

swollen and covered with lumps. The left eye was nearly closed. Fifty yards from the glider I came to a road, a lucky coincidence from a retrieving point of view. I peered around and saw a farmhouse about a quarter of a mile away on the opposite side of the road, so I went towards it. It was then that the reaction to all the tossing and turning set in. I was sick! Dry retching! For some time I was unable to move. Eventually I got moving again. I saw another farmhouse on the same side of the road as the *Grunau* and much closer, so I turned back. As I did so I saw a car coming from the farmhouse. I went over to the car. One of the two men in it told me he had seen the landing, had already communicated with the drome, and that the boys were on the way out to retrieve the machine. He then suggested that, on account of my swollen face and appearance, he would not wait for the others, but would take me to the Benalla Bush Nursing Hospital which was quite close to the drome. On the way in we passed Reg McConnell and Uwe Radok on the farmer's motorcycle. Then we met the Duckworth Dodge and trailer which we stopped. After seeing that I was still able to walk they went on, leaving Dave Darbyshire to go back to the hospital with me. At the hospital I was given something to settle my stomach.

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Presently I walked back to the drome where I was received with much amazement, especially when I said I had reached 13,000 feet. I was soaked through, so it was suggested that I have a hot shower. When I undressed I found that even though I had been wearing a pair of overalls, I had bruises and lumps from the hail on my left arm and shoulder. I was sick again, after which I returned to the hangar where it was suggested that I lie down.

Uwe Radok, assistant to Dr. Fritz Loewe of the Meteorological Section of the University, had returned

### Historical Notes

Then the retrieving started. This is done almost entirely by aerotow, usually with Polish-built Russian Po-2 biplanes, which made a most distinctive noise reminiscent of a motor-boat plodding across a harbour. It is quite unbelievable what patches of ground (I won't say fields) their very competent pilots whisk the gliders from. The system is that the glider pilot acts as controller for the operation. He must check that his field is at least 250 meters long, with an obstruction-clear slope thereafter at the take-off end of not less than 1:30. If the field is not big enough, but there is a better one not far away, he must move the glider. This may well involve the foreigner in some complicated sign language and pidgin-anything-he-can-think-up in order to arrange for a horse to pull the glider, only to find that the farmer wishes to know the weight of the aircraft in kilograms in order to calculate the number of horses necessary! Having found himself a suitable field, the pilot places the glider crosswind in such a position that the tug shall touch down ten meters ahead of the nose (even if this means putting the glider into the next strip or across a ditch), and parallel to the wings. In due course a Po-2 waffles into the field, the glider is hooked on, and the combination clambers out and bumbles off home.

—Ann Welch, FLIGHT

by this time. He came into the hut with the meterograph record and sat down on the floor beside my bed. As he sat there he just looked at the record and exclaimed, "I don't know, I don't believe it. The clock must have stopped." This state of perplexity was induced by a small portion of the record. The descent from 12,000 feet to 4,000 feet was shown as a straight line, not as a curve. Finally he convinced himself that the clock had not stopped and that it was a true recording. Out came the slide rule. After much sliding of the scales he gave us the amazing information that the rate of descent indicated was 350 feet per second, or 240 miles per hour. It must be remembered that this is not the true rate of the downdraft, as it includes an airspeed of at least 60 to 65 mph. This latter figure is open to doubt as the airspeed gave trouble earlier and it could have been frozen.

A week later the meterograph had been checked by the Meteorological Bureau, Melbourne, and the figures quoted at the beginning of the account verified. The maximum height quoted in newspaper reports was 15,600 feet above the drome. This was verified as 14,800 feet. The altimeter in the *Grunau*, which showed a maximum of 13,000 feet, was not tested. The rate of descent in the downdraft reached 350 feet per second. An unknown fraction of this would represent the downward speed of the machine. It is hoped to determine this speed by reproducing a similar flying position in still air in the near future. However, even a conservation estimate would place the downward velocity of the air behind the thunderstorm at a minimum of 130 feet per second, or equal to the greatest vertical velocities ever recorded in the atmosphere.

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