

A New National Altitude Record

Established by **J. SHELLY CHARLES**

A new national altitude record of 19,434 feet above point of release was established by J. Shelly Charles on July 18, 1943 at Atlanta, Georgia, C. E. Bailey was the Official Glider Observer and the record was homologated by Dr. August Raspet, Victor Saudek, and Ben Shupack.

ROBERT M. STANLEY,
Chairman, Records Committee

DURING the flights this summer I was prepared to take advantage of any condition that might present itself which would allow me to grab a leg on the coveted Golden C license. Realizing the distance leg of a hundred and ninety-two miles would be more difficult, I had hoped to accomplish this leg first; however, after several unsuccessful attempts, I decided that if altitude conditions came along I would not pass it up and would do my best to get the necessary altitude of ninety-eight hundred above point of release. So, on August 16, 1943, with Mr. C. E. Bailey, official glider observer standing by, I inadvertently ran into more altitude than I had bargained for.

With my son, Jimmie, at the controls of the tow plane, a 1929 vintage of a Curtiss Fledgling, we were lined up for a west take-off at the Municipal Airport. We had considerable delay getting cleared due to traffic. The run-ways were steadily getting hotter and I was on the verge of prostration from heat when the Fledgling received the green light (45 minute delay). I am delay conscious due to air-line flying.

When approximately two-thirds down the runway at about a hundred feet, the Minimoa (Minnie for short) received a terrific boost of lift. On the spur of the moment I started to release from the tow plane, then on second thought was afraid the Fledgling would drag the four-hundred-foot towline through something at the edge of the field, so passed up the opportunity. I immediately started a left turn, which was the signal for the Fledgling to do the same. In this manner, I can practically control the tow plane to any point where in my estimation I might find better soaring conditions.

Soon we were back near the airport, headed northeast, and release was made at approximately one thousand feet. Being pretty well assured that I had lift at the airport, I purposely tried to hold the release altitude down and still reach the airport. We were soon there with lift suddenly at about ten feet per second, but it



Captain J. Shelly Charles

must have been a fast traveling bubble for it began to diminish rapidly, or maybe I simply could not stay in the region of lift. I did get some at the thousand feet, but within a few minutes I found myself at seven hundred feet on the east end of the airport, struggling to stay aloft. However, I was soon rewarded with better than three thousand and, apparently, sustained flight would be of no effort due to well developed cumulus.

After some time I found myself southwest of the airport under a well developed cloud with good lift and, shortly, on instruments at twenty feet a second. It looked as if I would be able to get the necessary altitude here, but at approximately eleven thousand lift