

# SILVER C ALTITUDE FLIGHT DESCRIPTION

by GENE M. WILBURN

This flight was my second on Tuesday, May 30, 1961, the last, and best day of the Mid-Atlantic Soaring Championship Meet. There was considerable thermal activity and occasional ridge lift throughout the day.

During my first flight in the M-ASA's 2-22 during the morning there was no lift on the north end of the ridge west of the field and it wasn't easy to get back through the notch and the down drafts on the lee side. While on tow the second time about 3:00 P.M. the Cumberland 2-22 was flying the north end of the ridge. I stayed on tow, flying through good lift, to the up-wind side of the ridge to take advantage of the better lift which I expected to find there. To my disgust, both the other 2-22 and the lift had vanished and it suddenly seemed to be a repeat of my first flight. The extra altitude gained by staying on tow (about 2500' instead of 2000') was swiftly lost. The decision to abandon the ridge came more quickly this time! Still, most of my altitude was gone after crossing the worst of the down drafts.

Back over the airport at about 600', after giving up all hope, I hit the first solid green that day. A quick circle with a 50 foot altitude gain convinced me that I had tied into a good one. I was able to stay

in it almost continuously with little drift to about 3200'. At this point it seemed the lift had gone as far as it intended to go, but at least I was in a more comfortable position than a few minutes before. Soon things began to improve again and I knew I had my altitude gain. The thermal topped out at about 4300' above the airport.

By this time the wind had drifted me southeast toward the point where the Potomac River cuts through the ridge to the east of Cumberland. Each trip up wind toward the field to the next thermal used up all the altitude gained the time before. The net result was to maintain altitude at the same spot.

Thermals triggered by the wind against the face of the ridge carried me to about 5100' before becoming too weak to be useful. Finally, after an indicated high point of 5200', it became apparent that further altitude gain was impossible without going downwind too far to return to the airport, and it was too late in the day to expect five hours duration on thermals alone. Flying toward the field along the east ridge I found a large area of weak lift and zero sink. This must also have been primarily due to unstable air; the altitude (about 4000' above the field) was more than twice the height of the ridge.

Upon arrival over the airport, I had enough altitude left to go to the ridge west of the valley. But because of my two unpleasant experiences earlier in the day and no sailplanes were in sight there, I landed without trying the conditions. Most of the other pilots, I found, were on the ground for the awards ceremony.

Everyone who had been waiting for the 2-22 had either gone home or out on retrieves. Having promised a glider ride to a friend who had let me use his MG-A during the meet, I shed my coat and climbed into the open back seat of the 2-22 for what I believed to be a short flight. At about 300' on tow I gave the controls to my friend for the rest of the flight. He is an experienced power pilot and even though never having flown a glider before did quite well. One hour and forty-five minutes later, long after I had turned blue, he was still having a ball when we left the ridge only because I had to get the tow plane back to Westminster before dark. I had secured a convert and chilblains on the same flight. At that time, after flying in moderate to strong lift, we had more than 3000' above field elevation. Some of the lift seemed to be from warm air over the Celanese plant combining with the ridge currents to make a large column of rising air out over the valley.

All the way back to Westminster there was a 30 mph direct tail wind. Even at 5500' there was lift as I crossed each ridge. The conditions persisted long enough for my five hours and then some. If I had but tried!



EXPORT REPRESENTATIVES  
ALLIED INTERNATIONAL CORP.  
230 Park Ave. New York, N.Y.

## PORTABLE VHF COMMUNICATIONS

### Skycrafter's VHF MULTIPHONE

COMPACT, LIGHT WEIGHT, HAND CARRIED  
2 WAY VHF RADIO — OPERATES ON DRY  
BATTERIES OR MULTIPOWER PACK —  
SEVERAL MODELS TO CHOOSE FROM ...

*Versatile 2 way VHF communications unit for general aircraft use in powered aircraft, gliders and helicopters. Ideal for standby use. Models available for airport mobile equipment, unicom, flying schools and flight tests. Now available through Schweizer Sailplane Dealers.*

For FREE literature write to

**Skycrafters**

1365 Gladys Ave.  
Long Beach, California

