

# GOAL FLIGHT— EAST COAST

by BOB FISHER

There is a certain and real satisfaction in the completion of a goal flight in a sailplane. Given a good craft and sufficient weather support, sailplane pilots have demonstrated their ability time and again to reach predetermined spots hundreds of miles distant through their flying skill and understanding of meteorology. Most of these flights are made over ideal terrain and under good weather conditions. For a real challenge, I selected the East Coast for my goal and of necessity accepted what mother nature offered along the way.

Beware for you may make the same mistake I made in failing to recognize the magnitude of some of the barriers. There are physical mountains and then there are "other" mountains. The other mountains became as real before the flight was completed as the rugged timbered Cascades or the limitless, tree-covered Poconos of Pennsylvania. There were times when I longed for the days of contest flying when we could dismiss the day as no-contest or have the privilege of selecting any course within the 360° circle. No matter what the weather offered, the course was essentially due east even though there were cumulus in another direction or a brisk 20-knot wind faced you, it was still east. Another sur-

prise was the failure of the winds to aid in their west-east flow.

To cross the U.S. in true soaring flight has been my goal of the last five years. Although most soaring pilots have recognized that soaring is possible in any section of the U.S., there has been a tendency of many to doubt the quality of certain areas that produce good conditions. True, there are sections that excell and some that are very inferior. Some areas, of course, have much longer usable seasons. In soaring Coast-to-Coast, I felt much could be done to create interest in the sport and to dispel the doubts as to the feasibility of soaring in many localities. The inequality of the weather's offering does not in my estimation necessarily detract from the joys and satisfaction of soaring. The harder the struggle and the greater the challenge, the more gratifying becomes the accomplishment. Regardless of what this flight did to promote or encourage soaring in different localities, it did prove that at 46, old pilots don't die, they just glide away.

Preparing for a soaring vacation such as this was a major undertaking. The details of this would fill a book so I will but touch on it briefly. First, thoughts were concerned with finances which brought about the decision to sell my farming in-

terests and my beautiful two-place L-K to provide funds for the purchase of a suitable ship. Friends donated nearly \$3,000 cash with materials and equipment given or reduced in price. The Columbia Basin Soaring Association gave liberally and several members helped put on a benefit airshow. Ed McClanahan loaned his trailer while mine was under construction. I even received a beautiful poem written by Mrs. Peter Tuntland, the late Paul Tuntland's mother, encouraging me to persevere. The generosity and faith of so many friends was a real factor in the successful completion of this flight.

The selection of a ship for the flight was made after careful consideration. Recognizing that the hazards would be greater than normal local flying and that good all-around performance was a must, I chose the Schweizer 1-23H for the task since it provided more protection, being all-metal, and still came up with real performance. It also has a spacious cockpit, by sailplane standards, for pilot comfort and adequate room for extra equipment.

Oxygen and radio equipment was a must in the planning. Zep's oxygen system was used with the tank installed under the nose section. This was appreciated more than once on the trip for its benefits in reducing fatigue and in keeping one alert. The radio was mounted on the floor forward of the stick with the antenna on the turtleback. Five transmitting crystals were installed in the Sky-crafters VHF to reach the necessary stations. It would be impossible to overestimate the value of radio communications to the success of this trip. A Getabery Glider Gauges air-speed was used and proved to be a very sensitive and accurate instrument. Other instrumentation was about usual, including an electric turn and bank and Friebe variometer.

The time consumed in preparing for the journey seemed endless from the day the ship came by rail until take-off time. These problems were lessened by much volunteer labor in the building of the trailer, painting of the ship that came in the primed condition, installation of the instruments and equipment, the gathering together of the camping gear, etc. The ground crew of necessity consisted of all the family; my wife Wrenny, Danny (13), Dick (9), and Rags, our Scottie and mascot. Tom, my nephew, was chosen to drive the

The whole Fisher crew at Stuart, Iowa. From L. to R.: Bob Fisher, Dave Hensel (tow pilot), Wrenny, Dan, Tom (driver) and Dickie.

