



WILD FLOWERS *and* SOARING

An account of the Easter
Meet at Bakersfield

by R. A. Bailey

Easter, April 17, 1938—Wildflower time in California. The foothills of the Sierra Nevadas are a luxuriant green, patched with gold—the California Poppy in full bloom. Below, the valley floor is a rolling sea of blue lupine. Above, a brilliant blue sky is dotted with puffy, fleecy white clouds over the vast San Joaquin Valley. The weather is bright and warm with an occasional, but only very occasional, zephyr. On a certain ridge-top on the great Tejon Ranch proudly perch a dozen brightly colored, man-made birds, wing tip to wing tip, as the Hollywood newsreel cameramen busily cover the scene, and thousands of spectators mill about.

Such was the colorful picture as the Second Pacific Coast Glider Meet, sponsored by the Southern California Soaring Association, got under way. Billed as a get-together meet, and dedicated to real sport with no prizes, no trophies and no ribbons to wave in the breeze, it was intended primarily as another opportunity to explore and prove the possibilities of this terrain as a permanent soaring site.

In spite of the fact that no high performance sailplanes took part in the meet, the results indicated, to even the most skeptical, that here is a site having record-breaking possibilities. The meet was held on two week-ends: April 16-17 and April 23-24, and excellent cooperation was given by the Arvin Boosters from the nearby town of Arvin, who graded the launching runway, as well as the road from the highway to the take-off site. This was a definite step forward and aided in handling nearly 1,000 spectator cars, which thronged the hill during the meet. Admission of 25 cents per car was charged, and this netted a nice little sum for the club treasury. Launchings during the meet were accomplished by the same method as last year—that is, a pulley system that reduced the tow car speed by one-half. (See SOARING for November, 1937, page 2.)

Saturday, the opening day, was quiet, with a W-NW wind of 0-5 miles per hour with scattered, ragged cumulus clouds and very weak thermal activity. Stan Corcoran, the brilliant and consistent West Coast pilot, flying his training sailplane, the "Cinema", turned in

the best performance of the day with a thermal flight of 1 hr., 15 min., during which he entered a cloud 3,000 ft. above the field and from which he retired shortly via the airspeed route. Upon landing at the take-off site, he reported that his maximum rate of climb had been only 3 ft./sec.

Woody Brown, flying the "Swift", and John Robinson, flying his "Robin", were both successful in encountering weak thermals and making several flights of fifteen to twenty minutes each. Late in the afternoon, the wind increased to 8 to 10 m.p.h. and Stan Corcoran turned in a masterful 1 hr., 15 min. on the slope, landing at dusk.

Sunday's weather was the same, with the exception that the sky was entirely cloudless. However, thermal conditions seemed better and, early in the afternoon, Hawley Bowlus' new "Baby Albatross", with Stan Hall at the controls, demonstrated its "soarability" with a flight lasting exactly one hour. Stan Corcoran, in the "Cinema", also clocked off 1 hr., 33 min. on thermals over the valley floor. On several occasions, both boys were actually within 100 or 150 ft. of the valley floor and had already selected landing spots, when thermals lifted them back to 3,000 ft.

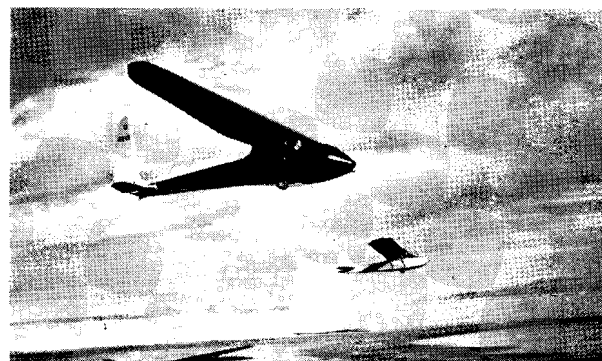
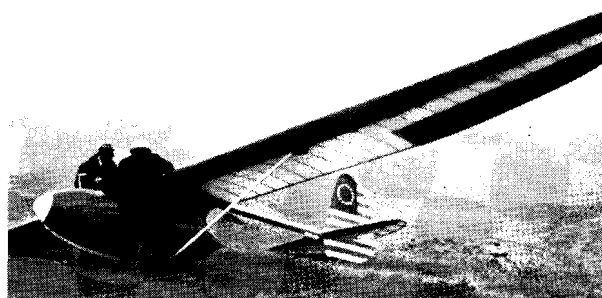
The crowd of three thousand people on the take-off hill was amply entertained during the day with ridge

Upper: The Bowlus "Baby Albatross"

Photo by Jim Campion

Lower: The "Yellow Peril" and "Silver Bird"
make it a twosome.

Photo by R. A. Bailey



John Robinson (right) of San Diego
and his "Robin".

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