



Don Stevens on the test hop of the Corcoran sailplane at Grand Central Airport.

Wide World

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Sunday, December twelfth, 1937, turned out to be the best California soaring day of the year, and only one glider and two pilots were there to take advantage of it. It was a typical California sunny day. A northwest wind was blowing about 25 m.p.h. This makes perfect soaring at Palos Verdes Hills, a ridge about 800 feet high and two miles long.

Stan Corcoran phoned and wanted to know if Frank Wolcott and I were coming out to the hill with our Waco Primary. I asked Frank and he said that he didn't think he would go. So, I asked Stan if I could go out with him, and he replied, "Sure, I need some help to set up the ship."

We arrived at the Hollywood Riviera Glider Field at eleven-thirty and, much to our surprise, there wasn't a soul around, although the wind was blowing steadily. We assembled the Corcoran glider in ten minutes. This ship, which was built by Stan, has a strut-braced wing of 47 foot span and a welded steel-tube fuselage. It is very light and might be classed as an intermediate sailplane.

I towed Stan off first with a 600 foot wire line. With the car moving at ten miles an hour, the ship climbed over 1,000 feet per minute. When I came to the end of the road, Stan cut loose and headed for the cliffs, which are 200 feet high, and soon climbed to 1500 feet. I jumped out of the car and watched him. He waved down to me and I waved back. I then put my hands together in front of me and ran in circles. Stan saw me and started spiralling. I then ran around, making figure eights on the ground, which Stan followed in the air. We had a lot of fun.

After 25 minutes, Stan came in to give me a chance. I took off and started to fly to the Palos Verdes hill, about a mile away. On arriving, I picked the wrong side and could just hold my own, so decided to go on back and land.

Stan then took off and, benefiting by my mistake, flew around the hill and soared on to a large bowl, which shot him up to 3000 feet. He then flew to the city of Redondo, about six miles distant. Arriving back over the hill, with more than a thousand feet to spare, he climbed to 3000 feet and headed to the take-off field. He landed after being in the air for an hour and a half.

I then took off and flew to the big hill and climbed to 3000 feet. This was the first soaring flight I had made in this ship. Stan had asked me sometime before if I would test his ship for aerobatics, so I thought now was a pretty good time. The first thing I did was to find out how the ship balanced. I pulled back the stick slowly, till the ship stalled. It dropped its nose until it picked up speed, then went up to another stall, dropped again, climbed to a still without dropping off on a wing once. That part was fine. I then looked out to the

The Soaring TEST PILOT III

Don Stevens Flies the
Corcoran Sailplane

wing tip to see what angle the chord line of the wing had with respect to the horizon while soaring and, much to my surprise, found that the wing was up on an angle of over three degrees. I pushed forward on the stick till the wings were level, and she picked up about 5 m.p.h. more speed, but did not lose any altitude.

I next tried the ailerons with the wings level, and up at three degrees, and found they worked best in the upward position. I then tried spirals, first to the left, then to the right. I tried for ten minutes before I found out how to spiral correctly. I found, by holding the nose up to about three degrees and then spiral, it made the prettiest turns you ever saw. I then flew away out over the ocean at over 3000 feet altitude and started feeling out the ship some more. First I made shallow dives and pulled up. Each time I dived it a little more and pulled up a little steeper, until I reached an airspeed of over 80 m.p.h. I found it would have plenty of control to go over for a loop and did not feel any vibration in the wings or tail surfaces, but I wasn't quite ready for looping yet. I tried vertical banks to find out how the ailerons worked. In pulling out in steep turns I found it was pretty slow in getting the wings back level but there was plenty of control for stunting. I also found there was a little pressure movement in the elevator. This ship has a balanced, full-cantilever elevator, and about an inch and a half too much over-hang on the leading edge, which makes the stick hunt slightly. This can be corrected very easily and Stan is now fixing it.

I next tried a few wing-overs and found she handled very nicely. I then tried a loop. Heading into the wind, I flew out over the ocean and started to dive. The ship didn't pick up speed, so I dived more and more until the nose was straight down and I finally had what I thought was enough speed for the loop. I pulled back slowly, until the ship was straight up, and then all the way

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Stan Corcoran, left, with Miss Beverly Whitehead, young glider enthusiast, in the cockpit.

Jay Buxton

