

GOING FOR DISTANCE

In the March *Soaring*, Dick Schreder introduced some of the comments he had solicited from numerous well-known soaring pilots on how best to break the world soaring distance record of 535.169 miles (861.272 km.) set by Dick Johnson in the RJ-5 sailplane on August 5, 1951. Anyone having thoughts on this subject is invited to send them to Dick Schreder at 1150 Nebraska Ave., Toledo 7, Ohio. Each month, the comments of a few more pilots will be published, as space permits. Some follow.

Bernie Carris' Comments

My firm belief in making a flight in excess of Dick Johnson's 535 miles is that it can be done any place in this country west of Cleveland, Ohio, by using thermals and without having to fly instruments. I believe that Harold Jensen's recent flight has pretty much proven this. He was in the air only 7 hours and 45 minutes and averaged approximately 56 miles per hour. This was not a flight of long duration or high ground speed. Just early this May here at Elmira we had several days of record-breaking weather with cloud bases in the neighborhood of 10,000 feet and at least a 40 mph wind. Of course, this type of weather here is good only for Diamond distance, at best, because of the closeness to the ocean.

A flight originating in the southwest Texas area, perhaps near El Paso, would undoubtedly be the best bet but I think that any of the better pilots with a suitable sailplane could better Dick's record provided they use the weather as it comes, instead of at their own convenience.

Gordon Oates' Comments

It would appear that there are a number of ways in which the distance record could be broken: by thermal soaring, a combination of wave and thermal soaring, wave soaring alone and frontal soaring.

Taking each of these in turn: if thermals only are used then it appears that there are three areas where a record-breaking flight is most likely to succeed. There is, of course, West Texas, possibly New Mexico and the northern prairie states. I have not yet had an opportunity to do any serious flying in either of the latter areas, but unless the people who have flown there have been exagger-

ating, it would appear that flights of 600 miles should be possible over the prairies given soaring conditions approaching those that are claimed to exist. One particular day has been described to me. A perfect record-breaking day, with a 20-knot N.W. wind, soaring started at 9:30 A.M., cloud base at 9000-10,000 feet, lift of over 1000 f.p.m. and the conditions remained active until around 8 o'clock in the evening!

Sterling Starr has already proved the feasibility of wave soaring followed by a thermal soaring flight and it should be possible to emulate his flight and improve on it. In this case Southern California and possibly the Eastern Rocky Mountain area should produce the required combination at certain times of the year.

As far as purely wave flights are concerned, Dr. Kuettner once flew 374 miles from Bishop, California to Williams, Arizona, in a TG-3A, and he was only forced to land by darkness. Some exploration may be necessary to find the best area for a flight of this type, but it has possibilities.

The main difficulty in attempting a flight along a cold front would appear to be that of connecting a continuous front of the required length at the right place and at the right time of day. In other words, unless a relatively stationary front of the Marfa dew point type is utilized then there is every likelihood that the front will only be within reach of the selected base at an inconvenient time, say 6 o'clock in the evening, for example. Cold fronts of the required type usually move quite fast and thus do not leave much time for preparation and selection of a convenient base. If this difficulty can be overcome then the prairie states should be the best area in which to attempt such a flight.

I personally still favor a thermal flight as giving the greatest chance of success because of the greater number of days when such flights are possible. If the stories I have heard are true then there is a very good possibility that a record-breaking flight could be made originating in, say, the Dakotas or Montana, and flying S.W. in the unstable polar air mass following one of the many strong cold fronts that pass through that area. June should be the best month. I have personally driven through North Dakota at the begin-

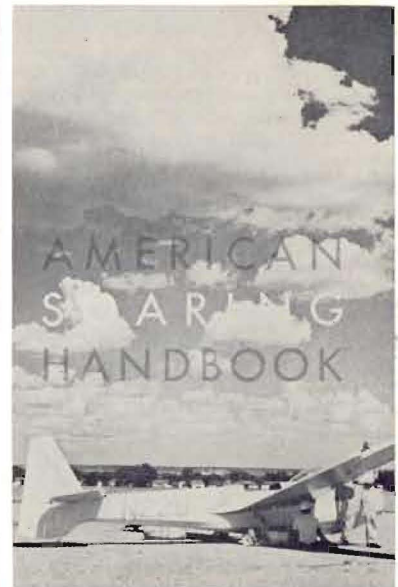
ning of August under a sky with about 4/10 to 5/10 cumulus coverage that was active from 10 A.M. to about 8 P.M. with a number of cloud streets extending from one horizon to the other. From ground observation I would have said that that was a 600-mile day, and the people who live there reckon that June and July are even better, so it looks as though someone with experience at long-distance, high-speed flying should investigate the area.

BIBLIOGRAPHY ON SOARING

Recent articles or items on soaring which have appeared in non-soaring publications.

The Airline Pilot, May-June, 1962, p. 29. Article with photo about Central Airlines Captain Leonard V. Pratt's soaring addiction.

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