

WURTSBORO WAVE TO GOLD C ALTITUDE

by MARTIN R. BECK

It all started Wednesday night after completing a late flight at Lockheed Flight Test. We stopped for a quick visit with the Weather Bureau Agent.

Albert Timer and myself, both members of the Long Island Soaring Association, have, for many months, been after the "Long Sit" (five hours after release) as legs for our Silver C badges. As in many other cases, we usually found ourselves with time available only on poor soaring days and heard the "You should have been here yesterday" story. Other days, while flying high over Long Island in our Connies with a day's work ahead, we would look down on beautiful soaring conditions and wish we had the day off for a crack at this long five hour flight. On those days, we would tell each other, "We should be up in the Club 1-26 today."

Then, on Wednesday night, the Weather Agent told us we had a cPk (Continental Polar Cold) high pressure system with the winds and unstable conditions needed for a good day on the ridge at Wurtsboro. NW winds 15K-25K. Jim Reilly, one of our group, had his 1-23 at Wurtsboro and I had taken the Club 1-26 up the week-end before, so our crafts were all set. Al and I then went home and packed the necessary equipment, including barographs.

Early Thursday morning, we kissed our wives good-by and took off for Wurtsboro. Upon arrival there at 0945, we found conditions on the ridge as forecast so we assembled both the 1-23 and 1-26, loading chewing gum, a can of tomato juice, the barographs, and other necessary items. Both sailplanes and the tow plane were in position by 1135.

A good friend, Tony Barone, operator of the airport and a tow pilot, assisted us by using the Sail Flight's Stearman. Al took first tow in the 1-26. I followed in Jim's 1-23, releasing at 1159 at 1500'. Had zero sink on the ridge at 1300'. After working up and down the ridge a bit, I decided to take a look at Ellenville. In addition to giving Al more room, I wanted to see the ridge

where it turns somewhat to the east at Ellenville. There was a good chance that the wind might shift further to the north later in the day, leaving us with no lift and four hours under our belts at Wurtsboro. In this case, the Ellenville ridge might furnish the answer for the last hour.

Cloud coverage was Strato Cu about 8/10 to 9/10, with the base at 4500'. Over Ellenville, a good strong "up" took me to cloud base. To preclude penetrating the clouds, I let the air speed build up to about 70 mph. As I came to a hole, I let the 1-23 climb again, coming out on top at about 6000' and continued to climb. I was able to hold 7000' at 36 mph, heading into a northwest wind in perfectly smooth air. I thought, "Boy, this is the way to make the 'Long Sit' — if it will only last." In one hour, there I was sitting in the sun on top crabbed into the wind in the most relaxing, smooth air you can imagine, going up all the time. Wind was estimated to be 30K and my air speed was 36 mph. Normally, we fly the 1-23 at about 42 mph straight and 45 mph in turns but, today, 36 mph was fine in the smooth air.

The wave lay on a line just south of Spring Glen intersection at the lake area and on up to the town of Ellenville. I believe this wave was made by the Catskill Mountains to the north and west of Ellenville and that I could have worked farther north.

At approximately 1330, the clouds changed shape and lined up in long rows. As navigation improved, I felt much better. Coverage was now about six-tenths. I could see Al at times working away on the ridge. With the cloud line up, the wave height increased and I started to think of the Gold C altitude. At 1410, I was at 9700' and reached the following altitudes at the times noted: 10,000' at 1418, 10,630' at 1450, 11,000' at 1455, 11,500' at 1500, and at 1505, I reached the high for this flight of 12,100' above the airport (12,661' msl).

Shortly after reaching this high,

I could see the clouds to the northwest getting solid again and, with this happening, my wave dissipated. A steady "down" now occurred at the rate of 100' a minute until, at 1525, the rate of descent increased to 500' a minute. Only two holes remained open for me now — one to the southwest over the Spring Glen Lake area and the other one up-wind northwest of the Ellenville area. I decided on the "up-wind" hole and came out below the clouds at about 4500' right over Ellenville. This was still too high to work the ridge lift in this area so I continued on back to the Wurtsboro Airport area. The wind was still holding at about 20K at the surface and I was curious as to how my friend, Al, was doing.

Arriving on the ridge with only 1300' left at 1600, an hour remained to complete the "Long Sit." In only 55 minutes, I had descended from 12,100' to only 1300' and was hopeful that the ridge would hold me for the next hour. Al was sitting at approximately 3800' from a thermal and had been worrying about me all day. When he saw me so low on the ridge, he said to himself, "Poor Marty. He's been beating himself to death down on the ridge all day." It took about thirty minutes more before I caught a thermal and got off the ridge bumps. Al and I then took turns looking down on one another until the end of the five hours. After five hours and fifteen minutes, I worked in alongside of Al and waggled my wings, gave him the hand clasp in the canopy (just in case his watch had stopped), and headed for the airport. Landing was made at 1721, after a total of five hours and twenty-two minutes. While I had expected Al to stay up a little longer, he had thought the wing waggle was a sign for him to come down so he landed too.

During Al's ride, he completed his altitude and duration legs for the Silver C and set our Club 1-26 duration record of five hours and thirty-eight minutes.

I completed my Silver C badge with the duration leg, started my Gold C badge with the altitude leg and set our Club clear air altitude gain record.

It is interesting to note that in the thirty days preceding the end of this flight, three pilots have completed their five-hour flights in the Wurtsboro area in Jim Reilly's 1-23. These pilots are Jim Reilly, Siegfried Feuer-sanger and myself. Of course, Jim
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