita Falls, Texas, airport. Many people at the Tulsa airport took this incredulous story with a grain of salt. The people at Spartan Aviation on whose parking apron Barringer had rolled to a stop, and even the airport manager, were a bit slow in accepting this young birdman's story.

A little group of hard bitten soaring men, clustered about a telephone back at the Wichita Falls airport, were thrilled to their toes with the news but not necessarily amazed. No longer would soaring be a sport of the hills.

Soaring Readers Write

"The best kind of letters are those that require no answers."—Anon.

637 Wyckoff Avenue Wyckoff, N.J.

I read with interest the article by E. J. Reeves, in the Nov.-Dec., 1957, issue of SOARING, saluting the late Lew Barringer and it brings back mixed feelings: one of sadness on the loss of such a man as he, and pleasant memories of many happy and enlightening hours spent in his company. It may be of interest to you if I recalled some of the sidelights on the Texas expedition.

The first, and extremely important, incident occurred when we arrived in Nashville, Tenn., on our way southwest. As guests of the State, we were to explore the possibilities of Mt. Eagle as a soaring site and partake in the ceremonies dedicating their new airport at Nashville. We found upon awakening in our hotel room the morning after our arrival that our rooms had been entered and every last dollar had been lifted from our clothes. This made necessary our deceiving Motel and Hotel owners as to the number in our party and taking turns sleeping on the floors.

We stopped to visit folks in Paris, Tex., that Lew had met on his Persian Archaeological Expedition and partook in some sight-seeing and merry-making. Everyone wanted to go bullfrog hunting. This is done at night with a harpoon, flashlight and a bottle but they made the mistake of getting the bottle before the harpoons and that saved the night for the bullfrogs.

We arrived in Wichita Falls and were received with hospitality: everyone tried to do everything possible to help us. As a result of our loss of funds in Nashville, it was arranged that we, the crew, would be put up in the new National Guard barracks. We had better than hotel accommodations, with the exception of a drive-in across the street that was open all night and had a juke box loud speaker on the roof. This gave us so many sleepless nights that in desperation, we took a rifle and its firing drowned out by the din, we extinguished the din by shooting out the speaker on the roof.

I also recall one of Lew's most terrifying experiences. It seems that one of the local boys, Fred Storie, who gave us much valuable assistance, had a pet bull snake. One day when weather was not up to par, he parked the snake in the cockpit of the Minimoa and went hunting for Jack Rabbits: while he was gone Lew decided to try a winch tow and nobody was aware of the other occupant of the cockpit. We got Lew to altitude and he was making a slow turn when we saw the nose of the ship go straight down and then a slip in and a fast landing and the canopy coming off and Lew getting out and all Hell was loose—.

A side trip to the oil fields was made on a poor flying day and Pete Bonotaux and I led off up the swaying 120' tower of one of the rigs. We were near the top when Pete, whose hands were on the rails, failed to notice a missing rung and his feet slipped off, coming down hard on my shoulder, dam near knocked me off. I froze and to tell the truth I think I am still frozen on that ladder.

I will never forget the day we clocked a Jack Rabbit at 60 mph. We were on a retrieve with the trailer on the back of Lew's convertible and had been unable to find him for hours. We were on a hot, dusty road when this Jack took off down the road in front of us and we stepped on the gas. We went like the hounds after the fox and became so intent on the chase that we never saw Lew waving madly at us as we drove by. It wasn't until an hour later we found him and !@;!*.#!❖;!±!

I have often wondered if the Soaring Society had possession of the many feet of film that Lew took on this trip as I never did get to see any of it and would sure like to know its whereabouts. Speaking of film, we seem to have loaned someone most of our film Library just before the war (North Jersey Soaring Assoc. and Chet Decker films) and it was never returned to us. We don't know its whereabouts and would appreciate any help in locating same.

Regards,
Ken Findiesen

Thermal-G-Ranch Glider Port RD#4, Hamot Rd. Waterford, Pa.

Thanks a million for the photos you sent. We sure enjoyed your stopping off to see our field. Work on the field is moving along slowly. We have the same trouble every one else seems to have — namely money. We are fortunate though that in a project like this Gliderport there is lots of work that is just plain work and can be done without buying materials.

We now have the new winch, a twin to the one we built for the Air Force. We have added a tension meter and tachometer. This brings the towing down to a positive deal no matter what the wind, weight of glider, etc. We have been towing with appx. 2,800 ft. of wire and are making tows that average between 700 and 1000 ft. We have timed tows that go to 875 ft. in 15 seconds. Enough bragging about our winch. Remember, whenever you're in the East, the welcome mat is out at the Thermal G.

Sincerely yours,
Larry Gehrlein

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