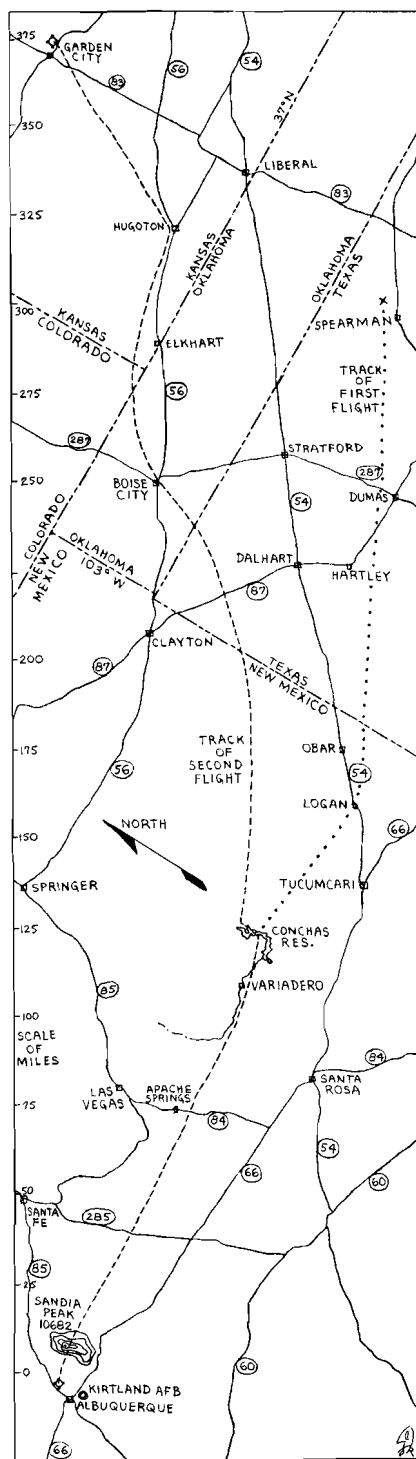


I would sink down to the cumulus clouds and through them below the condensation level which was at 16,000 ft. This time I had a turn-and-bank indicator installed and the oxygen system full of oxygen. I had the mask on during the whole flight which kept me above 12,000 ft. and most of the last three hours between 14,000 ft. and 17,000 ft.

The first glide from 20,000 ft. down to 12,000 ft. assisted by a good tailwind covered 65 miles; one fifth of the distance was already behind me before I started circling in the thermals. The next fifty miles I followed exactly the route of the first flight, but near the Conchas Lake I missed the thermals entirely and sunk down so low that there was not much hope left to get up again. I had the choice to land on a dirt road upwind of the lake or cross the lake and hang on the small ridge which extended out of the water to make the shore line. I did not give up and flew across the water and reached the ridge on the other side only 200 ft. above the water at almost tree-top level. It was a moment of suspense because there was absolutely no place to land except in the water; the ridge and the land behind it was made of large and small rocks only. The wind held me up about 2 or 300 ft. above the water and I decided to fly along the ridge to the north, where the river comes into the lake, hoping to find some landing place or maybe, just maybe, a thermal that would lift me away from this little ridge and up to the clouds again. After almost 10 minutes I caught a thermal lift and very carefully I started to make circles out in front of the ridge and with much concentration I worked my way up to 1200 ft. above ground before the lift was gone. From here I could at least try to find a suitable landing place. While flying downwind I found a weak thermal again and this I worked for almost 30 minutes and drifted about 10 miles while circling up to 14,000 ft.

Still shaken up by this close call I decided from here on always to fly at best L/D and stay as high as possible. 300 km. already covered, only 200 to go and it was only 2 o'clock. I could count on 3 hours of thermals and only 200 km. to go, it should not be too difficult to reach a point from where I could begin the final glide. The wind was not as strong now as in the first half of the flight and again turned around to come more and more from



Map showing tracks of two long 1-26 flights made by Helmut Roemer.

the south. The weatherman had told me in the morning to fly towards Kansas to Garden City and in the rush to get in the air I did not look it up on the map to find out how far it is to declare it as a goal. Now I began to look for Garden City and found out that it is exactly on the 600 km. radius from Coronado and for the first time it appeared to be possible to reach it. After passing

the border from New Mexico to Texas I passed north of Dalhart and I had to slow down and hang on the thermals longer than I wanted to because there was only blue sky ahead and I expected the air to heat up some more in the afternoon in order to form cumulus clouds. Approximately 60 miles north there was much better development of cumulus clouds and for a while I tried to fly north to make use of those.

This direction of flight brought me into Oklahoma over Boise City and into the southeastern corner of Colorado. I could not reach the area of those cumulus clouds after an hour and finally continued northeast to make more distance. The clouds were only very small and the lifts weak, but by careful observation of things ahead I managed to never go below 11,000 ft. again and was mostly between 14,000 and 17,000 ft. I also used the lift in the clouds when they grew large enough to keep the air rising; cloud base was still at 16,000 ft. After passing north of Elkhart, already in Kansas, I knew I had it made since I could glide beyond the 500 km. radius from the altitude I presently had. Garden City was still too far out. Over Hugoton I found the last lift for this day and from 16,000 ft. the last glide was set up. The distance to go was 65 miles and the altitude to lose 13,000 ft. The glide ratio would cover only 60 miles, but I hoped the wind would help me for the rest of the distance since it would take me almost one hour to glide down from this altitude; if the wind is only 10 mph I should make it. Playing the airspeed at best L/D or faster for more sink or slower for less sink than 200 fpm I glided on down and the closer I came to Garden City the more it was evident that I would arrive with altitude to spare. Finally I arrived over the airport at 5800 ft. and had actually another 20 miles of glide possible. But observing the weather during that long glide I could see a cold front approaching with large cumulo nimbus clouds and much lightning on the horizon. For this reason I decided to land at the airport and have a solid hangar for the sailplane. After many circles over the field I landed right in front of the FAA building at 17:05 after 7 hours and 20 minutes in the air. The cold front arrived rapidly and when we closed the hangar doors, the roll cloud was overhead and the rain and a 70 mph

(Concluded on page 11)