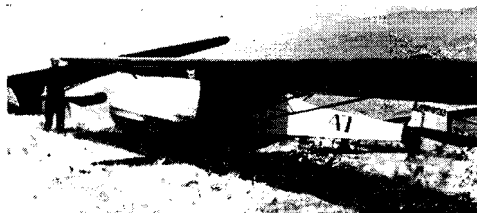


# Soaring in SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

An Account of the Bakersfield Meet

by R. A. Bailey



Stan Corcoran ready to take the air in the HC-1 utility

Photos by the author

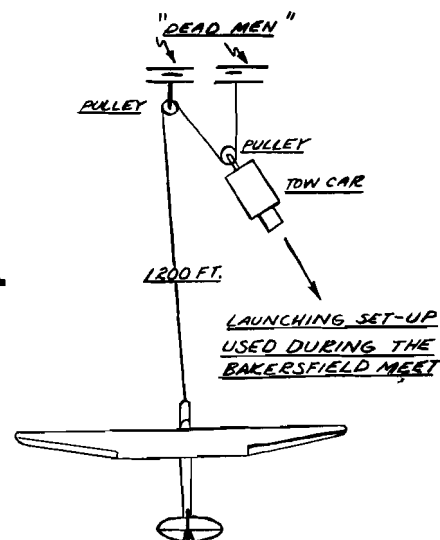
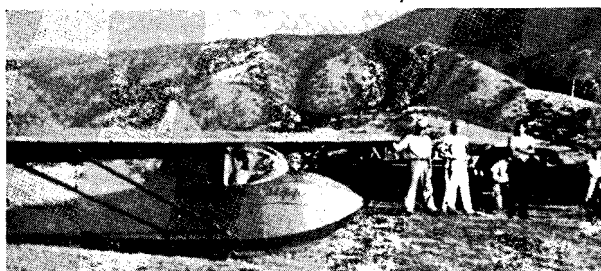
Southern Californians returned from the Eighth Annual National Soaring Contest at Elmira this year vowing to stir up some real excitement among local gliding enthusiasts. And stir up excitement they did! !

Twenty-five pilots, to say nothing of the horde of rabid spectators, packed up their sailplanes and scanties and trekked 125 miles with their eleven ships to the great Tejon ranch near Bakersville, California, to pass judgment on the new soaring site discovered and developed by the Pacific Coast's grand old man of soaring, William Hawley Bowlus.

The occasion was the Labor Day holidays September 6-7-8, 1937, so the boys and girls were given ample opportunity to test this new and promising terrain. Camp tents were pitched beneath the gigantic live-oak trees that dot the hills back of the take-off site, making this one of the most picturesque and romantic settings imaginable for the "king of sports". Camp life was complete with its full complement of pilot's meetings, practical jokers and midnight bull sessions that are the pride and joy of all dyed-in-the-wool glider friends.

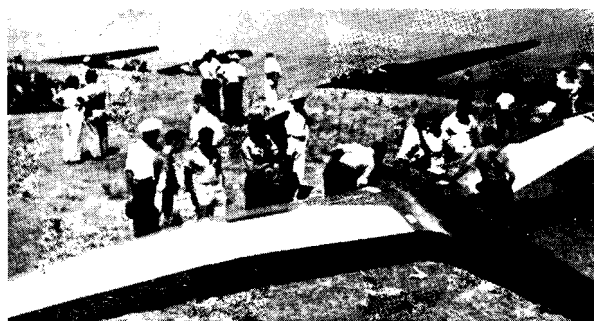
Largely through the efforts of Mr. Bowlus and Harvey Stephens, this huge 60,000 acre ranch was thrown open to soaring enthusiasts through the courtesy of Mr. Hamilton, the ranch manager. Located in the extreme southern end of the great San Joaquin valley, this site is 2800 feet above sea level and 900 feet above the valley floor which stretches past, as we stand on the take-off site, in even, unbroken pasture land ideal for landing and unhampered by any sign of trees, houses, or electric lines. About eight miles away lies the town of Arvin, sur-

Volmer Jensen and his utility



rounded by its fertile grape vineyards, cotton fields and grain fields, presenting a vivid and multi-colored picture. Immediately behind us Bear Mountain towers 7000 feet into the sunshine. It is one of the peaks of the range of mountains extending northward for nearly 500 miles along the eastern side of this great valley.

The take-off site is situated on the foothills below this range and offers runways and landing areas on top of the hill which will accommodate a large number of gliders. In order to facilitate auto towing over the rough spots in the launching runway a system of large diameter pulleys was used to cut the tow car speed in half. An accompanying sketch illustrates the set-up.



View of field and ships

This method of launching gave smooth, even tows and had an advantage of allowing the driver of the car to observe the ship being launched, as he proceeded toward it, and to vary his speed to suit the conditions.

No favorable weather presented itself during the three days of the meet. There were no cumulus clouds and little ridge wind. Despite this, a number of thermal flights were recorded and a total flying time of eleven

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Harvey Stephens safeties a wing connection on his Ross-Stephens sailplane Howard H. Kothe

