

# 200 MILES IN 3:55 IN A 1-26

by WILLIAM C. MEYER

Two weeks before this flight Al Leffler, flying the Orange County Soaring Association's 1-26, with Evan Turner crewing, had soared from El Mirage, California, to Dry Lake, Nevada.

Now Evan Turner and I had arranged for five days off and the use of the O.C.S.A.'s 1-26, and we both had hopes of making the same flight.

Monday, July 9th: My day and I might as well "think big," so a Diamond goal declaration from El Mirage to Dry Lake, Nevada, was written and signed. (My realistic goal was Silver Badge distance.)

I was off the ground on aero tow at 11 a.m., PDT. I released at 4000 feet ASL (1135 feet AG) in weak lift. I landed at 11:15 a.m.

My second tow was at 11:45 a.m. I released at 11:50 at 4850 feet in 20-meter lift. By noon I had reached 9500 feet and a 20-25 mph west wind had drifted me over the Shadow Mountains. Feeling brave, I headed towards George Air Force Base, where I had inside dope on thermal activity over the runway.

About two miles out, at 8000 feet, two delta wing fighters made after-

burner take-offs and passed about 300 feet in front of me. This changed my mind about going over George, so I proceeded toward Barstow and Daggett.

I reached Daggett without any trouble one hour after take-off. I made a quick calculation of distance flown vs. time in the air; assuming that Daggett was Silver distance of 32 miles from El Mirage, my ground speed was a little over 30 mph. From this I assumed it would take me 6 hours more to reach Dry Lake, Nevada. This was an error on my part, since Daggett is approximately 50 miles from El Mirage.

Laboring under this misconception, I headed out into the desert from Daggett. I kept remembering what everyone had told me about cross-country soaring. "Get high and stay high." The only problem was, I was getting lower and lower and lower!

About 20 miles out of Daggett, I was low enough to start looking for a landing spot. This was the start of a very repetitious hour. I would struggle up a thousand feet in weak, uncertain lift, head on in hopes of encountering something better, then

down near the deck again and looking for a landing spot. This went on nine times in the next 50 minutes, twice getting as low as 400 feet.

While making a final approach, I spotted a dust devil so I swung out and headed for it. It turned out to be a real boomer and up I went to 11,000 feet. Then I took off and went through the next pass and on to the next down grade. With my map spread out in my lap, I was trying frantically to find out where I was!

I worked my way up the next grade and did some ridge flying on the next pass. When I got through the pass the highway made an abrupt jog to the left. I was still looking for Baker at this time. I made the jog to the left, but it didn't make sense. I had been in the air less than three hours so it couldn't possibly be the turn just before the California-Nevada border.

Ahead there was a large dry lake with dust drifting at one end. It looked like a good thermal so I made a beeline for the end of the lake. The good thermal turned out to be dust raised by heavy equipment building a new highway. So there I was over the end of the lake at about 1000 feet, lots of dust, no up, and getting low again.

All of a sudden I hit lift and went on the fastest elevator ride of the day, up to 10,000 feet. The 30 meter per second variometer was pegged so long that I thought it had stuck. I looked off to the right—could that be Lake Mead? If so, what had happened to my supposed 30-mph average?

Flying straight at 65 mph and staying above 8000 feet without any difficulty, I had Las Vegas in sight, then Nellis Air Force Base and, beyond, Dry Lake was visible. It suddenly dawned on me—I just might make it and be setting some sort of a speed record for a 1-26 on my first successful cross-country.

I was over Nellis Air Force Base and still had 9000 feet of altitude so I put the nose down and stepped the 1-26 up to 70 mph. When I got over Dry Lake I still had 7000 feet so I pulled full spoilers and spiraled down in the weakest lift I could find. I landed at 3:45 p.m., 200 miles from El Mirage. I sat there and thought, did this really happen to me?

Three days later I repeated the trip from El Mirage to Dry Lake, only this time I was crewing for Evan on his successful Diamond goal flight.

## FELLERS! PLEASE DON'T SMOKE IN YOUR GLIDERS!

An anonymous photographer sends this shot of a 2-22 frame just after it had cooled enough to touch. The pilot was smoking and had dropped his cigarette on the landing roll. Both he and the passenger got out without injury. Imagine what the results would have been had the cigarette dropped a minute earlier! Preliminary examination indicates the ship may be a near-total loss.

