

# 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.

## Gale Abels' Comments

For me to express an opinion on the "best method and area" to break the distance record is a bit hard due to my inexperience. I wish I could have flown a triangle on a good day at Odessa to compare thermal strengths.

Assuming top soaring equipment and pilotage, I regard these other criteria in this order of importance: 1, Wind velocity and direction; 2, Starting time possible; and 3, Thermal strength (average) over course.

In our mountain region near Denver we are quite good on #2, favorable on wind direction, and on #3, good in the mountains and fair over the prairie.

I will comment on last summer's Buena Vista Camp and then add to that some other speculations.

During the four days of the Fourth of July week end we took a Super Cub, 2 Skylarks, a 1-26, an L-K and a 2-22 to central Colorado (Buena Vista) and camped out. It was really something, magnificent scenery, freezing nights and scorching days.

My thought was to try at your out and return record by flying (you'll need the map) south down the San-

gre de Cristo mountains to Santa Fe and back. Thermals were very prevalent but an unlucky wet air mass prevailed which allowed over-build-up and light showers at about two-hour intervals plus causing the cumulus to remain below mountain peaks until 9:30 or 10:00 A.M., thereby preventing early starts. I flew about 5½ hours on the first day over the Collegiate Range and in a circle about 70 miles in diameter to become familiar with the area. The following day I was completely bushed from no oxygen the previous day (I later learned) and couldn't get interested in anything. On the third day we decided on a cross-country to the east. We weren't too serious, we messed around and got a late start. I started at 12:30 P.M. in my Skylark 3F and flew about 230 miles to near the Nebraska line. Cloud base was 20,000 ASL in the mountains and 14,000 over the prairie. I stopped at 17,000 ASL, usually in terrific lift. Strangely, an area of glassy smooth air was met on the lee of the mountains. The other Skylark and Dave Johnson in his L-K landed at Colorado Springs. I decided to glide it out and use up the altitude. Miraculously, after a 40-mile glide in smooth air I hit another thermal and was again on my way. This was obviously a diamond day but probably not a 500-miler.

The problem as I see it is therefore to start farther southwest in the mountains taking advantage of an early (8:30 A.M.) start and flying the stronger lift over the mountains as long as possible emerging in the driest area possible (irrigation is murder to us) near Cheyenne and bearing more easterly into the Dakotas.

Perhaps the grass seems greener on the other side of the fence and in that regard I have long wanted to go to Salt Lake and launch (they have a tow plane) on a flight into South Dakota or Nebraska.

On the bizarre side is John Ryan's and my speculation of a start in Arizona with a hold up at Pike's Peak where one ridge-soars all night by the light on the peak (if the wind stops, Peterson Field just east is within easy reach) and the next morning one heads out on a 700-miler.

## Jim Hard's Comments

I don't pretend to be a "well-known soaring pilot," but since there is no price on dreaming (and, to date, no federal tax on it), I have worked out some possibilities which to me seem feasible.

In Situation Number One, our glider guider is equipped with a high wing loading ship chock full of oxygen bottles for survival and lead bricks for penetration. Selecting an appropriate fall or spring day, he slips the bonds of earth somewhere in the vicinity of Jasper National Park in western Alberta. Climbing in the Rocky Mountain lee wave to 30,000-40,000 feet, and with the famous "Northwest Arch" miles below him (this lenticular extends from horizon to horizon on a good day), he proceeds southeasterly along the wave at a speed which allows him to maintain position and altitude in the wave while maintaining an average ground speed of 100 mph. Three hours later he waves at his friends at Pincher Creek as he swishes by. Continuing on down the Continental Divide, Helena is passed far below and the final glide is begun toward Bozeman, Montana, where he knows he will be greeted with an enthusiasm which could be exceeded only at Livingston, 25 miles to the east. In a period of some five odd hours our pilot has established a new world record of about 550 miles.

Situation Number Two is nothing more than an extension of an unsuccessful attempt of Situation Number One. In this particular flight, our hero who we will now call Circularis Updraftus, had been forced down on the wave flight somewhere in the vicinity of Cut Bank, Montana. He takes up temporary residence in this town awaiting the following summer. About the second week in July, when the cumulus can be resisted no longer, he sets sail in an easterly direction across Montana and North Dakota. Williston slides below at the

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