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Above: The Goepfingen "Wolf" taking off at Elmira.

Below: Richard duPont in his "Wolf" before setting distance and return record.

The Soaring TEST PILOT - II

FLIES THE WOLF INTERMEDIATE
SAILPLANE

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recess can be lifted out for internal inspection. Sitting on a thin cushion, I slid my feet forward and found two comfortable rudder pedals. The stick is rather short and fitted with a rubber hand grip. On this model there was a small lever fastened on the front of the stick, which trips the DLV sure-acting release. The brake lever comes out of the floor within easy reach on the left side.

It took me some time to get the hang of the four strap harness of the safety belt, which ties you in quite snugly with one pin. It seemed unnecessarily complicated and I confess I prefer our simple belts such as the one made by Waco. Then the cockpit cover was lowered over my head and snapped into place. Right away I noticed that the top of the windshield was on a level with my mouth, but this was no defect in design, as I don't fit too well into any aircraft.

Taking the stick in hand, I moved it all over and was amazed at the smoothness of the ball bearing controls. The rudder also moved freely and well to either side.

After trying the release a couple of times, one of the fellows slipped the smaller of the two DLV links into the release and gave the signal as I told him I was all set. He then ran to hold the wing tip level for me.

It seemed as if the airplane had hardly started to move when he let go and I had perfect aileron control. The take-off run seemed rather long after flying utilities, and thus I first noticed the different feel of the heavier wing loading. Once off, it climbed easily and I nosed it down again at twenty feet to let the Fairchild 22 get off.

In the climb to 3,000 feet, I had little chance to get a feel of the ship, but when I cut loose I experienced a real thrill. From that moment it seemed as if this trim ship would "eat out of my hand", so responsive did it feel to my slightest wish.

I had never felt such aileron control in a glider. This was more like a pursuit ship. At first I tried shallow and then steep banks, either way. She responded beautifully. Then a few dives and wingovers—she seemed designed to do them. Pulling the nose up into a stall, I found no vicious spinning tendencies and, when I did pull it up suddenly so that it fell off on a wing, I had no difficulty in quickly recovering control. All the time I threw it around, I had the comfortable knowledge at the back of my mind that this ship was exceptionally rugged and licensed for aerobatics in Germany.

All this playing around had brought me down to about 1,200 feet, while the variometer showed about 4 feet per minute sinking speed in a normal glide. As I glanced at it now, the needle slowly moved to zero and then

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The Goepfingen I, popularly called the "Wolf" for its designer, Wolf Hirth, has rapidly risen to a position of world wide popularity as it fills so well the need for a training ship to bridge the gap between the utility and the high performance sailplane. There are now three in America and a fourth will soon be on its way over from Goepfingen, Germany.

My first experience with this trim and maneuverable ship was at an airport, where I arrived in time to help take it off its trailer and put it together. The ease of assembly immediately proved to me that it was a practical sailplane from a handling viewpoint. The two wing panels come together at the fuselage and are quickly held in place by pointed pins, secured by safeties. The single strut on each side is fastened permanently to the wing by a hinge joint so there is only one pin to put in at the fuselage fitting. The rudder also remains on the fuselage in the trailer. The horizontal stabilizer slips down over two fixed bolts and is braced below on either side by two dural struts, which remain fastened to the lower fitting when stored on the trailer.

In short order she was together and being rolled out to the take-off place. Yes, I said "rolled", for this is one of the few German ships equipped with a landing wheel—a result of Wolf Hirth's years in America.

While the 450 foot rope was being laid out on the field and the tow plane warmed up, I reached inside the open cockpit and pulled a round wooden knob and off came the cockpit cover, which contains the instruments. As I climbed in, I noticed a comfortable, padded headrest and imitation leather upholstery on the sides of the cockpit.

The round pack of my quick detachable parachute fitted neatly into the well behind the seat. This entire