

# 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.

## Frank Kelsey's Comments

I think it has become quite obvious that with the high quality sailplanes and skilled pilots presently flying, it is getting almost impossible to improve on the existing distance record, without the help of some really unusual weather conditions coinciding with the time of the flight.

Even the new breed of sailplanes, flown by the best pilots, operating in normal thermals, will find it pretty difficult to better Dick Johnson's record.

It is common knowledge that most all major mountain ranges in the U.S. run pretty much north and south. This fact, coupled with an "unusual" weather condition which exists periodically, called the "Nevada Low" by the weather bureau, can provide the necessary condition needed for a record-breaking flight.

John Ryan's 465-mile flight of July 3, 1961, from Prescott, Ariz., to Logan, Utah, indicates possible performance on thermals over this route.

Bob Fisher's 345-mile flight during his tremendous "across the U.S." expedition was made through this same area, which speaks well of conditions.

Any power pilot that has flown this area during the spring months while a "Nevada Low" is present, no doubt remembers the unstable air, the high winds aloft circulating counter-clockwise providing 50-60 knots from about 240° over the area at the 10-12 thousand foot level. Because the Nevada Low is relatively stationary, this condition can last for 2-3 days with no approaching front to cut off a distance attempt. Cloud bases are usually around 12,000 ft. asl. Standing waves lie along all the major ranges as far as you can see.

It is noted with interest that a major highway parallels its zig-zag way through this area. Much of our state's dry farming follows this highway route. Amber 2 Federal Airway is just west of the entire route providing communications as needed. Our thin thread of habitation is along the route all the way through Utah, Idaho and Eastern Montana, as if planned. In the desert west, this fact certainly can be comforting upon terminating a flight attempt.

A proposed start could be from the St. George, Utah, or Cedar City surfaced airports. An INSAC Station at Cedar City could assist on weather information as well as being an airline stop for Bonanza Air Lines. A start from Salt Lake City to Cutbank, Mont., would just equal Dick Johnson's present record, with room to go to the Canadian border. Available tow planes and the weather bureau at Salt Lake City should not be overlooked.

A flight from Cedar City to Butte, Mont., make the magic 1000 km., (622 miles) and it is 700 miles to Great Falls. A little fantastic? Maybe! Try adding 50 knots to the cruising speed of the "Sisu," the Ross R-6, a BG-12 or you name it, to get the high speed possible along a standing wave condition which would keep circling to a minimum.



Frank Kelsey, SSA, State Governor for Utah, working on his new high-performance sailplane.

During the "Nevada Low" periods it is possible to do a high altitude, lee wave flight to almost the Canadian border. A thermal flight along the west face of the Wasatch Front of a lesser distance, but still breaking the 1000 km., is very possible.

Needless to say, much effort and planning would be necessary as well

as probably many attempts before the ultimate is achieved. The right sailplane equipped for many hours of flight at extreme altitude, plus a very rugged, determined pilot with lots of skill would be required.

If anyone considers activity in this area, our tow plane, facilities and knowledge of the route are at their disposal. My own efforts hinge on completion this fall of a new single-seater that, flown properly at the right time, just might do it. Maybe next year.

## George Coder's Comments

I must admit, good, bad or in between, I have definite ideas as to how future records will be established. The speeds and distances have been jacked up so high it is no longer a matter of technological development but careful (and often frustrated) planning coupled with expert airmanship. In the U. S., this narrows the field to a few of our top pilots.

Some of the predominating factors involved in record flying I will list. Perhaps the order should be rearranged but then again there may be no specific order. It may just turn out that each is like a link in a chain. These factors are: 1, finance; 2, equipment (sailplane, instrumentation and accessories); 3, airmanship (talent); and 4, location.

1. Take finance first; this we know is very important. If anyone intends to challenge records, he must be prepared to go to the location he chooses (item 4) and wait until the ideal situation occurs. This may take time (like waiting for the Bishop wave, for example). We know *about* when it will be, but it could take a month of sitting to get one. Then item 3 undoubtedly improves in a ratio of how much you put into it, or again, a financial influence on a capability factor. Certainly one cannot become an expert aviator by buying his way if he does not have the talent. Yet, if he does have talent he can't develop it by wishing.

2. Equipment. The cost of developing suitable competition equipment and outfitting it properly must be appreciated. It does take finance and ability (plenty of both).

3. Airmanship. Again skill, or *talent*, is probably the dominating factor, coupled with finance, equipment and location supporting this ability. I think a smaller proportion is attributable to luck when records are being attacked. In competitions, scheduled previously, luck plays an important