



"Wheels-up" McClanahan sets out on one of his first flights in his new Hutter Libelle.

Photo by Robert Lee Moore

THE HUTTER LIBELLE—TWO IMPRESSIONS

Writing articles about sailplane performances after only a few flights is a bit presumptuous in my opinion, but the lack of any soaring accounts of the Hutter 301 sailplane I hope will justify my boldness. For the benefit of those fellow glider pilots who are anxiously awaiting delivery of their Libelles I thought perhaps a brief description of my first soaring flight in Werke Nr. 13 might make the waiting seem worthwhile, if not any shorter.

The morning the flight was made Molly and I were awakened by the persistent scratching on the window screen of the little Norway Spruce we planted too close to the house. Pendleton radio informed us that a cold front had passed through the area at 0500 bringing strong southwesterly winds. Of course there was still much to be done on the sailplane and trailer for spring but the temptation to soar took priority.

Take-off was at 1230 behind the Richland Flying Services' Cessna 182. The surface wind was registering 30 mph with occasional gusts to 50 mph. It was comforting to have the aid of Norm Fuller and Roy Lundgren to hold the eager steed in check. The tow rope was barely taut and the ship was airborne.

Release was made at 2500 feet ASL over Badger Mountain, a small hill about five miles upwind of the airport rising 700 feet above its base to a lofty 1600 feet ASL. While its length is only 500 yards it does provide lift on days like the one in question. After two hours of rock polishing I was beginning to feel at home in the cockpit and could trim the ship leaving both hands free to eat a late lunch. The control forces were very light and the sailplane was responsive to their slightest movement. I thought the easiest way to fly was to change the flap setting for increasing or decreasing the speed. Applying a more negative

flap setting was like slipping into overdrive enabling the ship to penetrate upwind almost effortlessly. And so it was that I found myself two miles southwest of Badger in very weak lift at 3000 feet ASL. I turned west at this point, following the canyon between Badger and the Horse Heaven Hills, climbing slowly. As I neared Kiona between 4000 and 5000 feet ASL the Libelle began to shudder in slightly turbulent air. A very dry wisp of what might have been a miniature rotor cloud appeared, then quickly evaporated. Adjusting my position with respect to the location of the cloud paid dividends of 500 fpm. There was little doubt now that the Horse Heaven Hills which rise to 1700 feet ASL were helping to generate a respectable wave.

My thoughts turned to Rattlesnake Mountain which produces the strongest waves in this area due, I think, to its height (3600 feet asl), its favorable contour, size and orientation. Being somewhat conservative I waited till I had 12,000 feet of altitude before turning north-westward. Computing the glide ratio at 80 mph for the 15 mile trip to the site of the former radar station seemed slightly absurd when I arrived overhead at 13,500 feet. I found lift about six miles northeast of the mountain and made a climb to 17,000 above a deck of flat lenticular clouds. With no oxygen on board and winter's darkness approaching a rapid descent was necessary. Since the outside temperature had been as low as -34°C . I wasn't really in the mood for performance checks. I tried a few stalls in the glossy smooth air and found them to be tame with ample warning. If the stick was held back too long a wing would drop. In straight flight the stall began at 42 mph with a plus-four degree flap setting and 46 mph with flaps neutral. The ship could be held in a