

INTERNATIONAL F.A.I. BADGES FOR SOARING

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Kenneth M. Flannigan - Alt.

SILVER C LEGS

Robert Bienenstein - Alt., Dist.
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GOLD C DISTANCE AND DIAMOND GOAL

by VIRGINIA DULANEY CAMPBELL

I took off from Hamburg, Germany, on May 28, 1957, in a Spatz, Model B. My goal was Terlet near Arnheim, Holland, compass course from Hamburg 244 degrees; distance was 327 kilometers (203 miles); wind direction was somewhat unfavorable being almost directly from the east. When I released from the winch tow with 350 meters (1150

feet) there was only one cloud close enough to reach and I headed for it, knowing that if I didn't get into the core of it immediately I would have to land. The wind was just strong enough (about 20 km.p.h. or 12 mph) that with such a low altitude I was soon blown beyond the point of no return. Fortunately, by the time I got to the Elbe river I had gained enough altitude to safely stay in my thermal and let the wind blow me over it. I soon reached the cloud base which was, at that time, 1100 meters (3600 feet). By this time I had drifted considerably north of my course so, seeing many clouds and having no doubt about staying in the air I corrected my heading hoping to contact the Hamburg-Bremen Autobahn.

This was my first long cross-country attempt and I had determined to do exactly as Herr Huth (our Chief Instructor and German Champion pilot) had told me. He said never to fly straight ahead unless I was over 1,000 meters (3280 feet) . . . that I should always keep that much reserve. Unfortunately, after that first good thermal, I was never able to gain an altitude of over 700 meters (2300 feet) and, as a consequence, kept circling. Each time when I'd lose the thermal (or give it up because of the 1 meter lift on one side and one or more meters per second down on the other) I'd fly in a southerly direction, ever hoping to spot the Autobahn. I couldn't figure out what was wrong with my flying. I couldn't find the core of the thermals . . . they seemed to be all broken up and full of bubbles. Later, when I discussed the flight with Herr Huth, he assured me that it wasn't my fault . . . that the air was like Champagne that day and that he, too, had trouble getting altitude.

Just when I had decided I was completely lost I saw Bremen up ahead and to the south of me, realized I was north of my course in spite of all my detours. At first I couldn't believe this was Bremen, as I'd been in the air for four hours and Bremen was only 100 kilometers (62 miles) from our field. It was

then after 2:00 P.M. and I felt a little sick. My despair increased when I saw that there were no more clouds ahead of me. In back of me and far to the south the sky was full of clouds but in the direction I had to fly there was nothing but blue sky. I decided that it would be foolish to try to detour against the wind and stay in the cloudy area as time was too short. Without much hope I flew straight ahead into the blue sky. My altitude when I left the clouds was 600 meters (1970 feet) but with only 1½ meters down per second I got quite close to the north side of Bremen before I had to look for a landing place. When I was down to about 400 meters (1300 feet) I flew over a dry looking field which yielded from ½ meter to 1 meter per second (200 ft. per minute) lift. I fought desperately to stay in this and finally gained enough altitude to fly over the Weser River which flows from Bremerhaven to Bremen.

By the time I got on the other side of this river I was perilously low and picked out a field to land in. As I made my downwind approach for a landing I had a curious feeling that this wasn't to be the end of my flight and when I felt a "bump" as I made my turn onto the base leg I was ready for it. I threw the Spatz into a tight circle and circled with zero rate of climb until this finally improved, bringing me up to 600 meters (1970 feet). The rest of the trip until the Dutch border I flew without clouds, up and down, never getting above 700 meters (2300 feet).

About 5:30 P.M., 270 kilometers (168 miles) from Hamburg (just north of Almelo) I was down to 200 meters (656 feet) and picked out another landing field. This time the terrain was full of grassy fields but no roads. I remember thinking that they'd never get the glider out of there if I landed unless the trailer could be put on a boat. The place was interlaced with canals but no houses or roads. Again, just before landing (this time on the final turn) I felt a "bump" and took a chance. This turned out to be a strong thermal which took me up to 1100 meters (3600 feet). I saw clouds in the sky ahead of me and headed for them. After one more thermal I knew I had at least made my 300 kilometers (186 miles).

The rest of the trip was easy. The thermals were steadier and stronger than at any time of the day. I got two meters per second lift, reached