# Soaring

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## Post-Contest Impressions

FOR the first time we have had foreign competition at a National Soaring Contest. Peter Riedel of Germany, Jonas Pyragius and Bronius Oskinis of Lithuania have been our guests. They have not only charmed us by their good fellowship but also won our unstinted admiration for their skill in the flying of sailplanes.

ON the opposite page and elsewhere in this issue are statistics of performances made during the Eighth Annual National Soaring Contest held at Elmira, New York, from June twenty-sixth to July eleventh inclusive. Lists of figures such as these are apt to seem cold, dry facts until some special significance or conclusion is attached to them. Such significance can be given to these figures and it is highly encouraging.

LET us look at the totals. First we notice that one hundred and forty-seven pilots and fifty-four soaring craft took part. This is nearly double the highest entry of any previous year. It shows a marked step ahead for the movement and opens our eyes for the first time to the need for regional elimination contests and acceptance of entries of qualified pilots only in future national contests.

THEN we have the total number of miles flown, 2,224, perhaps the most significant figure of all. With a decrease of more than one hundred hours from last year's total flown as an indication of the poor soaring conditions prevailing during the Contest we have a total distance flown cross country nearly double that of last year. The conclusions to be drawn here are the greater number of high performance craft, the increased skill of their pilots in thermal soaring, and the undoubted value of airplane tow launchings when slope soaring is impossible.

THE figures for best distance, altitude, and duration all fall below last year's marks. However, when you consider that most of them were made in weak thermal conditions where lift averaged from one to three feet per second and five to ten feet was rarely encountered and that the best altitudes were made from airplane tow and involved instrument flying in clouds to reach heights of close to 9,000 feet above sea level, the record is one of which we can be proud.

ON the other side of the ledger we must consider statistics that do not appear in the tabulations. For the first time our perfect safety record has been marred by accidents. There were four crashes resulting from stalls. It is very fortunate that the most serious injury was that of broken legs. The most disastrous from an equipment point of view resulted in serious damage to three high performance sailplanes.

AS a result of these accidents it was painfully brought home to us that our present license requirements are inadequate and that from a safety point of view we must require a knowledge of stalls and spins and recovery therefrom for anyone qualifying for a commercial glider pilot's license. At a round table conference, those pilots, officials, and instructors best qualified, drew up a set of requirements with the full cooperation of Bureau of Air Commerce officials. These recommendations, which will be printed in the next issue, have been sent to Washington for official action. It may seem to some that the requirement of experience in spins in a light airplane is a step backward, yet it is the concensus of opinion of those of us who have had the experience, as well as the leaders of the movement abroad, that only in this way can we eliminate the greatest single hazard in motorless flying.

LET us not feel that the Contest ended on a gloomy note, as one writer chose to express it. Let us instead feel as we should, that under very trying conditions it was a remarkably successful Contest during which we learned a great deal which will help us to grow on a more solid footing and in the future establish new records for safety as well as performance.