



Lloyd Licher's Gold badge distance flight of July 9, 1961. The flight began at El Mirage and ended at a road junction near Yucca, Arizona.

within 3280 feet of the junction. Plenty of lift was still about. In fact, with full spoilers at 55 mph, I was going up at 200 fpm for a spell.

The town buildings were all set well back of the road with the utility poles behind them except in two places where poles near the road obviously carried wires across. These I carefully avoided and set up a pattern to land at the edge of town toward the cross wires. Caution abandoned, I charged into an adequate parking lot adjacent to the highway. Shortly before I got there I felt something hit the ship. I bounced slightly three times and ended the landing roll with an ignominious 180-degree ground loop to the right. Fearful that the ground loop had wrenched the aft fuselage, I climbed out to see that it was okay. I found the vertical tail was a shambles.

I had hit unseen power lines across the road between poles set far back. They had not broken but evidently shorted out a circuit breaker somewhere because the whole town was without power. What a grand, but inglorious entrance! By coincidence I had landed in front of the only house in town with a private phone but it was dead because of the power failure. The one pay phone in town was knocked out too, but it went on battery operation and was usable—barely. The power company was notified and service was resumed an hour later. Pete arrived less than a half hour after the 6:05 landing so we were loaded and headed home by 8:00 PM. It was 118 degrees there that day and most of the way along Highway 66. Pete really deserved special recognition for such a hot retrieve.

The power line first contacted the ship about a foot in front of the canopy, wiped off the yaw string post there, swept up over the canopy, scratching it a bit, clipped off an unused antenna mount on the aft hatch and next hit the fin. The fin was knocked back to a 45-degree swept angle. The front attach bolt failed in tension, allowing the spar to bend back. Not repairable. The bottom of the rudder crumpled on the stabilizer. Repairable. Their combined deflection to one side evidently caused the ground loop. There were a few minute burn marks on the top of the right wing where the power lines had swept over the metal surface. It's a good thing I wasn't one foot higher or the story might have had a different ending.

I think the lessons to be learned are obvious and hope others will profit from this description. I bought a current aeronautical chart later and the Yucca airport is marked thereon as abandoned. If I had told more people where I was going one of them might have known about the airport and told me. Or, if I had done my homework, I would have realized that Dr. Selvidge mentioned it in his 1958 *Soaring* article on soaring in the desert. I should not have thrown wire caution to the winds after seeing them cross the road in other places but used the technique I always had in mind for such a situation, fly along above the poles until between two, then dip down before reaching the next ones, low enough to avoid any possible cross wires.

We arrived home from the retrieve at 3:30 AM with 685 miles on the car that day, for which the gas cost \$15.33. The tow cost \$3.00 and a new fin kit was \$38.50 plus air freight. Repairs were completed in time for participation in my only Nationals, a cherished experience. The 199.5 miles for the flight set a mark which was not beaten in the Schweizer Best Flight Contest for the West Coast states so I won a barograph for my effort, as well as the goal Diamond and Gold distance. I'm sure that Diamond distance was possible that day, even in a 1-26, if oxygen were used to permit a higher working range and better speed flying techniques were used. At any rate, I had made my Big Flight with relative ease and could henceforth hold up my end of future hanger-flying sessions as one with a significant experience to relate.



The world's first swept-tail 1-26, the result of some last-minute in-flight modifications made while landing near Yucca.