

A SOUTH AMERICAN

Duration Record

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A description of the soaring flight which established and official South American duration record of 8 hours and 12 minutes for two-place Sailplanes at the Third Soaring Contest held in the mountains of Osorio by Varig Aero Esporte during the month of January 1942.

AT five o'clock in the morning, we were roused by the notes of Mickey's bugle which was happily piercing the air with the notes of "ABRE a Janela." A splendid morning announced a day favorable for soaring. In order to waste no part of so good a day, we quickly set out for the field at which we kept our silent birds. All the while the wind continued very weak, almost calm.

About ten o'clock the wind began to freshen, and we began operating from the hill. Three times the "Buzzard" was flown by some student pilots working on their "C" license. A little before eleven, the BIGUÁ, an elegant two-seater, was rolled in takeoff position, soon to begin another day of activities. (So numerous were the "C"-license candidates, this sailplane flew more than any other ship during the meet).

We took our respective places in the cockpit and took-off. With me was a "B" pilot, Tacito Costa, of the Aero Club of BAGÉ. We were prepared for everything. Each of us was armed with a sandwich and a bottle of soda-water!

After attaining 400 meters off the hill, we released. It was exactly eleven o'clock. The wind blowing against the slope remained weak. We tried nearly an hour to climb another one hundred meters above release height. To get up to 600 meters was a real struggle, for the updrafts were exceedingly scarce.

At 600 meters we arrived at the cloud base, for clouds were forming at the side of the hill. Then we had to use our spoilers to avoid being drawn into them, where the visibility was zero.

One-thirty arrived and all went well. We ate half of our sandwich and soda-pop. (That was our breakfast). We had to dive constantly, 80 to 100 km/hr. (when our normal soaring speed would have been 60 km/hr.) in order, to avoid being sucked into the clouds which continually skimmed by overhead.

Shortly after two-thirty other sailplanes joined us in flight over the hill. The "Pelican" cruised leisurely alongside; it seemed more like a bird than a mechanical device. More than once did we admire the beautiful lines of that sailplane! As we cruised along twenty meters apart, we recognized the face of the pilot, Bordini, who was winning his "C" certificate.

At four-thirty we polished off the rest of our lunch. From then on, the weather began to get worse. Numerous clouds blown in from the ocean caused us to maneuver constantly to avoid them. Nor did we want to fly blind, knowing that beside us was a mountain over three hundred meters high. Constantly more numerous became the clouds which threatened to envelop us. By our side the "Pelican" was maneuvering rapidly, curving and spiraling dodging cloud after cloud.

When the clouds became quite dense, we risked a dash at full speed for a more distant hill, where again we had troubles. We were very low. We tried to soar along the crest of the hill, for there the updrafts were strongest. At times the wind diminished and it seemed certain we would have to land. Then we saw a short distance away some vultures soaring, indicating the presence of a thermal. We made the final effort and started that way. To our great joy the variometer showed 1½ meters up.

Regaining once more the lost altitude, we were once again among the clouds. Now, more than before, we were enthusiastic, for we lacked only an hour and a half to break the South American record for two-seaters.

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Camp at the Third Soaring Contest at Osorio