



The Cloud

Photo by Alex Aldott

by Keith Chamberlin

The following is an account of one of the most extraordinary flights ever made in a glider. It took place on the 9th of January, 1949, at Benalla, Australia. The aircraft used was a Grunau Baby that had been manufactured twelve years earlier by Segelflugzeugbau E. Schneider, in Germany. It hardly need be added that the pilot, Keith Chamberlin, was fortunate to escape from The Cloud with his life, nor that Soaring readers are not to treat this as an exploit to be duplicated. For those concerned with the hazards of flight this may be considered as an installment in the series, I Learned About Soaring from That!

On Sunday morning, the last day of the Gliding Club of Victoria's Second Benalla Gliding Meeting, the weather was warm and getting warmer. As time went on it became clear from meteorological reports and visual observations that this was to be one of the best days of the camp.

Small cumulus clouds were starting to form in the southeast by 9:30 in the morning, and by 11:15 were forming all over the field, and not around it, as it is usually the case. There was very little wind, so Mr. Uwe Radok asked me if I would take an aero tow and see what conditions were like. He was of the opinion that at least six thousand feet could be reached and the lift would be unlimited—an observation which later proved to be correct.

The Grey Grunau was taken out and the Tiger Moth (owned by the Royal Victorian Aero Club) warmed up. I put on a pair of overalls, and as the temperature was then in the vicinity of 80 to 90 degrees, I was feeling very hot and bothered and anxious to get away. Mr. Radok brought out the meterograph, checked it, and strapped it to the strut. The meterograph records pressure, temperature and humidity on a chart. This particular instrument also incorporated an accelerometer. He discussed what I would do; if the conditions were good enough, I would try to stay up for five hours and get a leg of the Silver 'C' Competency Certificate.

The towline was hooked on the Moth and the Grunau and the tow started. After circling the field