

MARFA, TEXAS, SOARING CAMP

by J. C. "Red" WRIGHT

This past spring The Sagebrush Soaring Society of Odessa, Texas, decided to promote a vacation soaring camp during the first two weeks of August. After due consideration to several likely spots, we chose Marfa, Texas, for its geographical location, cool climate and excellent facilities. What we had not counted on is the tremendous hospitality of the townspeople and the overwhelming welcome they gave us—cocktail parties, dinners, barbecues and a magnificent effort to help and extend every possible facility for our use. The rates at the Paisano Hotel and the Lodges are very reasonable and the hospitality is out of this world.

The Marfa-Alpine Airport where we headquartered is tremendous—three 7500' runways, 40 acres of ramp to operate on, hangar space, camping facilities, telephone facilities, rest rooms, no airways or congested traffic, beautiful countryside of green prairies that are one great big landing area if needed, Cu's popping at 9:30 A.M., vast distances available to the northeast, north and west for distance flights, good triangular course areas, towering Cu's, 11,000' bases, cooperative airport management, etc.

All in all, it is our considered opinion this is one of the world's best soaring sites with a season lasting from March through September.

The statistics of the Camp are truly remarkable, and we did not have as good weather as is usually the case in that area. There were

considerable late afternoon thunder showers (which are a real delight to the ranchers) that slowed us down a bit. However, most flights were under way before we experienced any over-development of Cu's into showers.

Wally Scott, Gerhard Goetze, Ben Greene, Al Parker and Lanier Frantz knocked off several diamond flights two days before we shifted from Odessa to Marfa. Wally Scott flew one 380-mile dogleg flight in his 1-26 to Stratford, Texas. He was delayed (due to business reasons in Odessa) from joining us at the start, and in between business meetings in Odessa, he dashed off another dogleg flight, from Odessa to near Lamar, Colorado, for a 1-26 record distance of 443 miles. Amazing! Pardner, if he ever gets his hands on a real high-performance sailplane, some existing records are going to topple!

Most of the first and second day in Marfa were spent getting acquainted, flying recon flights and general fun soaring, then on the third day we all hitched up our blue jeans and started the assault on the goal and distance flights.

Ben Greene went 448 miles to Boise City, Oklahoma, his goal, but due to an error in release point and altitude of release, he was only three-tenths of a mile short of a new world record goal flight. Somewhat chagrined, but not dismayed. Ben flew the *same identical flight* two days later from a release point 10 miles further south to firmly

claim a new world goal flight record (subsequently approved as 457.99 mi.).

George Arents, Lanier Frantz, Gerhard Goetze and your correspondent, "Red" Wright, tried for the goal but found it the better part of valor to land at Tucumcari, New Mexico, for a distance of 350 miles.

A couple of days later, Lanier Frantz, Oats Schwarzenberger, F. J. Lilly and J. C. Wright tried a 500-km triangle with turn points at Orla and Girvin, Texas. None of us made it, but Lanier Frantz came close. He got back to Alpine, only 18 miles short. Time and the mountain ridge stopped him.

Also this day, Al Parker saddled up his beautiful Sisu 1A and took off for Pueblo, Colorado. He really burned up the track along the mountain range, but was hemmed in by an over-development of Cu's near Springer, New Mexico, and had to land. However, 432 miles is a pretty fair jaunt for a practice trip in a ship in which he had little previous flying.

Now a few amusing highlights of the Camp:

1. Ben Greene was informed by the airport attendant at Boise City, Oklahoma, that if he was going to make it a habit of flying to his field *that often* that he would give him a key to the storage hangar, *which he did!*

2. Lanier Frantz on his Diamond distance flight from Odessa, Texas, to Clayton, New Mexico, via Hobbs, N.M., was heard to moan piteously over the radio that he was over Hobbs and had no lift and was in terrible shape, just one "Great Big Blue Hole," not a Cu in sight. *However*, when we saw his photos of the Hobbs turn point, there were multitudes of huge cloud shadows plainly visible in all directions. Now he is well-known as "Blue Hole" Frantz.

3. Al Parker's flight to Springer, New Mexico, had some unexpected complications, true enough, but I doubt that any knowledgeable sailplane pilot would be dismayed by the problem that the Amarillo paper credited him with confronting. They stated and I quote, "Mr. Parker was making excellent progress until he reached Springer and *then he ran out of wind.*"

4. One of the West Texas papers quoted the soaring pilots as choos-

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