

TWO-LENNIE FLIGHT IN A 1-26

DAVID C. JOHNSON

ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN FOLLOWING THE WAVE FLIGHTS FEATURE IN SOARING DURING THE LAST TWO MONTHS CANNOT HAVE ESCAPED THE CONCLUSION THAT BIG THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN COLORADO. THE ACCOUNTS OF A NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS ARE SET FORTH HERE, EACH SHOWING A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT ASPECT OF WHAT HAS TURNED OUT TO BE ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING WAVE SEASONS WITHIN MEMORY.

There was a lull in the wave soaring activities on the afternoon of November 17 at the Black Forest Gliderport during the first wave soaring camp of the 1965-66 season. So far the first four days of the wave camp had produced four Diamond gains and two Gold altitude gains.

I got the Schweizer 1-26 ready, then dressed in the usual warm clothing used in wave flying which included down-filled booties and wool-lined flight boots along with a couple of pairs of warm socks.

A 29-minute tow was made behind the Super Cub to an altitude of 14,300 feet over the west part of Colorado Springs where we found reasonable wave lift. Some altitude was gained in the wave after release to firmly establish the wave location, then a dive was made to 13,800 with spoilers out to establish a low point and notch the barograph trace. After setting the low point the climb in the smooth lift of the wave was quite slow with only 200 to 400 fpm showing on the rate of climb. A slow penetration was made toward Pikes Peak in which a little down was encountered but since I had around 16,000 feet at this time I continued on toward the west where the primary wave should be.

Just south of Manitou Springs I reached the primary wave and the rate of climb showed a steady 900 fpm up which was the best rate of climb during the entire flight. This location was around six miles due east of Pikes Peak and directly in the lee of it. The normal location of the primary wave is about four miles in the lee of Pikes Peak.

At around 21,000 feet it looked like I would be able to continue climbing up past the 24,000 feet level where the Continental Control Area starts, so I called the Denver Center on the BEI and asked for clearance above 24,000 feet. I received permission to use the area and the climb continued but the rate of climb gradually diminished and was now showing around 500 fpm.

Due to the high wind velocities at these higher altitudes it took some effort to hold my position over the ground and I found that I had to indicate 55 to 60 mph to keep from being blown out of the wave. A westerly heading was being maintained all the time to hold position. Above 34,000 feet the wind velocity eased up a bit and I was able to hold position with around 55 mph indicated. The rate of climb during the last part of climb was quite slow with only about 50 or 100 fpm showing on the instrument.

When near the top altitude I made a penetration at around 70 mph to almost over Pikes Peak but found no better lift so I slowed the 1-26 up and drifted back to my original position just southwest of Manitou Springs.

The top altitude which I saw on my altimeter was 35,400 and the lift at this point was very weak but I tried to get all I could out of it. The thermometer in the cockpit which registers outside air temperature showed a minus 55 degrees. However I was warmly dressed and was reasonably comfortable but a bit cold. I had to keep the ventilator open a bit to prevent frost from forming inside the canopy.



Dave Johnson (left), co-proprietor of the Black Forest Gliderport at Colorado Springs, takes a somewhat disbelieving look at the consequences of thirteen Diamond altitude gains in a single day.

The sun was getting low and the shadows were coming over the Black Forest Gliderport some miles away so I left the wave and headed for home. It took some time to lose all that altitude but I could show about 1800 to 2000 fpm down by spiraling with full spoilers and indicating around 80 mph. It was a pretty frosty Schweizer 1-26 when I got back on the ground and I was pretty well chilled myself after almost three hours of flight.

After landing I checked the winds aloft at Denver and the maximum wind during the time I was up was an even 100 knots at 32,800 feet from 270 degrees. At 36,000 the velocity eased off a bit to 75 knots. These velocities pretty well corresponded to the speeds that I had to fly to maintain position when the altitude correction is applied to the indicated airspeed. My airspeed indicator required a 75 percent correction for true airspeed at the top altitude of this flight.