

from Richland toward Boise, Idaho, during the CBSA Memorial Day contest. Unfortunately this is not far enough to constitute Diamond distance. Starting at Wenatchee, this same route to the SE over the Blues to Boise would exceed 500 km. Alternately, one can fly due east from Wenatchee past Spokane, Wash. and Kellogg, Idaho across Mullan Pass and the higher and wider Bitterroot Mountains to a point slightly beyond Missoula, Montana.

The first three days of this year's Northwest contest at Wenatchee were marked by only mediocre weather, and modest goal and return or triangle speed tasks were set by the task committee (see Pete Bowers' article in July SOARING). However, a minor cold front went through Wednesday night. When I arrived at Fancher Field Thursday morning worn out from the previous several days' flying and hoping for another short task which would get everyone back early for a restful session of hangar flying, the place was already a scene of feverish activity. Bob Fisher, the Northwest's first Gold C pilot and senior member of the task committee had decreed an open day, and the competitors were sealing barographs, checking cameras, and searching for maps. The predicted wind was 10 to 12 knots WSW and Bob opined that this was the day to try for Missoula, or beyond. Since he and I were running neck and neck in the contest scoring, I had little choice but to reluctantly follow suit. I also remembered that it was Bob Fisher who had planned my Diamond goal flight three years earlier, picked the goal, marked my map, and shoved me on my way - maybe it really was a Diamond distance day! We pitched a coin to determine who would take off first, and Bob won. The tow pilot was instructed to tow to Badger Mtn. Lookout, several miles north of the field, on the theory that the west wind should produce lift on the ridge north of the lookout. I took off at 10:05 A.M. in my Schweizer 1-21 behind the Seattle Glider Council's PA-12 towplane piloted by Clyde Nofsinger. As we climbed out of the pattern, I noted that Bob was still scratching hard on the ridge so released (10:12) at 4000 asl in a big thermal close to the field. I was soon joined by Fisher in his L-K, and we climbed to the top at 7800 feet and set off on course to the east at 10:26. Cumulus clouds were forming to the north and east thirty to forty miles away but Wenatchee was in a cloud-

less hole making the going uncertain. High cirrus to the south plus the cross wind ruled out the route toward Boise. Setting out, Fisher and I flew side by side several hundred yards apart, which seemed like good strategy for finding thermals. However, it soon became evident that the Fisher luck (or skill?) was paying off again as he appeared to be flying in rising air while I was sinking. It began to look doubtful, in fact, whether I would reach the clouds. Fifteen miles out I was down low and had to stop and circle to stay up. While so engaged, I heard a deafening roar and looked out to see a Larson AFB Globemaster banking away from a near collision. This experience, and the sight of Fisher vanishing in the distance, further unnerved me and it was touch and go for a while to remain airborne.

A series of small dust devils came to my aid, and we eventually reached the clouds. One hour after release we were 45 miles out on course and the going had become easier. The clouds were small and flattish and based at only about 8000, but each was a consistent producer of lift, and we drove along at a good rate. Although achieved rates of climb averaged only 300 to 500 fpm, the second hour saw almost 60 miles slip by and brought us to the small town of Harrington with its distinctive grain elevators. At this point the clouds ended. Ahead was an ominous 30-mile wide, cloud-free gap filled with haze or dust. This gap extended to the town of Cheney just south of Spokane.

We set sail at maximum L/D and hoped for the best. When the clouds were finally reached and safety appeared within grasp, a tantalizing and frustrating experience ensued, like something from a bad dream. The first cloud dissipated as it was approached. So did the second and third. By then I was down awkwardly close to the 2000 foot terrain, out of gliding distance of the Spokane airports, and facing the prospect of landing in a farm yard only an ignominious 140 miles from Wenatchee. While picking out a landing place, a providential thermal came to our rescue, we climbed back to cloud base, and were on our way again. The end of the third hour showed another fifty miles logged and lake Coeur d' Alene approaching. At this point a decision had to be made. Till now the flight path had not deviated more than one or two miles from the airline route

penciled on the map from Wenatchee to Kellogg. Should I stick to this route, detour north to the town of Coeur d' Alene and follow the highway to Kellogg, or should I abandon the flight entirely, photograph a turning point, and try for a triangle? Oh to know what Fisher was doing! Cloud base had not increased as I had expected and there was a strong temptation to take the latter course, since at this point it was otherwise necessary to abandon the safe terrain of the Columbia Basin and strike out into the forest covered mountains. Beyond Coeur d' Alene the highway enters a steep canyon and there is literally no place to land till one reaches Kellogg and its airport, which is built on mine trailings (the only possible place). Otherwise the mountain sides meet in the river and only enough space has been scraped out for the road and railway to cling to. Mines and houses are in many cases supported on stilts on the front and are dug into the hillside on the rear. From my vantage point under a cloud by the lake near Rockford Bay the back way into Kellogg via the airline route and the railroad seemed more inviting than the highway, and several meadows and fields looked like possible landing places, so the decision was made to press on at least to Kellogg.

Kellogg was passed at 2 o'clock, almost 200 miles out, average speed 50 mph. I was still peering ahead hoping to catch up with Fisher, but in vain. He was not under any cloud nor was he sitting on the Kellogg airport. He must be far ahead! At about this point the going got tougher. Cloud base was still only about 8000 feet (I had hoped for 10,000 to 12,000 over the 7000 foot mountains). lift was also weaker than over the flat country, and the clouds were already showing signs of dissipating. I had moved over to the north side of the valley to take advantage of the uplift from the SW wind. Despite the declining conditions, it was tempting to go on up to the pass 20 miles beyond, see what the country on the other side looked like, and then return to Kellogg if it appeared too formidable. At this point I pulled what could have been a costly "boo boo." Coasting up the edge of the valley I mistook the small mining town of Wallace for the similar town of Mullan. The sectional chart showed a road and railroad leading out of Mullan up over Mullen Pass. So I followed a road and railroad (my Cook compass had stopped working -