

The map opposite is justified because it can show sailplane pilots the extremes to which they can wander from and across a good straight flight line and still get enough contest points to win something or other. And this text is a collection of excuses to explain the crooked flight lines on the map.

Keith Richardson, my driver, and I arrived at the practice field, Strother, a wonderfully complete place for a Nationals, several days before the contest. These days were spent reviewing the frightening list of certain winners and their unbeatable equipment. Practice flights only convinced all of us that the soaring, even on the best days, in the hot air over wet, green, cool Kansas was going to be something less than we experienced at Odessa, Texas, in 1960. However, practice was valuable in mental conditioning for the ragged little thermals that were our power on many following days.

The practice session was good also for eating steaks and bowling with the competition because Paul Bikle and Irv Prue let slip that Capt. (now Maj.) Ed Butts, USAF, might be available as a crew chief. I phoned Chanute Field immediately and awakened Ed (it was midnight) with the proposition that he fly down to join the fun and games. Ed agreed a few days later, mostly to stop the continuing midnight calls. He was my secret weapon; he's big enough to assemble the Lo by himself, can hold off contest officials with incisive one-word statements and he can even make Keith work!

On the last day of practice, Ryan beat Bikle, who beat me, on a sort of freedom rider flight from Strother to Pratt to that other field where the contest was to be held. About 180 miles and it was Ryan in the Sisu by a fair margin at near 55 mph in the northern edge of a good Bermuda high. Lift was up to 700 fpm and never that good again. Sure enough I broke a few regulations on landing, was stood at attention and reprimanded severely as they say.

August 1st, the first contest day, was just soarable under a stationary front and I got away with an earlier take-off time than was good for the task declared, west to Pratt and return, 142 miles. My turn for selection of take-off time was far down on the list and I was reluctant to gamble with the late time available to me this first day.

Getting away was easy but I could get only 3,000 feet above the ground under a sprinkling of tiny new cumulus. After a few miles, however, just staying up became a problem when our tattered cover of little clouds showed a big hole; our first introduction to the wet spot in the middle of Kansas, but it was too early in the game to recognize this as a permanent hazard.

I elected to go far south around the hole toward better clouds that seemed to parallel the course and then curve back to the turn point. This decision produced the first unsightly bulge in flight line and only got me near the turn at the same time as the other early starters who had barged straight across the hole. The hole had been closing during my flanking and, in addition to my contemporaries, all the late starters were piling up against the one big cloud in the sky. And it was dropping out sheets of rain neatly blocking the route to Pratt. Having learned from the earlier deviation, I stayed close to course, got soaking wet, almost went down, and finally floundered into the clear to find everyone already returning from the turn point. They had deviated.

Returning was easier, the rain cloud had moved north, and using many little thermals and one big one halfway home let me beat everyone but Allemann back to Wichita. 28.1 mph slow; 11th place; 812 points.

August 2nd came with the same front even more stationary right overhead. The task: Anthony, Hutchinson and return. No contest.

August 3rd came with the same front even more stationary right overhead but somehow there was some lift. Only Coverdale exceeded the 100 km. on this free distance day. He did 87 miles. I stayed quite close to Wichita. No contest.

August 4th came with the same front moved just a little to the south and the soaring looked good enough for E. J. Reeves to proclaim, "We're going to Ant'ny, Hutchi'son and return even if it kills every last one of us!" It did.

A good late start, two little thermals and two large ones under clouds got me 48 miles to Anthony where I caught all the early starters assembled in two great clots. Everybody was there and the next two thermals hatched the most exotic games ever of "chicken." I'm chicken and I tucked in behind Paul Bikle

because the Prue Standard is strong enough to chop up even the big pieces of wreckage and we went round and round. But it was too much when a Kamakazi type made a full deflection pass between Paul's wing and tail so I led out north on the 64 mile leg to Hutchinson. Paul and I flew into blue sky with weak, dry thermals and immediately the headwind dominated us. We worked several thermals as we led slowly north. Paul suddenly tired of flying wing and charged on ahead "to make some contribution." He did by diving into a deep shear layer and then throwing up a tremendous plume of dust as he helped prepare the Kansas fields for the next wheat crop.

I slowed down, got low, and finally found lift only to see Randall in the Ka-6 come tripping lightly on the gusts to me then quickly up through me and away. Sickening. From the top of the lift the final glide made Hutchinson and 9 miles straight toward Wichita over the flat plain to land without a turn. I felt good.

It required half an hour to find a phone and then a little youngster told me that he saw other gliders. I watched Abels and Carris beat over on their last glides. I felt bad. 120.3 miles; came fifth for the day; Carris, 126.5 miles, first. My flight netted 951 points and brought me fourth overall. I felt good again.

August 5th came with all the various types of clouds arranged right overhead. The task, Anthony and return plus optional open distance seemed impossible but Coverdale, Maxey and McClanahan brightly accessed a funny little wave, went very high and left us all. We'll hear about Coverdale's fantastic 113 miles for years, especially from Coverdale. He made me promise him the trophy on all rainy days. He agreed to pay the freight on it both ways. He is a good sport.

August 6th came and my personal routine was fixed. Capt. (Now Maj.) Butts aroused me as usual at about the same time the Army has reveille and we made our daily early morning pajama-uniformed tour around our Diamond Motel's circular unit to review the stationary front. Capt. (now Maj.) Butts always presented the meteorological lecture for the day during this inspection. But this morning we couldn't see the front and later E. J. said to fly west to Greensburg and return, 199 miles, and then go off in any direction as far as possible.