

THIRTY-SIX HORSEPOWER OVER THE ATLANTIC

BY MIRA SLOVAK

PROLOGUE PAGES BY MERL DOBRY

ON EVERY SIDE OF US ARE MEN WHO HUNT PERPETUALLY FOR THEIR
PERSONAL NORTHWEST PASSAGE,
SO OFTEN SACRIFICING HEALTH, STRENGTH, AND LIFE ITSELF TO THE
SEARCH, AND WHO SHALL SAY
THEY ARE NOT HAPPIER IN THEIR HOPEFUL QUEST THAN WISER DULLER
FOLKS WHO SIT AT HOME,
VENTURING NOTHING.

MOTORSEGELER OVER THE ATLANTIC

"Fly a 36 hp (VW) powered glider across the North Atlantic, you must be out of your mind." This seemed to be the general theme of the comments made by those who watch us roll the slick little RF4 out of her hanger at the Sportavia factory in West Germany. Her white and red mirror finish sparkled in the sunlight and she seemed to radiate a feeling of determination and heart that could rise to the challenge, even the unpredictable North Atlantic.



In spite of her miniature size, the "Spirit of Santa Paula" named by her pilot, Continental Airline Captain Mira Slovak carried some of the finest radio equipment available on the market today, a VHF, ADF, VOR and a battery operated Navtek standby unit. This coupled with a very responsive control system, aerobatic+6G - 3G rating, 20 to 1 glide ratio retractable gear with warning light and stall indicator, and a MPH per HP ratio, would make even the most aristocratic high performance

ship in production today, green with envy.

Her pilot's credentials stack up equally as well. Mira had already captured the interest of many fans, both in the U.S. and in Europe first back in 1953 when he made his freedom flight from Czechoslovakia to West Germany in a commandeered airliner. For Mira, freedom is far more than just a word, it is a way of life, a principal to be honored, respected, and pursued, it is America. He closed one of his letters to a friend in Santa Barbara by saying "I love America." This refugee had been forced by his desire for freedom to leave his beloved Czechoslovakia, and he found a new life and home in America. Mira arrived in the USA with \$3 in his pocket and two shirts. When a friend said, "Let's buy you some new things," Mira answered, "Hey, what do you think I am, I'm just a poor refugee!" Since then the name has stuck. It has been spoken with pride at the National Air Races (Mira holds the 1964 National championship)" and in the deadly screaming world of the unlimited Hydros, Mira is the holder of the Gold Cup, Canadian Cup and the President Cup, just to name a few of themany honors in this field. It has been

whispered by the wind slipping over the stress wires of his beautiful Bucker Jungman as he performed at airshows, benefits, and in acrobatic competitions. A Golden Czech Lion is painted on the tail of his Bucker Jungman (this ship is now in the proud possession of the world famous writer, Pilot, E. K. Gann). In some small way Mira said he hoped this symbol would remind those who saw it that he was a refugee from a country occupied by the Communists - a real and true danger to man's freedom. This fact seems once again proven by the recent action in Czech -- "America has given me a home and a chance to go as far as my efforts will carry me and I love her." Here is a man who with no sponsor or financial help, spent his own hard-earned cash and vacation to challenge something that was said to be impossible.



With this man and this plane, the North Atlantic truly had a worthy adversary. All of her 36 hp buzzed with excitement as Herr Kruber (Sportavia Test Pilot) ran the single wheeled landing gear down the grass runway at Dahlemer Binz one bounce, two bounces and the Spirit of Santa Paula was no longer just a beautiful inanimate form of wood and metal, but an airborne living thing. She reached skyward on hollow wooden wing bones of man's own fashioning to sift the clouds of destiny.

There is a miracle in flight and fortunate indeed are those who have had the chance to embrace it. After a series of prescribed flight tests and checks, the Spirit was baptized N1700 and ready to go. Now it was Mira's turn and within a few seconds the bubble canopy clicked shut, locked, and a bond between man and machine was sealed, which would carry them both one-third the distance around the world.

May 7, 1968 TAKE-OFF



During takeoff, the Spirit strained with the weight of her loaded gas tanks to free herself from the earth's surface. A small crowd of well wishers watched the little ship bounce down the field and inwardly strained too, then suddenly the grassy runway clawed no longer at the single wheel, but launched Mira and the RF4 skyward and up over the tips of the pine trees that ringed the small airstrip, past a shattered

bunker now overgrown with spring ferns that seemed to whisper, "unity and freedom are possible in spite of man's inhumanity to man."

A last friendly wave of the wings to Kathy, one of the young glider pilots, as she guided her bicycle down the country road back to the village. Up the Spirit climbed, to reach beyond the clouds, to seek adventure where it lie, to explore over the horizon. Mira locked the throttle at 3200 RPM and set a course for Belgium.

Through these. Same skies many brave men and highly tuned combat machines suffered

and triumphed and changed the nature of the world as they danced their deadly quadrilles.

On the Spirit flew and the miles moved by beneath her stationary wings. It was time for a position check, a glance at the radio compass, clock and map. To the east, a short flight away, lay the Iron Curtain countries, Czechoslovakia, land of Mira's childhood, a land which recently had expressed the desire to be free and shape her own destiny and, for this, had once again been trod upon by Russian boots and tanks.



Ahead lay Belgium and Brussels, with her magnificent churches and towering buildings. Brussels is not a museum, it is a blending of the living past and modern new shapes. It is as old' as yesterday's civilization and as young as tomorrow's architecture. Above her skyline purred the Spirit unnoticed except for a few school boys who lay on their backs in a park, counting clouds as they drifted by. On to Dunkirk and over beaches where history is a part of the present.

Mira turned the little ship away from the shoreline and for the first time the Spirit and he moved through air supported only by the sea. Man has always had a desire to discipline the sea; a desire which is satisfying because it can never be fulfilled the challenge of the sea is timeless. A thousand years ago the long hulls of the Viking ships cut through these same waters on a similar attempt to carry their crews to far off America and, with determination, succeeded.

Time to pump some petrol from the wing tanks into the gravity feed system secured just behind the fire- wall. Twenty minutes passed, then a spray of gasoline over the windshield announced that the job had been accomplished and the nose tank was filled to the brim.



By now those fluffy summer clouds had taken on a new dimension and a heavy rain was threatening. Ahead, Dover with her white cliffs glowing a dignified English welcome. To fly along Dover's white walls is a magical thing the past seems to reach forward to you, or perhaps your imagination is drawn back. There radiates an alliance with the men who flew here before a bond welded together by the presence of Dover and the freedom of flight.

The storm was increasing and the visibility continued to lessen. Soon the wind-driven rain closed in on the little plane, blotting out both land and sky. Mira could no longer see the rolling English farm lands, but the Spirit and he continued straight on course with the aid of the invisible eyes of the Luton radar. A safe landing at Luton, a few cups of hot tea, and story swapping at the pilot's club, then Mira and the Spirit flew on five and one-half, wet hours later, Glaskow, Scotland.

For five days and nights rain dripped from the Spirit's cold exhaust pipes and an attempt

at crossing the Atlantic seemed impossible. Then came the first encouraging weather report a high pressure area was building over Greenland then sure enough, six hours later the clouds around Glaskow began to break and Mira pointed the Spirit's nose toward Stornoway. One hour passed and so did the good weather. The Spirit and Mira there back to the same old game of rain, head winds, and poor visibility



No single phrase can describe the Scottish countryside that passes below the Spirit in this part of the world. Gale-force winds from the North Atlantic can, without warning, roll a blizzard across the mountain tops, while spring flowers sway in the mild air of Ardamurchan. To seaward, Staffa Island with its renowned basaltic columns and awesome Fingal's cave.

The rain had stopped now and clouds become scattered. Long columns of sunlight reached down and dried the Spirit's wings and warmed her pilot. Ahead and to the right the rugged grandeur of Glencoe, a land of mountains, skiing, and wildly cascading rivers and streams. This was the training ground for Sir John Hunt and the party of climbers he led to the top of Mt. Everest. More time passed and so did the miles, then ahead ten minutes away, Stornoway. After landing, Mira received quite a reception. Dozens of people lined the airport, but their look was not of admiration but rather one of amazement and pity. They seemed to ask "What kind of a nut would try to cross the Atlantic in a Mickey Mouse little airplane like that?" Then Mira, feeling their thoughts, patted the Spirit on its spinner, shrugged his shoulders, and simply said "me." But deep inside a voice was saying, "Could it really be done, or has my enthusiasm been deceiving me?" Before Mira could ponder the problem any longer, his thoughts were interrupted by the delivery of a telegram. It read simply, "We love the Spirit of Santa Paula, we love Mira Slovak," and it was signed by four kids from Santa Paula. After reading that telegram, Mira knew all ideas of turning back had been shot down. As he said, "There were four kids thousands of miles away who believed in me and my airplane. I had to go if only to fulfill the confidence these kids. Had in me and the Spirit."

The Spirit's tanks were filled to her 36 gallon capacity, oil checked, it was fine, and once again Mira and the small plane tested their footing over water. The land disappeared slowly behind the Spirit, a glance back, a quiet prayer, and ahead the vast Atlantic.



A friend and he had jokingly discussed painting green fields, cows and farm houses on the top of the Spirit's wings. Then when Mira was in the middle of the ice floes of the North Atlantic, he could slink very low in the small cockpit and see only the peaceful landscapes offering many safe places to land.

The awesome vastness of this area is difficult to comprehend. Even while flying in the warm, safe confines of a modern Icelandic Airliner, one is aware of the immensity of this part of the world.



Mira kept his heading and the timeless sea glided by below. Each wave seemed the same, yet somehow different, rising and falling and each time washing their heads with white foam. From 3000 feet it didn't seem possible that this softly swaying blueness was the icy, devastating North Atlantic an ocean that could speak with a fearful roar and has tossed one-ton boulders a hundred feet on the north side of the Faeroe Islands. It takes courage to sail out on the

North Atlantic to cast your nets and luck to the sea off Greenland or the Iceland banks. Just such courage is found in the Faeroe Islanders and their home was Mira's next stop.

Co-author's note: This was as far as I flew with Mira, as the safety of a commercial airliner over the Atlantic held more appeal to me. We were to rendezvous at Santa Paula in a week. Here now in Mira's own words, the Atlantic crossing.

I thought it was low clouds because clouds were getting thicker and thicker'all around me and I was flying under them, When I looked closer, a few minutes later,' I could recognize the hills of the Faeroe Islands. There were about 4 or 5 islands together and the airport was located on the north side of the island in a little fjord. When I proceeded to these islands, I could see heavy clouds surrounding my proposed landing place, the airport of Vagar. When I came real close to it, the visibility was reduced down to less than 2 miles and I was encountering heavy snow showers. When the snow hit my windshield, it turned to water but fortunately it didn't freeze. Right away I called on the radio to Vagar tower and they advised that I should stand by, that the airport was closed. The tower operator explained that they were working on the runway and only half of it was finished, as they were putting a new asphalt cover on it. I told them I was having ice problems and with the heavy snow showers around me, I was afraid I may pick up ice and I would never reach Iceland unless I wanted to swim the rest of the way. He said it would take at least 15 to 20 minutes before they could clear away the equipment. Frantically I circled, trying hard not to lose sight of the runway. The snow showers were almost unbearable as they were blinding me. The low ceiling and the snow blowing against the windshield so rapidly prevented my finding my way out of the storm. I had to go down - one way or the other! Luckily, after 15 minutes they had moved their equipment and allowed me to land. I was anxious to get down as soon as possible, as I was afraid I would lose sight of the runway. Finally, I got the landing clearance and the tower advised that the runway was full of holes. When I touched down, I thought the airplane was going to come completely apart. After a few bounces and a few hair raising moments, I finally came to a stop and was very happy to be on - the ground and see the people.

They gave me a funny look because the airplane I was flying in wasn't exactly the kind of plane you would fly over the Atlantic. It was only a little Put-Put! After a brief

explanation of my forced landing, they took it nicely and said "you have your problems and we have ours with this runway." So I spent the rest of the afternoon there and the people were quite nice and spoke fluent English.

The evening was very pleasantly spent and I met quite a few Danish people who were very hospitable. I retired that evening in a little hotel with a pleasant feeling of satisfaction. The 1st leg of my journey was over.

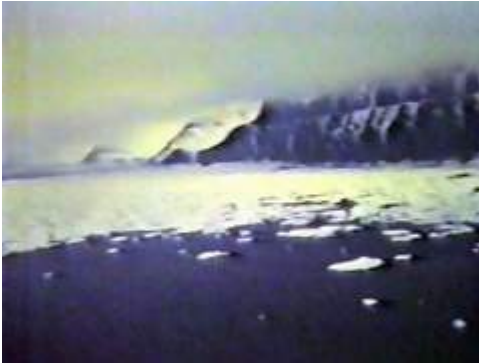
The next morning, there was beautiful sunshine which was a good indication that I could depart. After checking the weather with Iceland, the forecast looked very promising with only a few snow showers on the way and some rain showers on the East Coast of Iceland. My destination point, Reykjavik, was completely open. After thanking the Danish people for their gracious hospitality and taking a few pictures, I was on my way to Iceland. Once again - - - nothing but water, clouds and loneliness. After 3 hours flying time, and about 60 miles ahead of me, I could see the snow covered mountains on the East Coast of Iceland. I contacted their radio operator and before long we became involved in a conversation. He asked me many questions about the structure of my powered glider as he had been following my trip and was very interested in my airplane. He expressed a desire to see it before I continued my journey. I didn't intend to land there because of heavy cross winds, but thought I would just circle a few times over the airport, wave my wings for "so long" and proceed on my way to Reykjavik. It's amazing that such a little country like Iceland could have so much different weather. Within half an hour I saw a dark cloud ahead of me. Approaching it, I knew it was blowing lava dust. It reminded me of dust storms in El Paso in the south side of Texas. So after spending half an hour getting out of the lava storm, I went through a snow storm. A half hour later I came to a rain storm and a half hour after that I knew I should be approaching Reykjavik and I was in beautiful sunshine.

After landing in the Reykjavik International Airport, there were, as always, people wondering who was trying to fly the Atlantic in a little airplane like that. After normal customs procedures, I spent the rest of the afternoon preparing my airplane for the next morning's journey. Checking with the weatherman, the weather ahead of me looked real good. So I spent the rest of the afternoon in the control room. I listened as SAS, TWA, Pan American, and Lufthansa went by. Myself being an airline pilot, I of course have a pretty close understanding with the controllers who are running our lives on the ground with the radar as we're flying the machines in the air. It was a very pleasant visit.

Before I left, I was introduced to Mr. Hanson, Chief of Aviation in Iceland. A very quiet, unassuming gentleman who had very nice words to say. He used to fly gliders many years ago and is still a great fan of glider flying. This man, I am sure, is No. 1 in Iceland aviation. I soon learned that we had a great deal in common as we were both owners of the same type of aerobatic airplane, the Zlin. I also learned that this gentleman pioneered the interest of aerobatics in Iceland, by being the first aerobatic instructor. He also established rescue units by being the 1st to jump - after never having done it before. He was truly a very exceptional man.

After a long friendly discussion, we parted - hoping to meet again. At 4:00 in the morning I was on my way to Kulusuk, which was my next planned landing in Greenland. I knew

this would be the longest stretch over open water. I was fully loaded with fuel so I had to fly very low. After 45 minutes I looked back and there was no more Iceland and there was no more Reykjavik. Just a few clouds here and there and the weather ahead looked pretty good. The sky and the ocean were blue and it reminded me of flying some place close to Hawaii, certainly not in the cold Atlantic. From the low altitude, I could see the gentle rolling swells which gave the appearance of a very peaceful sea. However, I soon changed my mind when about 1-1/2 hours later I saw a huge cargo ship being tossed and turned like a little toy. It gave me the idea that the little swells had not been so little but they were terrific great walls of water. Somehow through my mind came the thought, "What would happen if I had to go down?" Well, I didn't want to think about it. I was just hoping that the little "Putt-Putt" Volkswagen ahead of me was never going to stop turning, and the little airplane never stop flying, because it would be a very long; lonely swim to Greenland or back to Reykjavik. The weatherman was actually giving me a very favorable wind. I planned on 6 hr. 15 min. my total flight from Reykjavik to Kulusuk. After 3 hours, the clouds started picking up from nowhere and here and there I could see little thunderstorm clouds working their way through the rain and snow.



I have seen on this journey the rain falling practically from no place. I have watched new clouds form which I never have experienced in my 23 years of flying or have I ever seen anything similar to it. I tried to stay away from any kind of liquid sunshine or any kind of snow showers because I didn't want to pick up any ice. I flew through the clouds,, left and right and once in a while I could see the ocean - still blue - but no longer the nice peaceful rolling waves. Now they were nasty, choppy ones, which would give me an indication after reading marine books and talking to the old navy boys, that if there are heavy chops in the sea, there is pretty good velocity wind blowing. A short time later, I found that instead of forecasted tail winds, I was experiencing 30-40 knots head wind. Actually my water speed, or ground speed over water was roughly around 50 MPH. I was too far away to reach anyone on radio. I wanted to advise the Atlantic Radio Control that my estimated time of arrival in Kulusuk would be approximately 1-1/2 hours overdue, due to the unexpected winds. I realized it would be 3 to 3-1/2 hours before I would be able to reach any kind of station on the east shore of Greenland. So I sank a little deeper into my seat, avoiding to see the choppy water below, and I couldn't help some of the thoughts that kept creeping into my mind. Here I am, hours from anybody. In case I have to go down, it would be a long time before they found me. I had all the emergency equipment which would locate me for the Air Force Rescue team, but there was still little chance to be found. It was a very lonely feeling. Away from civilization — just by myself. My life depending on a little 36 h.p. automobile engine that is going to get me where I am trying to go. And thoughts came through my mind of the importance of a human being and believe you me, if at any time in the past I ever thought of myself as being somebody, this was the morning of honest confession with myself. How insignificant a human being, among the wasteland of nothing. I have never seen so much of nothing in my life. And in case something goes

wrong, with no protection one has only 4 minutes to survive in the cold water. Of course, I was wearing a rubber suit which would give me approximately 3 hours to survive. In a dingy, which was for 3 to 4 people, would give me 2 days. I had food for only 5 days. But the icy wind and the bitter cold temperature would make it impossible to say if one could possibly survive more than a couple of days in this part of the country.

So, I pushed my way through, looking at the blue and white chops of the ocean once in a while and checking the wind so I could roughly maintain my preestablished heading. After 4 hours I very anxiously started tuning my radio compass and tried to pick up Big Gun Radio beacon. In a book of a U.S. airport it says at 200 knotical miles one should be able to receive the signal and get some kind of a bearing out of ADF which is a direction finder. After a few minutes tuning, I was unable to reach a station, so I thought I might have been slowed down by the strong headwind. Perhaps I could pick it up in the next one hour. An hour went by and still no station. It gave me an indication that I was completely out of my course somewhere in the blue yonder of the North Pole or someplace coming close to the South of Greenland which was practically impossible to reach with only 11 hours of fuel. So thoughts again went through my mind that I had made a mistake someplace. There were clouds all around me and once in a while I could see the ocean and a few ice burgs floating around the Atlantic Ocean. It was a funny feeling that somehow I had betrayed myself. I had a guilty conscience of goofing it up. Something went wrong someplace because the compass was swaying 20 degrees left and 20 degrees right and my standby compass I had to hold in my hand to compare with my main compass. They both agreed. After being up-in the air for 7 hours, which was 45 minutes overdue, and unable to pick up a radio station, I started giving up. There was not much I could do. I didn't look down too much. I just tried to follow the compass closely as much as I could. I knew definitely something went wrong, but how, where and what I couldn't figure out. Then, all at once, out of a fairy tale, I sneaked through a bunch of clouds ahead of me, and right there in front of me was a magnificent, rough, rugged mountain terrain of Greenland. It was approximately 40 miles ahead of me. A few degrees to-, the right, I could barely see terrific great antennas which belonged to the radar station of Kulusuk on the East Coast of Greenland. So, I tried the radio again and I still couldn't receive anything on my radio compass. Finally I contacted the radar station which was owned and operated by the United States Air Force. A very anxious voice came through and said, "Where have you been? You are practically 2 hours over your ETA and everybody has been impatient and worried because it looked like you had to go down. We were just about ready to send a search party for you." Well, I explained that there was heavy wind blowing that I didn't expect. It was stronger than I had anticipates and that caused my 1-1/2 hour delay. So, in turn, I asked, "What happened to your radio beacon? I was unable to receive it on my set." He said "Well, two days ago we turned it off for maintenance So, all my being scared, the guilty conscience, the uncertainty and the distrust in my ability all turned out to be for nothing.

After refueling and having a good Danish lunch, and the exchange of nice words, I proceeded with their blessing. I was on my way. After takeoff, I got in touch with their radar and asked if it was possible to. give me radar vector. They gave me a heading which I maintained and they asked me if I could climb to 12,500 ft. Of course on this trip, the

most I had gotten out of the airplane was 6,000 feet, and to reach 12,000 seemed practically impossible. But I was willing to give it a try. At the minimum I had to have 10,500 because the top of the plateau of Greenland was 10,000 ft. So I had 500 ft. to spare. After 1-1/2 hours I contacted the radar man again. I had really lucked out. I was at 10,500 feet! "Good for you," said the radar operator, "but you better be careful. In the past month we have lost 3 pilots." I couldn't understand why because there was a clear beautiful sky. However, around half an hour later when I approached the highest plateau, 10,000 ft., I could see what he meant. When I looked to the right, the horizon completely faded into snow or ice and there was no way of telling if one was right side up or upside down. My turn and bank indicator wasn't very reliable. I had no other gyroscopic instrument to maintain my attitude. The only way I could keep my balance was to look at the sun and the reflection on the ice. With these two points I was able to maintain my straight and level position. It was amazing and hard to describe how it feels to be in a big tunnel where everything is all white around you. Everyone seemed to think this would be the most difficult part of my trip because of the presence of vertigo and unexpected winds. To me, I think it was the easiest part. If I had a choice, I would prefer to make an emergency landing on snow rather than water.

When I approached the second radar station, the air traffic was very light so the radar boys asked me to circle around the station. They said they were 15 miles ahead of me. I looked and looked but could find nothing. All of a sudden, right before me were huge antennas sticking up every place. I thought it was a mirage. I made a circle over them, but for some reason they still couldn't see me. I made two 360's and kept going to Sondrestrome, later learning that one of the radar operators had purchased an RF4 similar to the one I was flying. After landing in Sondrestrome, which is half operated by the United States Air Force and half by SAS Airlines, the Zield officer came to me and asked if I had permission to land. I advised that I did. He informed me that it would cost me \$200 for this landing because they require \$500,000 Liability Insurance. Since I had already paid this amount for the insurance, I was really surprised when I registered in the SAS office that I had to pay an additional \$198 for landing fees. I practically had a heart attack! I tried to find out what happened! "What am I paying it for?" I asked. "Well," he said, "you have to pay for the services." I said "I don't need any services!" He replied "Well, you have to pay for the fee for your starting unit." I said "Listen, I don't have any starting unit. The way I start my engine is with a little jerk by hand and the engine starts." He answered "You have to pay for the hanger." By now I was upset and I said "I don't need any hangar. It's sitting outside. It's been sitting outside ever since I landed." I knew I was never going to win. His last comment to me was, "I don't know what it is, but it's some kind of a fee required by the United States Air Force and I have to get it from you." Well, I was angry, but I paid the \$198 landing fee in Sondrestrome. But I told myself that I would never land around Sondrestrome again. It was the most expensive landing fee I have ever seen in my life! Total: \$398.00!

After finishing all the formalities, and while I was preparing my little airplane for the next day's trip, I saw that I was surrounded by quite a few Air Force technicians and pilots. Most of them just shook their heads. How can you explain to someone who never will be convinced that the impossible should be left alone. I realized this, when in a later

conversation, one of the men explained to me that he had lost quite a few friends over those big icebergs and they were flying much stronger, safer aircraft than I. Why would I even attempt it in a little single engine, 36 h.p. glider. It was beyond their imagination. Well, it was behind me. I felt comfortable, but I knew it was going to be a long time before I would try it again. I spent the night in a place where all night is daylight because the sun never goes down. Around 4:00 I got up and it was like daytime. I got everything organized and filled up with automobile gasoline and again, after 6:00, I was on my way via Cape Dyer to the landing place of Frobisher, which is in Northwest Territory of Canada.



After takeoff I started climbing and tried to pick up the altitude. The weather was beautiful. The sea looked to be smooth and the wind was practically nil. Again I had 250 knotical miles over open sea. This part of the ocean was loaded with ice burgs and a bunch of ice cubes were floating up and down. Looking down, I got a chill on my back because it would be very uncomfortable to try to make a landing. I tried to pick out a spot where, if I had to, I could make an emergency landing. The areas were too small and I would be sure to hit an ice burg or chunk of ice. It would probably tear me apart on impact. So, not looking downstairs, just looking ahead of me, I tried to follow my compass as closely as I could because the variation came to the maximum of plus 52 degrees west. If I want to maintain my true course heading 270, I had to be indicating on my compass a 322 degrees or 52 degree differential.

I picked up my heading from Cape Dyer to Frobicher. Again 250 knotical miles which was around 3-1/2 hours flying time. I flew over the peaceful countryside of Canada with the most beautiful hills I have ever seen. It reminded me of the good old days of Christmas that I spent skiing in the Sierra Mountains. Actually it reminded me more of Sun Valley because of the nice, gentle, rolling hills. Of course I doubt if there was any kind of human life or any type of animal life in this part of the country. It looked very forbidding. To make my onliness a little more tolerable, I began to look around. I noticed that my engine temperature went up 20° and my oil pressure had gone down about 5 lbs., which concerned me greatly. I tried to decide if I should go back to Cape Dyer or proceed to Frobicher. My eyes were glued to the engine instruments. However, after a short period they stabilized and didn't move. Not having an outside temperature indicator, I stuck my hand through the window and saw that the air outside was much warmer which was an indication, of inversion. So my worries were over. After leaving what I call the beautiful "Sun Valley Hills", I again went over a long stretch of water. Not until approxi-mately 25-30 miles was I able to receive Frobicher radio beacon which brought me right over the airport. I made a nice gentle approach. Since Frobicher does not have a control tower, the radio man was located in a little settlement about one mile away from the airport. He advised that there was a little activity on the left side of the runway. A group of photographers were there waiting for me. I asked what they were doing there and he replied, "Well, it doesn't happen every day that somebody is flying a powered glider over

the Atlantic." I had to chuckle a little bit with a feeling that it was true - I had been scared quite a few times, but it wasn't so impossible like many people expected.



After normal approach and touch down, I parked the airplane, and found to my surprise, over a hundred eskimo school kids waiting for me. This was a holiday for them! When they heard of the flight across the Atlantic, the teachers gave them 1/2 day off from school to come see the plane land. All the kids had chance to peak inside the cockpit to see how it looks in a single engine airplane. I received a very nice, friendly welcome by the Canadians, spending my evening with some very interesting people. I learned that the Canadian Government was providing the eskimo people with a special task force who were helping them find a better way of life. This is a terrific effort on the part of the Canadian Government, when I think of how these people used to live. They appeared to be very happy, and thankful that the Canadian people were taking care of them.

I stayed in a beautiful hotel where everything was spotless and clean and the food was excellent. After a nice comfortable shower, a good full stomach, I retired. The next morning, I found that everything was fogged in. The weatherman said that Frobisher Bay was under fog, but the top of the fog was around 2,000 ft. and everything else all the way down south was clear. I didn't have the desire to try to go over the overcast because I knew that there was a certain amount of ice available in these clouds, I waited until I could see the sun a little, and after normal clearance, I took off with an IFR departure. I tried to go through the overcast which took me a bit longer than I had expected because of my heavy weight and a little ice which I had picked up. When I broke out at around 1800 feet, I was in a beautiful, blue, clear sky. My next stop was Fort Chimo, estimated flying time 6-1/2 hours. The forecast said it was to stay clear. After flying approximately 5 hours, I found I was unable to pick up radio beacon because my average level was approximately 3,000 to 4,000 feet, which is not high enough to receive good radio reception. I was getting a little nervous because I was coming close to Fort Chimo. There were a few breaks in the overcast, and I could see what I wasn't sure was the ground or the snow covered Hudson Strait. The curiosity and also the uncertainty of not knowing where I was, told me I'd better investigate. According to my flight plan, I should have been approximately one mile away from the shore and it should be very easy to recognize because of the small hills close to the Hudson Strait. I found a small opening, I put my one landing gear and spoilers down and I practically dove right through the hole. When I reached the bottom of the overcast, I found myself to be exactly where I wanted. Right on the shore. Because it is practically impossible to follow in one mile visibility in a 500 ft. ceiling and I was afraid of getting into trouble and my reception would be even worse than it was at 4,000 ft., I knew I had better go back to where I came from. Nice, comfortable smooth air, and

sunshine. I started looking for the opening in the sky in which I went down. It was gone. I started snooping around like a cat looking for a mouse and there wasn't an opening of any kind in my vicinity. I had no choice but to go on the instruments and try to climb to my original altitude. I wasn't too happy because I didn't want to run into icy conditions which I knew existed at 1,500 ft. Around 400 feet I picked up the maximum speed I could get out of it with an open throttle which was 120 mph, and I started to establish my climb. When I hit the overcast, right away there were little drops on my windshield which was a good indication of ice present in the higher clouds. I could feel I was getting heavier and heavier. In 20 minutes there was so much ice on my windshield that I could not even see the engine cowling in front of me. The HF antennae which spanned from the right wing tip to the top of the rudder picked up so much ice that the vibration nearly broke the tail off. How long the rudder could take it and how long before the antennae would break, I didn't know. After several moments of heavy perspiration, I finally made it. It seemed like an eternity before I was on top again. I could see the blue yonder and the shiny sun. It was the most beautiful picture I have ever seen. It took approximately another 1/2 hour before the sun hit the ice and melted it. Finally, the airplane became normal again and there wasn't any more jumping around like a little young horse - up and down in the sky. I was relieved, and finally after another hour of flying time, I started getting out of the overcast and found my way to Fort Chimo. Upon landing, I met the same curious faces that I had met in every landing before. I refueled my little Putt-Putt and was anxiously on my way to Knob Lake. After takeoff, I followed quite a few lakes put together which looked like a long river and would ease up my navigational difficulties because Knob Lake was forecasting snow showers with rain showers that evening. I was roughly 60 miles away from Knob Lake when I ran out of the "togetherness" of lakes. The only navigational source of knowing where I was. Every hill below me started looking like every other hill. I knew approximately where I was, but I wasn't sure. I had to fly around a few snow showers which created more problems. I just hoped that my luck would hold so I could sneak in.

Approximately 10 miles from Knob Lake, I was approaching undesirable, low ceiling type of weather which was forcing me down close to the ground. This country was completely out of civilization - with no sign of life at all. It would have been very hard to find a place to land - and even harder to find someone, should they have to come pick you up. It brought to mind Ernie K. Gann's book "Fate is the Hunter". It was in this part of the country that one of their airplanes was lost. I just hoped that I wasn't going to be as unlucky as these people were. My hopes of finding the haven of the airport were getting thinner and thinner. My fears were getting greater when all of a sudden, out of nowhere I saw a telephone pole. A telephone pole to a normal human being in a civilized country doesn't mean too much. But for a man who is approximately 6-1/2 hours away in nobody's land, to see a telephone pole here in front of my nose it was a beautiful sight. If somebody was willing to give me a million dollars in place of that telephone pole, I would take the telephone pole. If things are going to go wrong - if I have to go down - I'm always going to find where the people are if I follow those telephone poles. So, with the snow falling here and there, I followed the poles. I could see houses and shacks, once in a while I would see a car go by. I was approximately 300 feet over them - and happy to be there. In my excitement to see them, I was waving my wings and probably the people on

the ground thought "What's wrong with that ioy?" Before very long I could see housing projects surrounding a small airport. As there were no radio contacts or radio control, I just put the gear down and prepared to land. It was a wonderful feeling. A feeling of accomplishment. From now on, I have it made.

From Shepardville down to Septisle it was beautiful. It was a straight railroad. I flew IFR. Not "Instrument Flight Rules," but "I follow the Rail Road." Looking back, never in my life have I ever seen so much of nothing or been so scared. Not because I did not trust myself. Not because I did not trust the airplane. But the feeling of insecurity was always there. Just knowing that at anytime - anything could go wrong.

After landing and enjoying a shower (which was the first in a long time), I found a Post Office where I sent Mr. Ernie K. Gann a telegram. Mr. Gann is the author of "Fate is the Hunter." A very famous book of a pilot's world and was dedicated to men who flew in the second war in this part of the country. I would appreciate the book and I could appreciate the man who wrote it because he was one of those pilots. My telegram read "Today, Fate was my Chaser." The next day I followed the railroad all the way down to Seven Islands. I was coming closer to civilization, the clouds were disappearing and when I arrived, it was a beautiful day.

From there I went on to Quebec, Montreal and before long I was off for the good ole USA. While crossing the bridge from Canada into the United States, I had a terrific feeling. I couldn't keep myself from singing as loud as I could "America-America". I couldn't help waving the wings of the plane and again the people probably wondered what was wrong with that guy upstairs. I was overjoyed with the feeling of success. I had done it! I was at home! And now it was like a dream. Just keep going and in a few days I would really be home!

While checking the Customs in Ogdensburg, the man was kind of surprised when he saw the diving gear. He asked if I had been fishing with my skin diving gear. I said "Not exactly fishing, but I was ready for it if I had to go down." He didn't know what I meant, and I didn't try to explain. From there I went to Tri-Cities. Due to heavy thunderstorms in the area, I had to spend the night. The next day, more rain, but I tried to work my way to Youngstown. Before I reached it I was forced to go down and wait a few hours due to a heavy storm. Then I was on my way to Wooster, Ohio where Sportavia, who sells the RF4, had a factory representative. From there I flew to Wichita: From Wichita to Las Vegas where I was to practice on the hydroplane of Harrah's Club. I took a few fast rides on Lake Meade and spent the day with the crew discussing our chances in the hydroplane season. The next morning I was asked to go to Los Angeles via Reno when I arrived at Reno there was quite a surprise. Television, newspapers and radio were waiting for me with Mr. and Mrs. Harrah as hosts.

I had heard that the Antique Aircraft/Air Show was in progress in Watsonville, California and some good friends of mine from Santa Paula were there with their newly rebuilt Curtiss-Robins from 1929 vintage. They were real surprised when they saw me land and the next day we decided we would fly formation all the way to Santa Paula. Flying their Curtiss-Robins were Perry Schreffler, and Bob Van Ausdal, both TWA Captains. I was in my little Putt-Putt.

Approaching Santa Paula, we encountered pretty heavy turbulence which was a good indication that they had some kind of a front going through. The temperature was high something was wrong. Anyway, I flew along the coast of the ocean. Then we approached Ventura and finally I could see some of Santa Paula. Part of the town, and part of the airport. That was truly a marvelous feeling of accomplishment. It was a great feeling because the entire journey was over. I saw my final landing place. I saw the place I had dreamed of for so many weeks. Actually I could say for so many months, I had made it. I didn't break any records. I was no Lindbergh

I was not the first guy to cross the Atlantic. I am not expecting any trophies--I am not expecting any kind of reception or any kind of special treatment. What I have done, I have done through my own challenge. Everybody said it could not be done. And I said Yes, it can be done. If it is properly planned, if safety is obeyed, if the common sense tells you go or not to go, then I believe it could be done. Many people did not feel that way. But here I was. Only a few minutes away from my home which I dreamed of for so long. And now the dream came to reality.



As I passed over the field I could see that many people had come to see the Spirit of Santa Paula come home. All of a sudden I found myself the victim of a heavy downdraft. I had 300 feet and good speed, so there seemed to be no problem for me to make it down. I even put the landing gear down. I flew away from the formation, looked at the runway and everything seemed just great. But somehow the down draft still kept pushing me down. I knew I could never make the runway so I headed for the open field ahead of me. The downdraft was still bearing down. If I kept going in the same direction, I was sure to hit the trailer house ahead of me. That is when it happened. As I made a gentle turn away from the trailer house, I fell out of the sky like somebody shot me down. That's the last thing I remember.



When I became conscious seven days later, I was surprised at the shape I was in. Plasma, blood, hanging left and right. I tried to put things together. I tried to remember what had happened. I remembered the trailer house, the turn, and then nothing. For a week I was in a dream. I saw a few faces which came and went in a foggy type of feeling.

While in the hospital, I would look at the ceiling and try to figure out what really happened. Where did I make the mistake? What went wrong? How is it possible for a man that flew 22 years to do something like that? To fall out of the sky. never scratched airplane before. And these words and these questions come to me over and over again. I spent quite a few sleepless nights and I still cannot figure it out. I could blame somebody. I could blame the high temperature. I could blame

the heavy wind blowing the hot, strong, Santa Anna Wind. I could say that I put myself behind the eight ball. I could blame anything I could think of, and it wouldn't be the truth. Probably the easiest and the best way to sum it up, like my good old friend Ernie K. Gann, when they asked him on a television show, "Do you believe in fate?" He said, "Yes, I do. Look at Mira Slovak. flew the Atlantic, 8,500 miles away, through lots of isolated country, miserable weather, over places if he went down - nobody would ever find him. A difficult trip in any kind of airplane. He did it in a 36 horse power Volkswagen. He came home - he conquered the difficult trip - he was 50 feet from his destination when he ran out of speed, altitude and luck at the same time. Yes, I believe in fate."Perhaps he was right . . . but, I still think that this time "Fate was my Chaser."



Fifty feet from the end of its journey, the RF4 "just fell out of the sky like a shot duck." Why? "I could blame somebody," says Mira, who barely survived. "I could blame the hot wind, the high engine temperature, or I could say I did something wrong—but it wouldn't be the truth."

