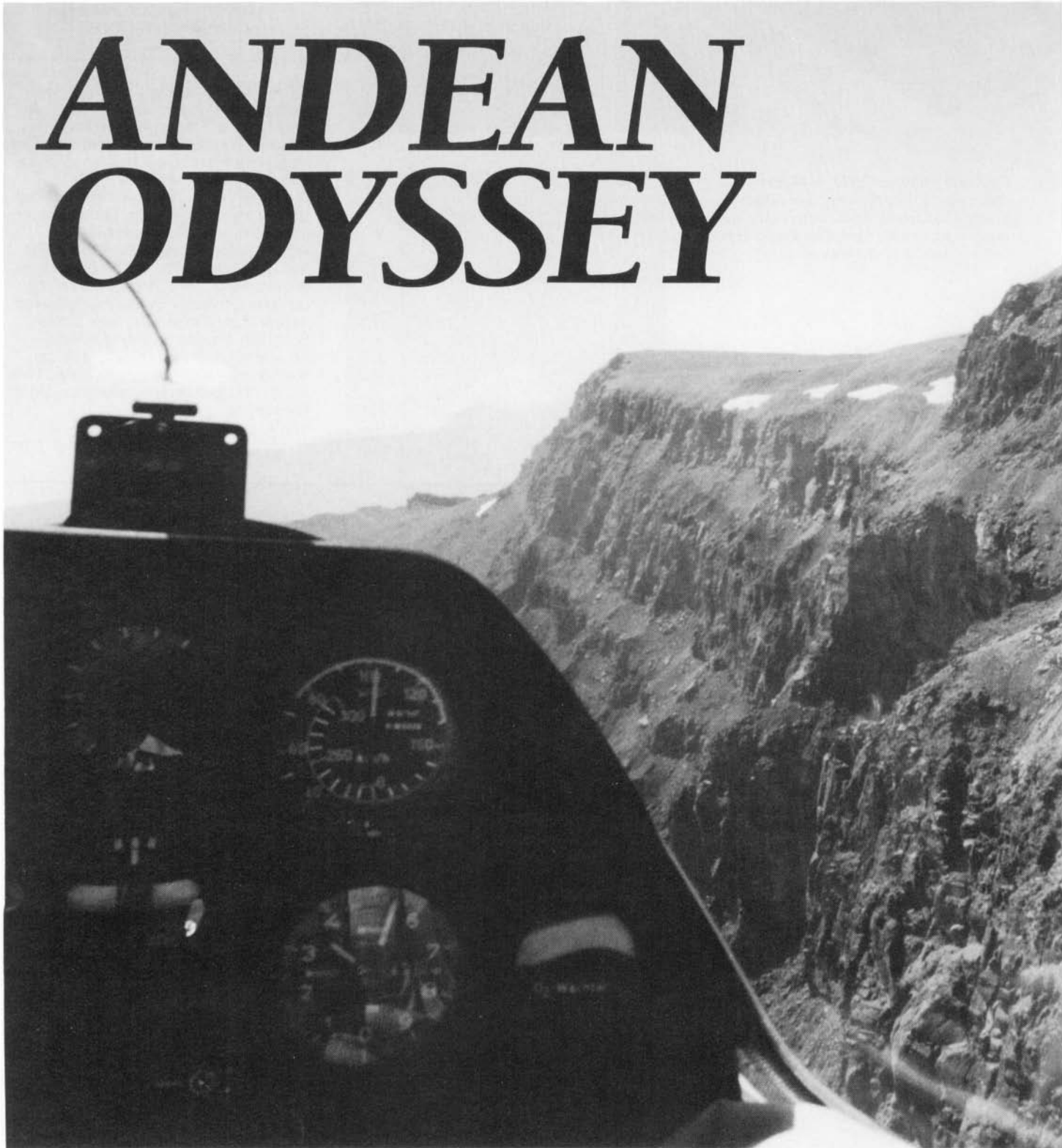


PART ONE:

*North and South American
Views Of a Soaring Rally
Along the Continent's
Mightiest Mountain Range*

ANDEAN ODYSSEY



(Ed. note: Contributions to this article were also made by Karl Striedieck, and Amalia Periera assisted Guido Haymann in the preparation of his manuscript.)

This is the view out your window if you are Wally Scott and Guido Haymann, and you're exploring the soaring possibilities of one of the earth's most majestic locales.



GUIDO: We at the Club de Planeadores de Santiago (the Glider Club of Santiago) have long been intrigued by the soaring possibilities along the Andes mountain range. Apart from the roughly 500-kilometer stretch of the Cordillera de los Andes familiar to us from our local flying, the cordillera's soaring potential has so far remained virtually unexplored.

Santiago is located at about the north/south center of Chile, and for a long time the northern Chilean Andes have looked very seductive to us because of their long, high ridges and the area's desert climate. When Reynaldo Urbina became president of the club last year, he decided we should begin to explore the northern Andes, and that we should invite some of the world's best glider pilots to fly with us.

WALLY: It was a long time ago and I was sitting on the edge of my seat, enthralled by what I was seeing on the screen. It was a Walt Disney color cartoon about flying, and it was to make a profound and lasting impression on the young teenager who watched. There was this family of cartoon airplanes, and the father was an old tri-motor type who flew the mail across the Andes. One day he came down sick and there was no one to take the mail through but his young son, a boisterous single-engine monoplane with large, cute eyes (windshield) and a tail (rudder) that continually wagged to show the world how eager he was to please his old dad. Despite parental apprehension the youngster shouldered the mailbag and took off in deteriorating weather, soon to be buffeted by storms as he approached the mountains. Blasts of icy wind sent him reeling end over end as he struggled to climb, gasping in the thin air. And then, through crashes of thunder and lighting, the dark clouds rolled apart and he was confronted with the fearsome and craggy visage of . . . ANCONCAGUA! Its awesome fissures and rocks looked like the true face of the earth's most vile and unforgiving bad guy. The little plane was terrified for an instant, and almost lost his mailbag, but he fought his way on.

Here my memory of the events gets a little hazy and I can't recall the exact outcome. It was a happy ending, I'm sure, but that story of persistence and faith, and the menace of that frowning mountain, have stuck with me over the intervening years. And finally, late last November, I was invited to come to Chile and fly. Looking at some National Geographic magazines and some maps of Chile, what was I to see near Santiago but the old granddad, labeled for all to see . . . Anconcagua! At 23,035 feet he would be a challenge to reckon with. My turn was coming, at last!

GUIDO: We finally decided the event would be a rally from Santiago to Arica, the northernmost city in Chile, 1700 kilometers north up the western flank of the Andes. Invited to join us on the five flying and two rest days northbound were Wally Scott, Dick Schreder, Karl Striedieck and Ed Byars of the U.S.; Deither Memmert from Germany, and Claude Calleja from France. Our sponsors were Lan Chile (the national airline), Shell Oil, Hotel Carrera, the Chilean Auto Club and the Consorcio Nieto Hermanos. The Chilean Air Force supported us generously with a towplane and mechanic, extensive ground support and a Twin Otter with crew to fly the glider pilots on a route reconnaissance.

We used all of our clubs fiberglass ships; a *Libelle*, two *Mini-Nimbuses* and three *Januses*. One of our pilots also flew club member Michael Kauffman's *Ventus* equipped with a sustainer engine, and American visitor Richard Rieser brought his Caproni two-seater powered by a jet engine. Our club members who flew in the event were Srdjan Radic, Alex Chanes, Carlos Perez, Guillermo Del Pedregal, Bernard Schneider and myself.

WALLY: On the trip down via Lan Chile on Jan. 5 we were treated royally and never wanted for anything. Lan Chile is in all respects a true major airline. After takeoff following an en route stop at Caracas, Venezuela, as the sunrise began to appear, I sent a copy of the January '85 issue of *Soaring* up to the cockpit with an attendant. I asked that she show the captain the article on Chilean pilots crossing the Andes and tell him that three American pilots were on board, on the way down to soar along the mountain chain. About an hour later Karl, Dick and I were invited up to the flight deck, where we spent an hour. Some time after we returned to the cabin the captain sent back an invitation for me to take some cockpit photos if I wished, and I occupied a jump seat for the remainder of the flight and our instrument letdown and landing at Santiago. It was a memorable experience, for some of the mountains were protruding up through the undercast. Not to worry, I soon realized, for if I am any judge of professionalism, and I think I am, I was watching it.

GUIDO: We had ready for our visitors our eight gliders and three towplanes: our club's 180-hp PA-18 and an Aero Boero (made in Argentina) flown by Werner Gaedecke and Eduardo Frugone respectively, and an L-19 furnished by the Air Force and flown by retired commander Michel Lambie. In addition Michael Kauffman flew his Cessna 421, Juan Lyon his 180 and Ursula Meier her 172 as crew transport and standby emergency ships. On the ground we had five trailers and 10 vehicles, including six off-road vehicles. Our club's ground crew included Reynaldo Urbina, who coordinated the event, and his family; Smiljan Radic and family; Andres Stehberg, Renato Hopfenblatt, Carlos and Pablo Amand, Julia Chanes and family, Hector Gallegos, Gerardo Kalbehn, Barbara Leisinger, Mario Reyes, Victor Sifri and Horacio Schmidt. Boots Scott, of course, crewed for Wally, while Charlie Spratt and Sue Bury crewed for the Caproni. We took along two meteorologists and a photographer; a total of 60 people were preparing to make the journey.

WALLY: After a fond farewell to captain and crew of the DC-10, we were escorted through customs with absolutely no delay and went to the Lan Chile VIP room for television interviews before taking a charter bus to Santiago's premiere hotel, the Carrera, for five nights of free accommodation and excellent service. After an hour's rest and a quick shower most of us went for a walk in downtown Santiago, where a large part of the four and one-half million residents seemed to be on the walking streets (no vehicles allowed). On the other streets were great numbers of busses, all belching huge quantities of smoke. We were told later the government is rushing laws to control emissions, which are polluting the nearby countryside.

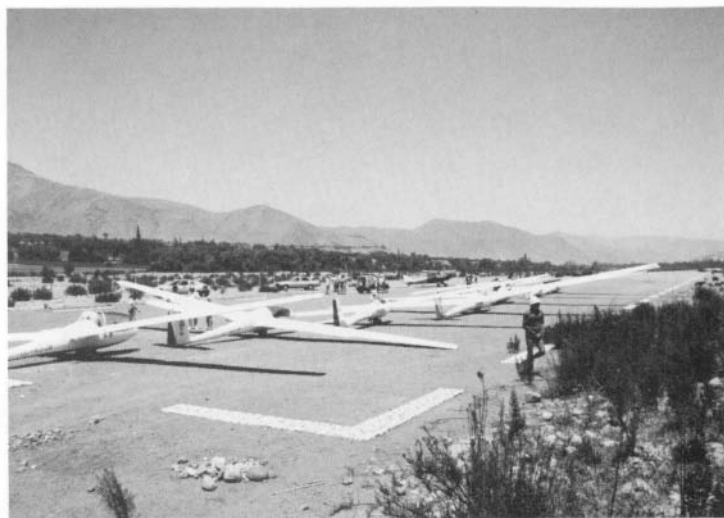
The next day, Jan. 7, we went to the Club de Planeadores de Santiago, a beautiful gliderport that I certainly would like to have in West Texas. It has a flowing river bordering its southern edge, eucalyptus trees 125 feet tall bordering the northern edge, and a single paved east-west

runway. There is a beautiful clubhouse where meals are served in a homelike atmosphere, a playground, tennis courts and a swimming pool. There are offices, meeting rooms, instruction rooms, two large hangars holding 16 sailplanes, additional private and maintenance hangars, and grassy tiedown areas for another 20 or so ships. It is all beautifully maintained, for the past 20 years by the Cajas family and others. Boots, toward the end of our stay, bought a Chile Geografia book and had everyone sign it. One entry from Rosa and Erga Cajas reads: "The language is not a barrier to love and understand one another." Another entry reads: "With much love and a feeling of regret for Chile, after your visit" and signed by Familia Cajas (the Cajas family).

That afternoon I had my checkout flight with Bernard Schneider in a *Janus*, but after 40 minutes I began to feel the effects of a familiar travelers' ailment and we went in so Schroeder could take his check flight. That night I began to feel really bad and started taking medicines that we had brought. The problem was to plague me for some time.

GUIDO: Most of our flying would be over the Atacama Desert, the driest in the world. It has parts in which rain has never been recorded. The area is rugged and largely unlandable, and almost without roads except for the Pan American Highway which runs mostly along the coast. There are few landmarks, making navigation difficult. The distance from the Andes to the highway where most of the landable areas are located ranges from 50 to 200 kilometers, so that gliding out against the strong prevailing westerly wind presents a problem.

Since insurance is prohibitively expensive in Chile, we secured coverage only on the gliders flown by foreign



Above: the lineup of ships is prepared for the day's flying. Opposite: when you're flying over terrain like this, it's comforting to have some company along.

pilots. The gliders flown by club members were not insured, forcing them to fly very conservatively.

WALLY: On Jan. 8 we pilots met for a recon flight in the Chilean Air Force Twin Otter over the entire route to Arica. On the first of several legs we felt no thermal activity at all; the air was dead. My stomach was not, however, and I took another pill. On the third leg of the route, from the town of El Salvador to Calama, the high desert at about 7000 feet MSL was beginning, and as 2 p.m. approached the air began to take on the feel of thermal activity. The country below was completely unlandable—I mean *completely*. We landed at Calama about 3:30 p.m. and could see huge cloud buildups on the high desert about 50 miles north and east of the town, producing rain to go with the chilly temperatures caused by the altitude; all this is known as Bolivian Winter, even though January is summer here.

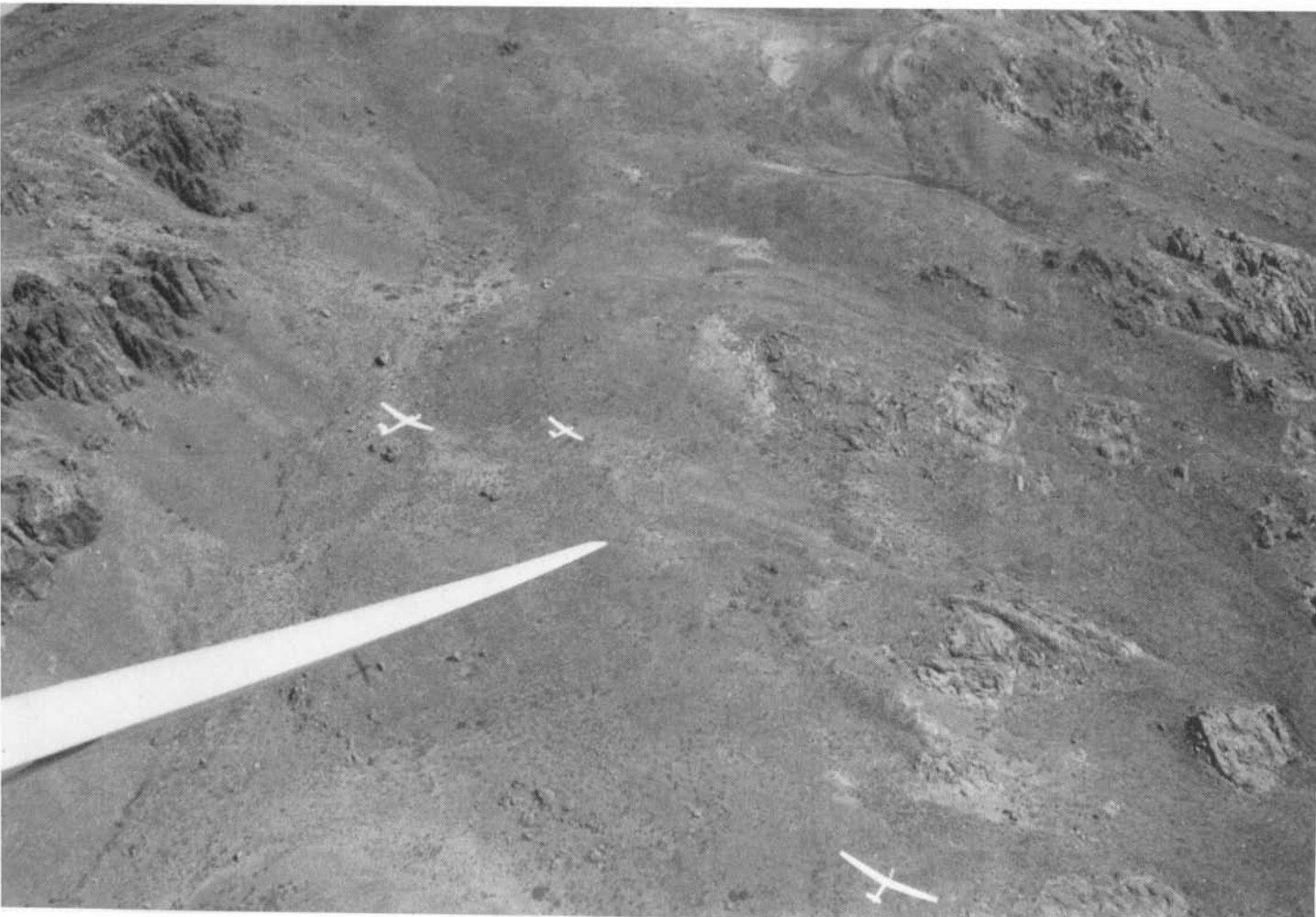
Because of fuel problems we didn't get to reconnoiter the legs from Calama to Iquique and on to Arica, which looked to me on the map as the best possibilities of all, what with the high mountains parallel to the course and only 30 or 40 miles from civilization and the Pan American Highway. It looked like interesting terrain to fly over, and even had some airports in the mountains. One of them, at Quebrada Blanca, had a runway elevation of 14,629 feet MSL, and several were above 12,000 feet. (One must remember that the world's highest international airport, at La Paz in Bolivia, is a mere 13,355 feet.) I wondered what kind of towplane would be necessary for a short runway and a heavy glider on takeoff at 14,629 feet MSL. We fueled at Antofagasta and then went on to La Serena, a good hotel, and another stomach-quieting pill.

On Jan. 9, another pill accompanied breakfast. I ask the reader to please understand that I wanted to get well quick, or at least hold everything together in limbo. Man, our exploration was to start in only two days, and I didn't want to get shot out of the saddle now! We had come too far and gone to too much trouble to miss even one day of flying. We left La Serena about noon and got back to Santiago about 2 p.m.; it looked like a good day for flying. I met Guido Haymann for the first time, and I think we liked each other immediately.

We decided to fly, as I had made only one short hop, so we flew about halfway to Vicuna before I was ready to call it a day. We flew to a point that was nearly the extent of any of Guido's previous flights, and he knew the country and mountains very well. I asked him to do some of the flying and found that his ridge flying techniques were to fly extremely close to the rocks, often at rather low airspeeds. It worked for him, but took me some hours to become comfortable with his style. Though I am sure he may have been able to see the hair standing on the back of my neck, I tried to appear nonchalant. When I took over the controls again I tried to please him by flying closer, but never touched any rocks as he was seemingly trying to do.

About 40 miles out from home, I again turned over the controls to Guido, wanting to watch his methods some more. When he took over the altimeter was on 3,000 meters. When we arrived back at the airport it was on 3,000. Exactly! He never once made a turn. Oh, we may have lost 300 or 400 meters, but the net loss for 40 miles was exactly zero.

In the days to come, I was to find out that he was a very smooth and precise pilot, and a pretty good navigator as well. But, if he was at the controls when hitting a ridge



thermal or rough orographic lift, he could stand the *Janus* on its wing tip and manhandle it very well. Sometimes rough thermals require rough techniques, and you have to let the glider as well as the elements know who is boss! Guido and I got along well. That night I took another pill, and the following day was spent getting a physical examination to make me legal to fly in Chile. Ed Byars, in the same boat (lacking a current physical) came along to the Air Force hospital for a really thorough and extensive exam, because tomorrow was the big day: the expedition was to get under way!

GUIDO: Jan. 11 at about 1 p.m. at our home airport, Aerodromo Municipal de Las Condes, Wally and I were first off after much ceremony and media picture taking. Final pilot distribution had put Radic in the *Ventus* with Peres and Chanes flying the *Mini-Nimbuses*. Del Pedregal flew the *Libelle* and the three *Januses* were co-piloted by Memmert and Calleja, Schreder and Schneider and Wally Scott and me. The Caproni was flown by Striedieck and Reisser.

The first day's leg was from Santiago to Vicuna, 380 kilometers by air. It was a good day, and only Schreder had to land about two thirds of the way, to be air-towed on.

It was a new and interesting experience for those of us who flew with foreign pilots. Wally and I had flown together only once before this flight, and it became immediately apparent that we were used to very different types of flying. We feel comfortable flying in the mountains, and very close to them. I never thought it was so unique, but apparently our ridge running, 10 to 20 meters away, is unusual in the U.S., and as I discovered, not a natural instinct to all pilots. Also, Wally told me that our thermals are not at all like those in West Texas. Ours are relatively narrow, and we pay close attention to the position of the sun and the terrain underneath.

As a consequence, both Wally and Schreder, and presumably Byars too, chose to fly further west and farther from the ridges and we eventually drifted into the precordillera, the hills and mountains which precede the Andes, where the lift got weaker and scarcer. While I would not have felt very comfortable in that area, Wally apparently did, and I enjoyed the opportunity of observing a master at getting the most out of ship and thermal.

Schreder and Byars probably got below the 2000-meter level, under which a stable air mass coming from the Pacific Ocean usually kills most of the lift. The rest of the pilots kept higher and closer to the Andes, and so flew faster than we did. Eventually we flew back into the mountains, and hooked onto a long ridge which carried us directly to Vicuna.

WALLY: With full survival gear for two, plus ten gallons of water in the wings that we would never dump and drinking water in the cockpit, we were off. Guido said it would be an excellent day, as there were clouds on the lower slopes. We actually did not have to work too hard, and Guido was very useful in the back seat. We had worked out an agreement that the person off the controls had a main job to keep track of navigation, as well as watching ahead for decision points. Guido kept on track, and was full of advice as to decisions . . . up to a point. Once we had passed the point of his furthest excursions from Santiago, the back seat became very quiet. Unknown vistas lay ahead for both of us.

The higher elevations were cloud covered, and our attained altitudes were about 3,000 to 3,500 meters. But a

feeling of anomaly began to set in for me: what worked over our western deserts and mountains was not working here. Except on rare occasions, if you headed for a good cumulus a few miles ahead, the lift would long be gone by the time you could get there. It soon became quite clear that the flight would have to be supported by pure orographic lift. At times some of the ridges were not producing either, being cancelled by other ridges upwind.

We did find one or two good thermals upwind from well configured terrain, and a cu would start forming overhead, but dissipating long before we could get to cloud base. Pure orographic lift. And, flying the ridges very closely, we often would turn in up-shafts of air that would net nothing but a scare. Cruising near the tops of some of the ridges, I would receive a heavy push under my ridge wing, only to turn into the sink of a very narrow band of lift, and wind up being able to escape only with a net loss of altitude.

Another anomaly: the lift would seldom take us beyond ridge height. Not at all like cruising down our western Rocky Mountains at 18,000 or 20,000 feet, following long cloud streets that would be productive for hours on end.

On this flight to Vicuna, there were two main decision points. One luckily worked out, and the other didn't. No loss was involved with the decision that didn't work out, except for time. It was when rather low and approaching a high north-south ridge. It was a beautiful ridge some 10 miles long with sloping sides of about 45 degrees of incline, and no fissures or gaps. But it led to the south, away from our destination. As it was coming up there was one narrow gap we could get through and cross to the



next ridge to the east, but with a loss of altitude. We were only about 2,500 meters.

I analyzed the situation out loud to Guido and expressed concern, not wanting to fly back south. Guido suggested we needed another 500 meters before crossing over. We came to the only gap, and just before crossing, I turned south in order to pick up the altitude needed. We flew the entire length of the beautiful slope and back again without getting one foot of altitude, and upon reaching the gap again, I crossed over. Guido nearly had a cat. We arrived at the eastern ridge at 2,000 meters, and it was very chopped up with ravines and protuberances. Rough, rough, rough! It seems that the Chileans have a theory of never ever going below 2,000 meters, as you descend into maritime air and the ridges are far harder to work. It does seem as though the mountains below this level are more prone to get wear and tear from the elements.

Well, anyway, here we were with 35 miles to go, no thermals to be expected, and only 4300 feet above our destination airport elevation, and a northerly (headwind) component to the wind. At least the sun was shining on our ridge and it was slightly more up-slope, about 55 to 60 degrees, than the one we left.

Here I turned the controls over to Guido for another example of his expertise. I admonished him not to lose any more altitude. "Where is the airport?" he asked. I told him to just stay with the ridge as it ran directly into the airport. We at last arrived, and at 4,300 feet. He had done it again. I offered my congratulations, and he proceeded to chew me out and tell me how lucky I was. "We just don't do those things!" he stated.



GUIDO: The second leg on Jan. 12 was a 425-kilometer flight from Vicuna to the mining town of El Salvador in the middle of the Atacama Desert. We launched at 1 p.m., too late as it turned out, for we flew slower than expected. In spite of the hour climbout was difficult, but Wally quickly put us ahead of the pack and we had reached an altitude of 4000 meters about 100 km north of Vicuna where the ridge we were following ended. We chose the wrong ridge to replace it, and lost more height following Schreder to the westernmost ridge where we fell into the inversion line and spent 45 minutes fighting a losing battle with the lower ridges. Eventually we landed out at the Vallenar airport, where we were quickly joined by the other two *Januses*. We were air-towed to El Salvador. Radic in the *Ventus* flew the same route for the first half of the leg, then turned east toward the higher ridges, climbed to 4500 meters, and made it to El Salvador late with just a little help from the sustainer engine. Striedieck had a hairier time, getting lost, running out of jet fuel for his engine, and only making the field at El Salvador with the very last drop of daylight with some help from Lambie on the radio and all the lights we could turn on.

WALLY: Off tow we worked a good thermal to 8000 MSL and started our rock polishing techniques. Schreder found a thermal that we did not work and sailed over our heads by a couple of thousand feet.

The Chileans had voiced disappointment that the Americans didn't do enough reporting by radio. So, once or twice Schreder called me to find out how we were doing. "Fine," I would tell him. When we finally caught up with him, after about an hour, once I asked how it was going for him. "OK," was his reply. I think this type of exchange was driving the Chilean pilots mad, as they were continually reporting positions and conditions to their fellow pilots. We never heard from Karl, and I'm sure he flew with his radio off most of the time. A few times I would like to have turned ours off, and would turn the volume down to an acceptable level, only to have Guido demand that I turn up the volume. I am very interested to hear what Guido has to say about all this.

GUIDO: One noteworthy aspect of the flight for us Chilean pilots was the almost nonexistent radio communication between the American pilots. While admittedly we often talk too much, we feel that it is easier to fly in new and unknown conditions if one takes into account the experiences that others are having. Well, we have different idiosyncrasies.

KARL: The leg from Vicuna to El Salvador featured a lot of rock polishing punctuated by the blasts from the Caproni's jet engine to extract ourselves from the impossible landing conditions below. So much jet fuel was consumed, in fact, we had to make an unscheduled pit stop short of El Salvador.

With full tanks (40 gallons) and a short 70 miles to our

OK, pretend you're the pilot, and it's decision time: where would you attempt to land down there? You're right; better come up with some other idea, and quick.

destination, we blasted along at less than max efficiency only to find ourselves totally lost and running out of fuel and light over a boulder-strewn, Martian-like landscape. After a few minutes of incomprehensible jabbering from the support L-19 and other aircraft we concluded we had overshot and did a 170 degree turn back. With the sun gone and no safe place to land, we hit the relight button and at 7000 AGL the engine flamed out.

At 2000 feet and still lost we spotted some salt flats that would at least provide a no-injury landing and just as we were about to set up a pattern the strobe light on the 421, which was parked at the airport acting as an aeronautical lighthouse, appeared and we continued to the strip, arriving with 500 feet.

The next day I took a Cessna hop back over part of the route to satisfy my curiosity about where I had botched the navigation. Of course it was immediately clear which two towns I had confused, but I found navigation to be a continuing problem on later flights despite increased vigilance.

WALLY: Jan. 13 was a day off for rest, and as the Chileans were concerned about flying out of El Salvador, a meeting was held to discuss it. I personally thought the only way to make a long flight was to stay with the Cordillera. Karl opted for the Pan American Highway route, Schreder agreed, and everyone else fell in line. Let me try to explain the Chileans' concern in my own words. Remember, they are of necessity primarily ridge pilots and rock polishers. The mountains along this part of the Cordillera Domeyko are not conducive to ridge flying, having slow and gradual elevation changes (15 miles to gain 6000 feet, or about 13.2



The Andes offer temptation galore to soaring pilots; it's a soaring area whose potential is just beginning to be tapped.

to 1—not very straight up). This, plus the 30 to 50 miles walking distance to civilization, warranted much concern. In the end some were towed to a dirt strip part way along the next leg to try it from there, but we opted to trailer the *Janus* to Calama, and Boots and I would fly there in the 421 on the 14th, where we would have a day of local flying before resuming the expedition to Iquique and on to Arica.

(CONTINUED NEXT MONTH)

VARIOMETERS, INSTRUMENTS, RADIOS, OXYGEN SYSTEMS, PARACHUTES, BAROGRAPHS

Winter & PIK*PACIFIC

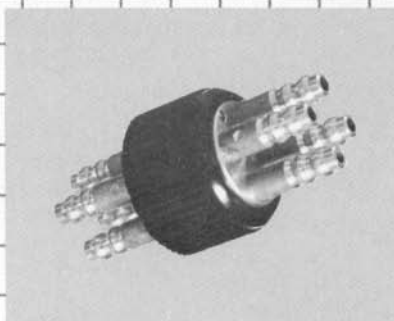
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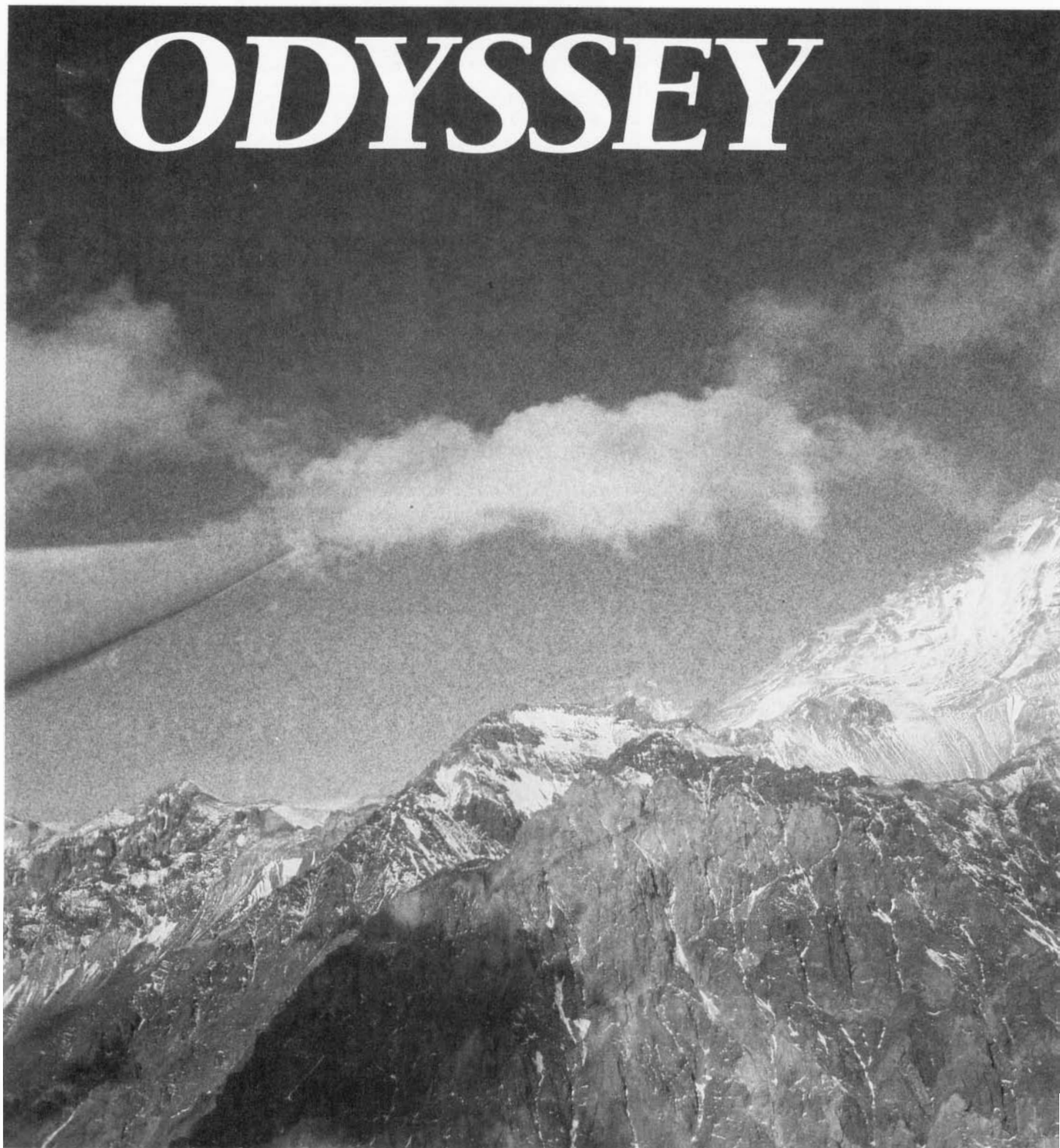
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PART TWO:

ANDEAN

*Soaring In The
Southern Hemisphere,
As Viewed From
North and South*

ODYSSEY



by WALLY SCOTT and GUIDO HAYMANN

Aconcagua, the crown of the Andes, can produce a lot of adrenalin when seen past the wingtip of your sailplane, as Wally Scott and Guido Haymann were to discover.



(Last month we followed the international soaring expedition northward along the western slopes of the Andes from the Chilean capital of Santiago to the mining town of El Salvador, from whence author Scott's Janus was trailered over the next leg to Calama while others were towed partway. There were landouts and relaunches; some of the Chilean pilots made it on the second try and Karl Striedieck in the jet Caproni got there using power. We take up the tale now on Jan. 15, 1986, during a day of local flying around Calama, in the words of the pilots themselves. Contributions to this article were also made by Karl Striedieck, and Amalia Periera assisted Guido Haymann in the preparation of his manuscript —ED.)

WALLY: It was a day of local exploration to test the neighborhood thermals, and we were back in windy country. Dick Schreder in his *Janus* went off first, followed by Diether Memmert in the second *Janus* and Guido and I in the third. Schreder reported some good lift. I cut loose at 2000 feet, made one or two turns and ran back to the airport for landing, but hit a small thermal and slowly climbed out. Heading into the wind we worked more small, weak thermals and finally got back over the airport. Schreder reported he was landing out, and later asked for the trailer to be sent as there was very slight damage; we notified ground.

We worked a few more thermals, and even got upwind of the airport. Then something happened that amused both of us very much. Guido became disgruntled: "Why do you always circle to the right?" I replied, "If my right wing kicks up, I turn to the right." "What do you mean?" he asked. I said I would explain later. "But why don't you turn left," he demanded. I said, "If you want to turn left, *you* fly it!" He took the controls, flew a few miles, and hit a thermal. He turned to the right! "Why in hell are you turning right?" I asked. "Damned if I know!" he replied. We both laughed our heads off. We landed after four hours and I was aware that the next day would be very challenging. Never have I been so concerned about a 150-mile flight.

KARL: It would appear that the absence of a barrier mountain range such as our Cascades, Sierras, etc., allows the prevailing westerly winds to carry the cold ocean air into the desert and eliminate convection. The fact that parts of the Atacama Desert have never recorded rainfall should have clued us to the fact that convective storms never occur and thermals are probably scarce as well.

GUIDO: From Calama our route on Jan. 16 was to the coastal city of Iquique, 272 km northwest of Calama. Most of us doubted we could make it all the way in the poorer lift of the coastal area, but hoped to reach the abandoned nitrate mining town of Humberstone which lies on the inland side of the low coastal hills. Wally and I in the *Janus* and Chanes in the *Mini-Nimbus* towed into the central plain to see whether it would work, but kept close to the Pan American Highway for good landing sites. We released about 55 km northwest of Calama and found relatively good thermals lift and little wind. While these flying conditions were alien to me, Wally felt at home as he moved us north, watching for dust devils, some of which reached 1000 meters into the air. We made good time for about 50 km but then conditions worsened; we started to get low and into the wind layer. Wally showed off his mastery of the skies when we could get no more than 1200 meters above the ground and had 35 km to go to the next landable site, an abandoned road section. Conditions did not improve, but we arrived with enough altitude to make a pattern and land.

WALLY: Things weren't looking good; Alex Chanes radioed that he would have to land on the road. About now Mike Lambie, the ex-military pilot, radioed from the L-19 that there seemed to be a landable piece of road about 14 miles ahead. With nowhere else to go we headed for it, very low and nursing every scrap of lift and patch of zero. We got there with a spare 100 feet or so, enough to make a fly-by and look it over. "Guido," I said, "we will have to make it over the electric lines, and there is a large pile of debris we will have to clear. There is another pile a little further on, but it is smaller and our wings will clear it. We will touch down there." It was barely possible.

Guido asked if I wanted the drag chute; I told him to put his hand on the release and be ready to deploy it fast, but only if I called for it. There were some large rocks scattered about, but there seemed to be an avenue between them. We cleared the wires and the large pile of debris and I told him the chute would not be needed. We touched down alongside the low pile, rolled a few yards, and I was able to let the wing down between the rocks on soft sand. "Beautiful!" said Guido. "Whew!" said I, not wanting to have to do that again to prove it.

We had about a four-hour wait on the desert until the towplane arrived to take us on to Iquique. When Mike arrived in the L-19, he asked for Guido to take the front seat, and I was planning to hook us up but just in time Alex Chanes and his ground crew drove up on the way back after their retrieve, and I hopped in back as we now had a wing-runner. As soon as we took off I was glad for our successful outlanding, as the terrain everywhere around was terrible: large areas of solid rock and moon-scape. With about 30 miles to go and mountains poking up through the clouds the radio came alive in Spanish and Mike told Guido to use the dive brakes. Even so our descent speeds were reaching well into the yellow arc. We crossed mountains and below clouds with just scant feet in between, and Mike flew down valleys beneath lowering ceilings to stay out of cloud. I thanked heaven for half-inch Nylon towropes. We finally landed at Iquique with the last light of day.

GUIDO: Schreder's ship made an early morning tow from Iquique where the higher coastal temperature would speed the repair of the landing gear, and Del Pedregal and Perez also opted to tow all the way to Iquique in view of our problems.

Radic and Memmert towed to 3000 meters on the lower Andes. Memmert couldn't hook up and had to return, but Radic found thermals in the absence of ridge lift and moved at a fairly good clip. He quickly lost track of his position, however, and decided to turn toward the coast when his watch told him he should be east of Iquique. There was cumulus and lift along his route until he was about half-way to the coastal highway, and his guestimate was accurate as he passed directly over Humberstone, using the sustainer engine briefly to cross the coastal hills into Iquique.

KARL: It was now obvious that soaring would be the exception in the Atacama Desert and our motor would have to provide the energy to carry us to Iquique unless we did something different. We elected to go due west to the coast and try ridge running on the 3000-foot bluffs and sand dunes that rise from the Pacific. This worked marginally well, and except for a couple of two-minute "burns" we slope soared 100 miles, arriving at the coastal city of Iquique with plenty of Jet A.

Below, the Caproni A21J jet-powered sailplane piloted by Karl Striedieck. Having that engine must have been a comfort when flying over the sort of terrain seen at right.



GUIDO: The last leg of the rally on Jan. 17 was 210 km from Iquique to Arica. However, because the central valley had proven to be so bad in terms of flying, the best conditions being along the inner route that Radic took, long tows across the country were required. This posed a logistical problem because only three tugs were available. On top of that, they had to refuel at another airport 30 km south of Iquique. Mechanical problems with one of the planes, and a poorly timed and coordinated refueling and launching operation resulted in only Radic and Memmert being towed to the Andes. The rest of us got to the air by 5 p.m. and were towed directly to Arica. The flight was smooth; mostly we kept close to the coast.

Striedieck decided to fly the coastal ridges, which rise an average of 1000 meters steeply along the coast, interrupted by only a few transversal valleys. He made it using some power only at the beginning. The route is good with the almost everpresent wind, but one must bear in mind that without a quick-starting engine, virtually the only landing option is the ocean. Rescue would have to be by helicopter because of the large breakers, rocks and lack of access.

Radic and Memmert were towed to about 3500 meters east of Iquique and released near the town of Mamina in the mountains. They managed to move rapidly using some ridge lift, but mostly thermaling under the cumulus. Little turning was required while maintaining an altitude of 4000 to 4500 meters. Memmert and Calleja in the *Janus* were behind Radic and never saw him. The visibility, poor in the beginning, turned worse later, and Memmert decided to return east after he lost his position. He was radar assisted into a military field. Radic continued, and after crossing the valley of Camarones, 130 km north of his release point, he encountered stratification at 3200 meters, flatter terrain and poor visibility. Lift was margin-



al until the valley of Azapa, which leads to Arica, where it improved somewhat until the valley of Lluta, which he followed west towards the airport 15 km north of Arica. He left the mountains with 2000 meters to fly the 80 km to Arica. The conditions coming out were poor and so was the visibility, but he managed to make it the airport without using the engine.

While only two of us actually made it into Arica on free flight, we were received at the airport as if we all had, and proudly accepted all of the official honors at a press conference the next day. That afternoon I gave joy rides to half the town, 1922 being the year in which the last glider had been seen in Arica.

We spent the next two days touring the city and its surroundings, putting the gliders together and resting.

(A couple of days of rest in Arica followed by a return to Santiago and several more days of relaxation and sightseeing occupied the visiting pilots, while the Chileans made a memorable return flight.—Ed.)

GUIDO: We were all airborne by 10:45 and started the slow climb into the mountains. We flew between 3500 4000 meters and found the air to be very stable. A few passes close to the ridges showed some activity there, but we were not sure it was sufficient to keep us up. We were very reluctant to land out, since to do so certainly would mean adding an extra day to the trip because of the problem of fuel availability.

We kept debating whether to release or not until we spotted the first cumulus just before 1 p.m. and slightly south of Vallenar. We released and immediately found very strong lift. I still don't know whether the lift started at that particular point, or at that particular time, or whether it had been there all along.

We were 500 km from Santiago at that point. Memmert and I went east up a ridge I had spotted on the trip up, and in less than 15 minutes had climbed to 5500 meters. Radic and Chanes chose to fly the same ridge Wally and I had flown when leaving Vicuna, and could not achieve more than 3500 meters. We were high enough to fly in along the highest peaks, but did not want to do it alone, so we flew straight south over the valleys and met Radic and Chanes 20 km south of Vicuna. In retrospect, I think we could have made a spectacularly fast flight along the higher peaks.

The conditions remained excellent and we maintained 3500 to 4500 meters all the way through, flying the inner ridges along the border with Argentina. Chanes went straight to Santiago, completing the 500 km in just over five hours. Radic, Memmert and I toured a little bit around before landing in Santiago. We were all quite exhausted.

If we had released slightly further north, perhaps 600 or 700 km from Santiago, and had continued another 200 km south of Santiago and then back, and had really pushed the sticks forward, it is likely that we could have completed a 1000 km course at a very high average speed.

WALLY: On Jan. 24, with Guido rested from his trip back south, we declared AA day: Attack on Aconcagua—or, more correctly, attempt on Aconcagua. We tried hard, very hard, and got close. Just a scant couple of miles short, but we couldn't get over or beyond his lower teeth. We even went places Guido advised against, and saw a lot more formidable terrain and got jolted around somewhat, but the old granddad won this day. We would have to try again tomorrow.

On the 25th we tried again with the forecast much better, winds straight out of the west and increasing with

altitude. We hit good solid thermals just beyond the first ridge and our hopes soared. Srdjan Radic had declared a 1000-km flight and taken off at 9 a.m., and as we worked our first thermal he joined us. Being a little behind in his time, he would abort his triangle and join us in our assault. We were soon joined by two other gliders, and away we went.

Everything went great for a while, good lift over the ridges, seemingly pure thermals. Then we hit one ridge that had given us no trouble before, and spent 30 minutes trying to top it. We never did, but got close. Radic and the others were ahead, reporting problems. We finally arrived at the lower teeth of Aconcagua, and tightened our seat belts. But . . . from this point on, the reader will have to guess at the outcome. The gentleman, or the tiger? I know. Guido knows. The Chileans all know. And, yes, the mountain knows, too.



Flying back to the strip, I was enjoying myself. The last two days I think the bug had finally gone. Guido was enjoying the flying also, as we were swooping and pushing rocks (almost) and screeching up and over sharp ridges and diving into steep canyons. "You know, Wally," Guido said, "you really scared me the way you flew the ridges at first." "You know, Guido," I replied, "you scared me too, at first!"

KARL: Condors are not an endangered species in Chile and they, along with various eagles and hawks, were our constant companions in the high Andes. But considering what had been predicted about soaring the Andes for fun and records, the 1986 exploration of the area turned out to be less dramatic than expected. However, judging by the soaring conditions around Santiago and the adventure and friendships made, this trip was a spectacular success!

GUIDO: What did we learn? The inescapable conclusion is that the north of Chile is not pie in the sky, and that more thorough exploring is still required to establish the true potential of the area. Conditions were not optimal due to the heavy influence of the "Bolivian Winter," so perhaps another season should be tried. The beginning of spring, in September or October, perhaps.

Radic proved that the best conditions are in the Andes, and not near the coastal road net. This means that higher risks should be taken and that ships of excellent L/D, and optimally with sustainer engines, are needed. For speed records, the routes along the highest peaks show the most promise. As Wally puts it, attempting these routes will require lots of support, oxygen and guts. However, we believe that the routes south of Salvador, combined with the routes we are exploring south of Santiago, will offer excellent possibilities for 1000 km flights. We are already starting to try it.

We Chilean pilots enjoyed ourselves tremendously, and relished the opportunity to compare our flying with that of some of the world's best pilots. In summary the main points of my account are:

- We were surprised at how unusual our type of mountain flying seemed to the Americans. The European visitors felt more at home. While I must admit that at the beginning we were not quite comfortable with the way the Americans flew the mountains, Wally for one was an expert at it by the time he left.
- We learned a lot in relation to ground handling, preparation and taking care of our ships.

A familiar sight to sailplane pilots who soar in the high Andes, condors are among the world's most accomplished soaring birds.

- For me, with my small experience, learning from Wally's flying techniques was like try to get a sip of water from a fire hose; some things were probably too subtle to perceive. Nevertheless we learned a lot about the necessary mental attitude in racing.

- We could not get used to the lack of in-flight communication among the Americans, but we think we understand it.

- We were also very pleased with the good care that our guests took with our equipment, both on the ground and in the air.

When I returned to Santiago I discovered that Wally and Boots had fallen victim to one of our home-grown ailments, and had to cancel a planned trip south with us. Perhaps they will return one day to try Aconcagua again, and I'll have the chance to spend some more time with this wonderful pair.

WALLY: I will come to the end of our flying with this observation—if Guido is number 10 on their list of pilots who fly close to the ridges, I do not think I want to fly with numbers 1 through 9.

Thanks, Guido, it was nice to share those adventures with such a gentleman. Thanks, Amalia, you were great. Thanks, Srdjan and Reynaldo, and Ursula, and many many thanks to you all. To Michael Kaufmann, who did so much to help so very many, our special thanks. We will long remember the Club de Planeadores. Hasta mañana, y vaya con Dios!

Top, a view of the summit of Aconcagua, and below, the panorama looking south from the just about the same vantage point.



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