

# SOARING STORY OF THE YEAR

## U.S. FIRST TO BREAK 1000 KILOMETERS

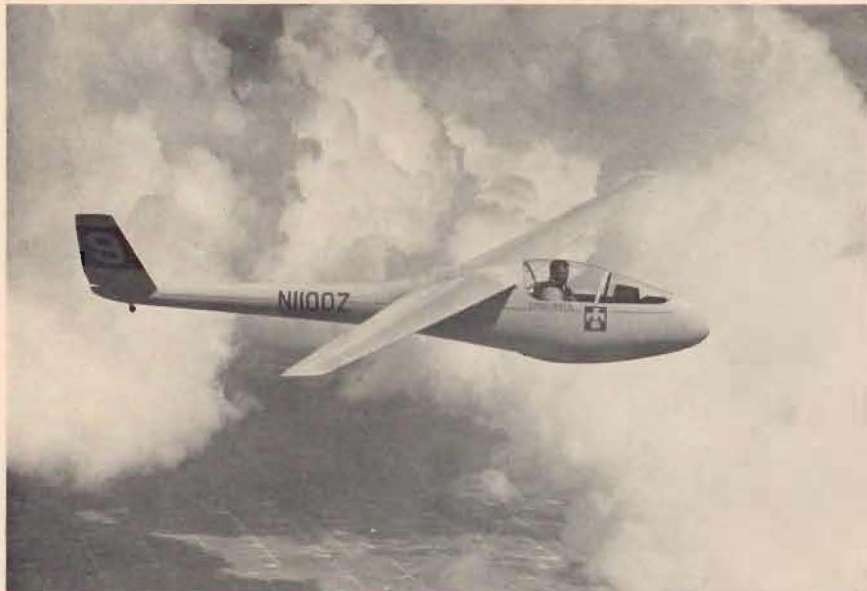


Photo by S. A. Aldott (All rights reserved)

A winning combination, Al Parker of Odessa, Tex. and his Sisu 1A sailplane in which, on July 31st, he was the first man to attain and surpass the magic 1,000 kilometer mark.

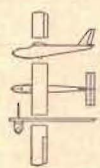
Soaring history was made on July 31, 1964, when Alvin H. Parker, soared his Sisu 1A sailplane from Odessa, Texas to Kimball, Nebraska, a distance of 644 miles (1036 kilometers). A new world soaring distance record is being claimed for the flight which exceeded the current record of 544.311 mi. by an even 100 miles. The current record is held by three Germans, Karl Betzler, Rudolph Lindner and Otto Schauble, who made simultaneous, identical flights on June 2, 1963, from Dettingen Teck, Germany, to St. Nazaire, France. Documentation for Parker's flight must be approved by the Soaring Society of America, the National Aeronautic Association in Washington, D.C., and the Federation Aeronautique Internationale in Paris, France, before the new record can be termed official.

Parker's flight began at 9:45 A.M. CST and terminated at 8:19 CST. He was airborne over 10½ hours. Dividing this time into distance gives an average speed of 61 mph. He started the flight with an airplane tow to about 2,000 feet above the ground, then gained altitude by circling in upcurrents under cum-

ulus clouds, gliding straight downwind between clouds at speeds of over 100 mph. He was helped by a steady tailwind of about 25 mph, from the southeast at first, shifting to the southwest later in the day. Climbases rose to over 13,000 feet above sea level in the afternoon. Most of the terrain he traversed is at an elevation of from 3,000 to 5,000 feet. Al reported that he tried the lift inside only one cloud, to 14,300 feet, but lost more than he gained in so doing. He termed the lift, in general, as only fair and characterized the flight as hard work, giving most of the credit to the sailplane. There was only one stretch of about 20 miles where he could fly straight in lift, under the edge of a thunderstorm near Fort Morgan, Colo., where he climbed from 6,900 feet to 13,000 feet. He encountered a front of thunderstorms just north of Fort Morgan but was able to penetrate under it after climbing to 12,000 feet, and then glide on to the airport at Kimball, Nebraska, which is in the southwest corner of the Nebraska "panhandle" just north of Colorado. Al had declared a 630-mile goal to Julesburg, in the very northeast

corner of Colorado, but the access to it was barred by thunderstorms. He was trying to recapture the world goal record (as well as set a new distance record) which was taken from him just eight days earlier by a fellow Odessan, Wallace A. Scott, who had set a 505-mile goal mark, subject to official confirmation. Al had set the current world goal record of 487.24 miles on August 27, 1963, with a flight from Odessa, Texas, to Great Bend, Kansas, in his Sisu 1A sailplane.

Parker's flight will also be the U.S. national soaring distance record, when approved. It will replace the mark of 535.169 miles set in 1951 by Richard H. Johnson from Odessa, Texas, to Salina, Kansas, in the RJ-5 sailplane. Johnson's flight stood for almost 12 years as the world distance record, until beaten by the three Germans a year ago. Parker is the first person to have exceeded 600 miles in one flight and the eighth to have exceeded 500 miles, the others being Johnson, Victor Ilchenko (the Russian holder of the 515.626-mile world multiplace distance record), the three Germans, Paul Bikle (who flew 557 miles last year but without a barograph so no record could be claimed) and Wally Scott. More significantly, Parker is the first to have exceeded the round figure of 1000 kilometers (622 mi), a magic number aspired to by many soaring pilots. He thus becomes the honorary lifetime president of the "622 Club," an honorary club endowed by the Sagebrush Soaring Society of Odessa, Texas, for those who achieve this remarkable feat. A glance at a map of the U.S. shows that Al's flight spanned more than half the distance between the Mexican border at El Paso, Texas, and the Canadian border.



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