

## THE SECOND DAY

The task on June 29th was announced as Distance on a Fixed Course: Stead to Winnemucca and return, then distance on a line through Alturas, California. A glance at the air chart showed the course line to Winnemucca would pass over an 8,379-foot range northeast of the base, then continue across seven-thousand-foot mountains bounded by dry lakes. Infrequent reservoirs dotted dry, sparsely-vegetated high-desert terrain.

The take-off line opened at 1030 and closed at 1730. All pilots were launched in one hour and four minutes, readily filling up two thermals within sight of the field. Winds aloft were predicted to vary from 15 knots at 7,000 feet to 35 knots at 25,000 feet. The temperature would range from an invigorating 15 degrees at 7,000 feet to two degrees at 15,000 feet.

Thermals were predicted early in the day and although weaker than the first day, would produce lift to 14,000 feet. Cu's were expected to mark the return course to the west later in the day.

Those left at the field diverted their attention to hangar flying, keeping cool and holding onto belongings that had any flying qualities whatever. A mischievous dust devil swirled through the campsites, now emptied of pilots and crews, launching a card table and two aluminum chairs to tent height, along with an odd assortment of utensils and clothing.

The turnpoint at Stead was located on a lawn between a hangar and the Environmental Science Services Administration building (known as the Weather Bureau in the olden days). The panel was re-located every 15 minutes by Lynn Orgill, Mel Neeley and John Flynn, who also re-arranged the sprinkler in the interests of satisfactory weather modification.

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## SHOWDOWN OVER GOOSE LAKE

On the second day Dick Schreder thought about the fortune cookie paper in his billfold and smiled ironically. Two hundred feet below he watched his shadow speed back and forth across the rocks for what seemed the hundredth time.

*He was trapped.*

Forty-five minutes had passed since he had glided in desperation to the low pile of rocks, a mound just big enough to permit him to figure eight into the wind that blew across the cold water of Pyramid Lake. Was that wind washing away the thermals? He scowled at his variometer. It registered a steady five meters down as it had since take-off. Maybe he should have landed then, but with the old Pioneer rate-of-climb indicator he had stuck in the duffle bag as a back-up he figured he could keep going. With a distance task for the day he knew every minute he could remain in the air was like money in the bank. And now this.

As he swung out over the dry wash the HP-14 rocked abruptly and the smooth hiss of the air by the canopy broke into quick, irregular palpitations. Schreder felt his body sag as the ship rose with unaccustomed force. Instead of coming out of his bank, he held the turn and completed a 360-degree circle. The rocks had dropped away a little. He had something! Another turn and another and he knew he was back in the contest . . .

While Schreder was stalemated other contestants had been flying across the desert on a northeasterly course that would take them 137 miles to Winnemucca, a desert oasis and crossroads since the days of the Oregon Trail. Here the task required them to identify the turn panels and retrace their course to Stead. But that was not all. Those who made it back to the field then had to set out for distance on a course that ran north through Alturas, California. Any who passed that point would have flown more than 400 miles.

Back on the first leg, 60 miles out from Stead, the convergence zone from the previous day was still holding. It provided down-wind cloud streets, a shear-line, and enhanced thermals so that all but two of the 63 pilots competing on the second day were able to make the turnpoint.

On the return, as the minutes began to stretch into hours, happy optimism was replaced with the realization that headwinds were building. The afternoon flow that Bikle had tried to circumvent the previous day now harassed them with a vengeance. At Lovelock, half-way back, the clouds ended and pilot after pilot had to resign himself to landing in the high winds.

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These landings were not without incident. The retractable gear of McClanahan's Libelle was damaged badly enough to remove him from the contest for one day, but he found a silver lining in the fact that the wings of the all-glass ship absorbed enough punishment to wreck a metal structure—and with nary a scratch! John Miller was not so fortunate. After a seemingly perfect landing on a strip of uncompleted highway, he was blown into a deep ditch alongside, totaling his Skylark but without injury to himself. And later in the day, on the third leg, Wylie Mullen damaged his Sisu enough to withdraw.

Graham Thompson avoided landing, but near Schreder's rock-pile he too had trouble.

*"I thought I was going down at Pyramid Lake. There's a small Indian settlement at the south end and twice I prepared for a landing. The second time I spotted a dust devil—these were quite rare in that area—and climbed out of the valley. Toward the top I was surprised when the lift suddenly became glassy smooth. I had a wave!"*

At this point he was about 25 miles downwind from Stead. Was this a secondary from the mountains west of the airport? No matter, it was lift; not strong, but lift.

*"As I moved toward the airport I noticed a strange thing. In the steady 200-ft/min lift I would run into what seemed like mounds of 500-ft/min stuff. I had noticed, too, that for some reason the velocities up there seemed to be much less than those nearer the ground, so I was able to circle the mounds in the wave just as if I were thermaling, yet penetrate toward the turnpoint."*

No clouds gave visible evidence of the wave's presence, and spectators on the ground observing the first returnees were amazed when they suddenly began climbing and penetrating with seeming ease into the heavy winds. Eventually 22 pilots made the turn—specks of white in the deep blue above. Some even had to come down from 20,000 feet, much to their