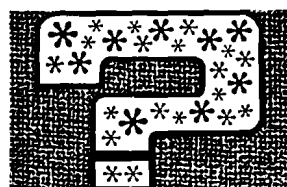


WHAT CAN POSSIBLY GO WRONG WITH A SIMPLE RETRIEVE



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Mid-morning on Saturday, 24th July, 1965, a keen young pilot jumped into his 463 and said:

"I'm off after my 300 K's, heading east. Have someone use my car to retrieve me. I've left the keys in it."

As a military man I could not but admire such concise, direct instructions. How different from the normal complicated rigmarole of arranging for a particular person to do the retrieve, and someone to accompany him; details of probable destinations; amount of petrol in the tank; checking if sufficient cash is available to purchase more; peculiarities of handling the car; details of communication procedure; action to be taken should contact not be made; checking trailer lights; and other such unimportant trivia.

With a cheery "all out" our pilot set sail.

Two hundred and thirty kilometres, seven hours, and a few holes in the ailerons later, he ground to a halt beside a main road, and from an adjacent telephone box, having borrowed some money (in his haste he had forgotten to bring any), he called the club.



Now, as it so happened, there was no one in the clubroom. However, all was not lost. Luckily there was an exchange on the airfield, and the operator took the message which gave the position of the glider. Others might have left a telephone number and a time to ring back, but this was really an unnecessary refinement.

Meanwhile back at the airfield . . .

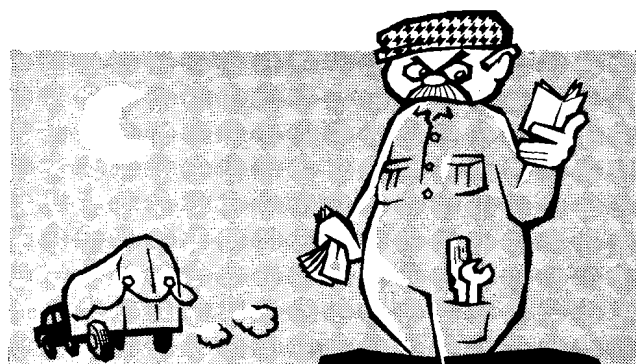
An hour or so later the duty pilot thought, "I wonder whatever happened to DB and the 63".

A quick call to the exchange and all was known.

Who was going to do the retrieve? After the initial rush of volunteers (it is amazing just how many experienced drivers are left on a gliding site late in the evening, waiting to do a retrieve which is clearly going to take all night and most of the next morning), a weary instructor was detailed together with a crew of the two youngest and least argumentative new members.

Into the gathering gloom they set off, remembering, luckily before they had gone too far, to return and attach the trailer.

It was just before midnight in the middle of nowhere, travelling at 40 m.p.h., that the car electrics failed in pouring rain, and all was darkness. However, a garage was contacted, and a breakdown crew of two and a vehicle despatched. Two hours later the combination, with a jury of 26 ft. of flex festooned around it, was ready to proceed on fog lights and trailer rear lights. At this stage, in the way that garages have, some small honorarium was requested for the service performed. The amount was a very reasonable £9 18s., but alas, our instructor had only £5 to his name. A lighthearted discussion ensued, after which the instructor was allowed to proceed less £5 and his driving license as a guarantee against full settlement later.



Meanwhile, back at the glider . . .

Our pilot, having sat in pouring rain for seven hours, realised in a flash that the retrieve crew was obviously not going to set out until the next day, and made tracks for a guest house. Realizing that he would be back at the glider long before the retrieve crew arrived, he did not bother to leave a note.