

TRIANGULAR DIAMOND GOAL FLIGHT

by DR. HARMUT SCHMIDT

Since I had returned to Chicago and joined the Chicago Glider Club again in January 1961 I had planned this flight on the map and one day I even took off with Bob Hupe in a power plane to select a conspicuous turning point in the small town of Wenona.

I had been waiting for my chance already for quite some time when on June 5, '61 there was the first day with almost no wind. Although the general weather forecast was not very favorable for a long distance glider flight with stratocirrus formations in the sky and no cumuli developing, I decided to take my chance.

After the usual preparations and having taken pictures of my goal declaration Gordon Durlin took me up in the air at 1115 Central Daylight Saving Time. During the tow we encountered some turbulence and I released at 1120 at about 2000 feet above the ground and soon found a weak thermal which I worked until 3500 feet and at 1130 I left the field heading towards Aurora hoping to find some better lift over there. But before I reached Aurora I found myself down to release altitude and to avoid an early landing in still rather meager lift I became more cautious now until SW of Aurora when I hit the first 3 m/s climb. From then on I became rather confident and proceeded on my first leg until between Waterman and Shabbonah I found myself so close to the ground that I did not dare to look around for better stuff and worked zero sink for over 10 minutes and finally I succeeded in working myself up to safer altitudes in a weak lift. Through this experience I lost almost all my hope that I would ever complete my triangle.

But I was in for a pleasant surprise for from now on I found very good thermals at frequent intervals averaging 3 m/s and taking me up to 6000 feet. I reached Dixon Airport at 1415, shot 3 pictures of the turnpoint and turned towards Wenona.

The second leg as not without excitement either. I crossed the Illinois River without difficulty but a few miles short of Wenona where I did not expect any trouble I found myself almost at the same level with a

high television tower and I felt much better when I saw that tower 10 minutes later from an altitude which enabled me to fly over Wenona to take turn-point photos at about 1600 hours and heading home.

If thermal activity would last for another 2 hours I thought I had a fair chance of making it back to the field and I decided to be real careful and stay up high from now on. But before I could keep that promise I went down twice to altitudes that I did not like at all. But when I reached the Illinois River again, this time between Marseille and Seneca, I hit thermals more frequently and managed to stay between 5000 and 6000 feet. When I reached Morris Airport with an altitude of over 6000 feet I knew that I could make it in a straight glide to the field although I could not see it yet in the haze. To play it real safe I worked another thermal over Plainfield and arrived over the home base at 1730 hours.

When I looked down I saw the hangar door was closed and nobody seemed to be around. With no cumuli in the sky they probably did not ex-

pect me to make it back to the field. I got a little bit worried now about my landing witnesses and decided to stay up in the air over the field as long as possible to attract attention and hoping that somebody might still show up. The lift was still pretty good and I put in another 2 hours and a quarter until I finally touched down on the field at 1945 CDST. With the sun setting already I took my final photographs and was real happy to find out that 2 persons had seen my landing, including Boyd Clow the operator of our airstrip. My legs were rather numb after this long flight but otherwise I felt too happy about this accomplishment to have any physical complaints. But the big shock for me came when I later studied the text on the blackboard and found that my goal declaration did not include the third leg of the flight. So I asked Dick Hawker as the official SSA observer and the other people who knew about my triangular flight intentions to draw up a statement.

The turnpoint pictures were taken with a Robot-camera which was firmly attached to the left side of the canopy. The disadvantage of taking pictures through the plexiglass was compensated by the easiness of aiming at the turnpoint with the whole sailplane.

HARMUT SCHMIDT

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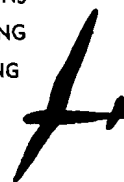
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