

# SMOOTH SAILING



## The Story of the 1938 American Open Soaring Contest



Arriving in Frankfort three days before the opening of the Contest, Ted Bellak and I were first amazed and then very pleased by the extensive preparations already made, under the able direction of Jim Smiley, the live-wire chairman of the town's Glider Committee. It seemed then, and so it continued throughout the meet, that nearly everyone there turned out to lend a hand to put the affair over in good shape. Only a contest director can truly appreciate the multitudinous details necessary for such an undertaking, and perhaps he, too, even after his first experience, can realize best what boring reading they make; so, here goes, without further ado, the tale of the flying that took place.

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 27th

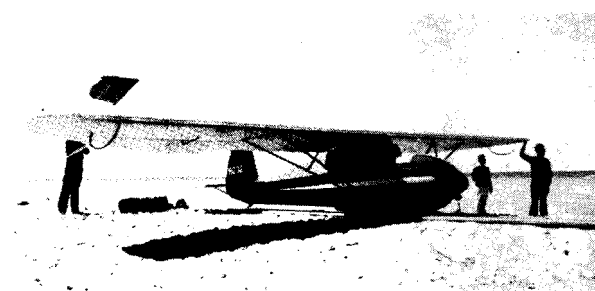
Many times I had to answer the question, "Why start a contest at such an hour as 3:00 p.m.?", to which I replied that it had been customary at Elmira and seemed to work well to get the ball rolling gradually. Therefore, we set up the Meeker winch on the Crystal Downs Beach, east of Pt. Betsie and Scott Royce, flying the U. of M. Franklin, was the first in the air at 3:20 p.m. The wind was weak and quartering from the NE, so Scott was down again in four minutes before "Monty" Montgomery took off in the XYZ Club's Haller-Hawk. He had better luck and stayed up 11 minutes. Third and fourth off were Jack O'Meara and Stan Corcoran in the Baby Albatross and the Cinema, which made the only two flights to count above minimum endurance requirements, with 1 hr. 22 min. and 1 hr. 29 min., respectively. Elmer Zook fell short with 48 min. in the Hawk. Those who made short hops were Lawrence Ely, in the Tri-state Franklin, repainted this year in bright red and black; Al Santilli, in the XYZ Franklin; Harley Hedderly, in Dick Randolph's trusty Cadet, and Bob Buell, flying the Purdue Club's Gross 4-place, with Webb Moore as passenger.

### SUNDAY, AUGUST 28th

This, the first real day of the meet, when a good number of contestants were ready to go to it, was favored with a wind that prevailed from the WSW. Decision was made at the morning pilots' meeting to set up on the Elberta Beach, a half-mile directly south of Frankfort, across the inlet. Like the dunes directly in front of the town, these had never been soared over, so to Dick Randolph, the first in



Frankfort Beach on September 3rd



Stephen Brooks  
The new "Gull" secondary of the Gliding and Soaring Club of Chicago

line with his Cadet at 11:11 a.m., came the satisfaction of pioneering these bluffs, which he did most successfully on a 3 hr. 44 min. flight. Second off was Stan Corcoran who, by keeping over a SW face of the largest bluff, a few miles south when the wind veered in that direction, stayed up 6 hr. 25 min., and was the first to exceed the 1000 ft. minimum altitude requirement, which he did by 25 feet. Third off at 1:02 was Sam Freeman, with the Wings Club Stevens-Franklin, for his first slope soaring. Perhaps he was spoiled by winning his "C" on thermals and, certainly, the quartering wind over the sometimes jagged 150-300 ft. sand dunes was not as smooth as the majority of the flying at the meet, which inspired the title of the article, but Sam reported that his 1 hr. 56 min. were pretty much of a struggle.

Next, in order of take-off, were Santilli, who stayed aloft 1 hr. 48 min.; Montgomery, exceeding his Silver C duration requirement with 6 hr. 14 min., in the Hawk; Bob Eikenberry, forced down after a short flight; Jack O'Meara, 3 hr. 15 min. Jack's experience of sinking into the soft sand with his small wheel taught us that balloon tires are necessary for beach operation. We finally got him off by laying table tops in a row. Stan Smith, with a passenger in his golden "City of Utica", and Ben Badenoch, in the MIT Franklin, were forced down trying to reach the best area for the SW wind.

Art Schultz, in his ABC sailplane, slid across the gaps and stayed up 1 hr. 57 min., before sailing back down wind and landing at the take-off area now thronged with hundreds of interested spectators. With the wind now almost parallel to the slopes but picking up in velocity, Inspector Alberly, of the Civil Aeronautics Authority, ran off a few license tests, which qualified Lawrence Ely, Bob Buell, Ernie Schweizer and Scott Royce as Private Glider Pilots. The only other long flight was 4 hr. 2 min., put in by Warren Merboth in the Albatross, which turned in the best altitude of the day, 1140 ft. This was one of the hardest sites to get to, as it necessitated towing the trailers down a railroad siding and pulling the assembled ships about 200 ft. over a low dune. Already, there were signs