

picked up the old club chute—the one with straps like steel bands—and, with everybody laughing at me was launched amidst dire predictions that I wouldn't make 40 miles.

By now cumulus were forming and dissipating on Cedar Hill Range just south of the field. I hit the first bump at 1600 feet, released, and worked 200 f.p.m. lift to 4000 feet msl, but couldn't reach cloud base. I had declared Shawnee, Oklahoma, 190 miles to the north, as my goal, so struck out in that direction. My head ached from lack of coffee, food, cigars, and with disgust at the world in general.

Release had been at 11:25 a.m. By 12:34 I was skirting the Garza-Little Elm Reservoir and still unable to reach cloud base. I could find nothing under the cloud streets but down and was finally reduced to scratching around at below release altitude. At 1:38 I crossed the railroad east of Whitesboro, Texas, having averaged a ground speed of 36 m.p.h. Things weren't going so well.

At this point I smoked half of my only cigar, drank a swallow of water and ate half my peanut butter sandwich. Life looked a little better now, and with this improved outlook I made an astonishing discovery. The wind, which was from the *south* at ground level was blowing from the *north* at cloud base! Not more than an hour later I was able to figure out that this was the reason I was unable to get to cloud base. There was a horizontal shear I was unable to penetrate.

It was immediately south of Willis Crossing on Lake Texoma that I made the breakthrough. Upon reaching the shearline at 5000 feet I turned south; 15 seconds later I contacted the sheared-off thermal and went to 8500 feet! Inspired by my own brilliance, and with great gusto, I turned down a cloud street and shoved the nose down. I crossed the Arbuckle Mountains going like Chandler in the Libelle—and promptly found myself 1100 feet above the ground!

This low point was over the Winrock Ranch airstrip east of Sulphur, Oklahoma. From here, with a to-hell-with-it-all feeling, I turned east, ran out from under the malignant cloud streets into the sunlight, hit the best continuous thermal of the day, climbed at an average 600 f.p.m. to the shear, left three buzzards who apparently hadn't figured it out, turned back south, picked up the sheared-off thermal and went to cloud base at 9100 feet. Things were looking up! It was plain at this point that the front had not accelerated and that a large cu-nim cell was sitting in the vicinity of my goal to the north.

I now felt I needed additional stimulation for the decisions that had to be made, so I smoked the rest of my cigar butt, ate the rest of my peanut butter sandwich, turned my now-steely brown eyes on the glide computer and came to the conclusion that I should start my final glide at the Canadian River. And here the immutable laws of soaring took hold. No longer needing any lift I found myself running under the edge of a thunderstorm, brakes open, indicating 80 knots and going up at 1200 f.p.m. with the wings flapping like a farmer's wife chasing geese! I decided that, even though the K-6 could stand this beating, I couldn't, I turned due west and ran out of the worst of the turbulence.

I arrived at the Shawnee Airport, brakes out, indicating 70 knots. I slowed down to 60 knots, a speed

that gave me just enough penetration to manage a straight-ahead landing on the taxi strip. The tetrahedron was swinging in a 45-degree arc. It was 4:25 p.m.—just five hours from release time and 190 miles from home.



I stopped the K-6 at the edge of the grass next to the administration building. Here, I thought, my predicament would be obvious and I would get immediate help. But after sitting in the ship for ten minutes, with the stick full forward and the brakes on, it became apparent that, not only was the building deserted but it blocked the view between me and the active hangar. It would probably be the next day before anyone saw that I needed help.

When the gusts subsided a bit I crawled out of the ship (hoping that its number, OE, really didn't mean over easy), secured one wing with the tiedown screw and raced to the hangar for help. This I got immediately. Fred Reese, the airport operator, was more than accommodating. With his help we towed the K-6 into the hangar out of the rain.

During the long hours I waited for Dick O'Neal to bring the trailer, Fred and I sat in the hangar and talked. He is an old glider pilot. He had ten LK's on the field right after the war and, using Lewin Barringer's book as a manual, taught himself to fly gliders. His solution to the thermalling problem was unique: He installed a turn-and-bank indicator in one of the LK's. Using this instrument he would bracket the edge of a thermal as though he were flying a low-frequency range leg using standard-rate turns and a 15-degree angle of bank until he had the variometer reading the same all the way around! He expressed a good deal of astonishment when I told him that during the day I had been consistently banking the K-6 at 40 degrees or steeper.

The hospitality at Shawnee was certainly more than I felt I deserved. Fred left the keys to the office with me so that I could wait in comfort. The trailer arrived at 11:30 that night at which time the difficult part of the Gold-distance/Diamond-goal flight—the long trip home—began.

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