

COAST TO COAST, BY SAILPLANE?

by ROBERT LEE MOORE

Robert H. Fisher is, like all soaring pilots, part dreamer — but a dreamer who is about to make one of his long-standing dreams some true. It has been one of Bob's ambitions, practically since he first became aware of soaring many years ago, to some day fly a sailplane across the country, "from salt water to salt water" — not on tow but in a series of soaring flights. This year, on the 50th anniversary of the first powered flight across the United States, he finally took steps to realize his ambition. He sold his interest in the family farming enterprise near Moses Lake, Washington, ordered a new Schweizer 1-23H, and started organizing his expedition, a venture which Bob feels may do more to publicize soaring in the public eye than anything else he could do.

He plans to depart from Seattle in late June, when the soaring conditions are best. Exact date of jump-off is, of course, somewhat indefinite, since it is dependent on weather; and just the right conditions will be required to get over the Cascade Mountains. This first leg of the journey may well be the most difficult (and hazardous) of the trip, since the Cascades are a formidable barrier which have been crossed by sailplane only once before — and then from east to west, which is easier. Stable, wet, marine air often blankets the Pudget Sound

area. Once across the Cascades, Bob plans to bear down through southeastern Washington, hop across the Blue Mountains in eastern Oregon (he has pioneered this leg before), cross southern Idaho, Wyoming, Iowa or Missouri, and then across Illinois, Indiana (where he was born over forty years ago) and Ohio — staying well south of the Great Lakes to avoid their stabilizing influence — and then on, *of course*, to Elmira. From there it would be an "easy hop" to the Atlantic Ocean. The itinerary is naturally somewhat at the mercy of the weather, terrain encountered, advice of knowledgeable individuals (much welcomed), etc. How long the journey will take is any one's guess, anything from three weeks to three months is not unreasonable. However, one can be sure that Bob will be doing his dead level best to beat the first airplane crossing of the continent (49 days). Knowing Bob, he will also be trying hard for his Distance Diamond and won't pass up any opportunities to set a record or two.

In 1950, Bob made the first 300 km. flight in the northwest and became Washington's first Gold C pilot (U.S. #30). He also won (easily) the first post-war NW soaring contest and established a monotonous habit of winning every contest he entered. (It was necessary for some of the rest of us to buy sailplanes with fifty percent better per-

formance than his slicked up L-K to break him of this habit!) All who know Bob and his determination have no doubts of the success of his current venture.

A jaunt across the country, such as Bob plans, with sailplane, ground crew, trailer, and tow plane is a major expedition and not inexpensive, even if the sailplane doesn't use any gas. Various friends and acquaintances are contributing to his expense fund, both because they like and admire Bob and because they feel that what he is trying to do will help soaring. Benefit air shows are being held, and he has the backing of the city of Moses Lake, the local newspaper, and various civic groups. The Civil Air Patrol is furnishing a Super-Cub towplane to accompany the trek. When Bob wings eastward out of Seattle, the best wishes of all of these people will ride with him!

If your local newspaper doesn't carry the story of the progress of the Fisher flight, needle them till they do!



Bob Fisher, Washington State's "Flying Tiger," and his new Schweizer 1-23H. Nose trim was painted on as a gag with excess showcard paint when temporary numbers were applied so first flight could be made.

Photo by Bob Moore

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