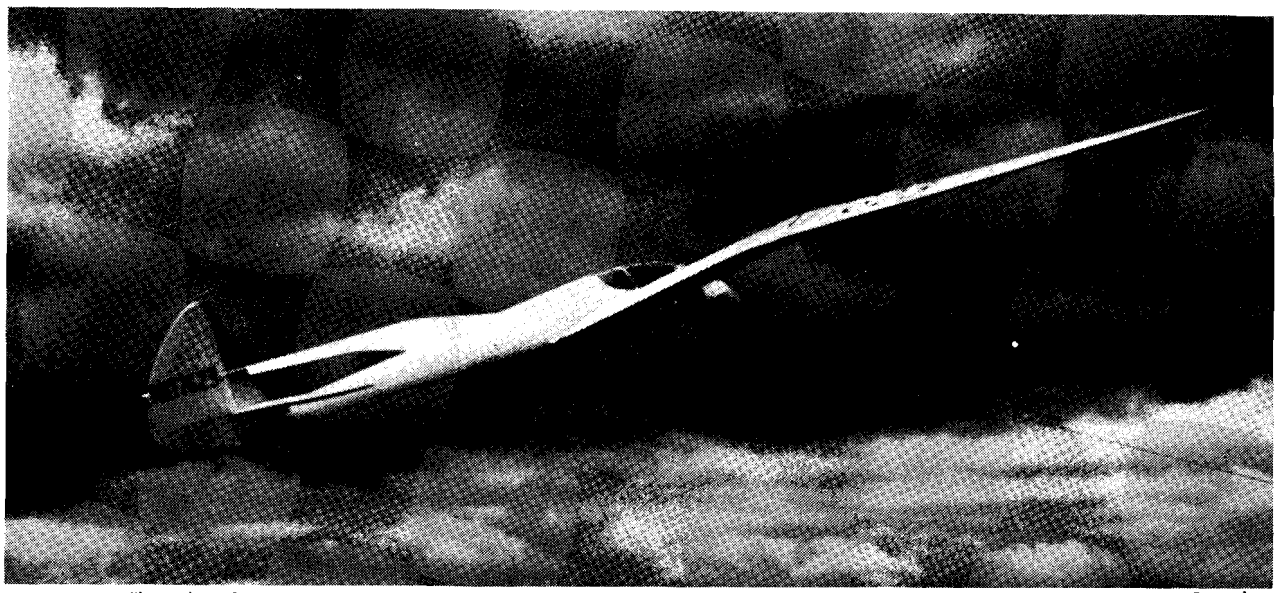

The take-off

Interphoto

The Soaring TEST PILOT FLIES THE ROSS "IBIS"

Before describing the flying of this beautiful new high performance sailplane it is well to tell something of how and why it came to be built. The ideas behind the purchase of a sailplane for the Soaring Society were the promotion of the sport through demonstration and record breaking flights, the encouragement of American sailplane design, and experimental flying for meteorological research. It was originally intended to be used first on the Texas Expedition, but unfortunately was not completed in time.

There have been some who felt that the SSA should have asked for bids from all the manufacturers. The answer to this is that there was not sufficient time for this between the date of its conception and the time it was first needed. Few will fail to agree that Harland Ross' design was the most outstanding American high performance sailplane built during 1937. It had already proven itself and with less than four months in which to have a new ship built it became the logical choice.

The "Ibis", as the new ship has been named for a large, white member of the Stork family famous for soaring ability, is somewhat different from the original RS-1 built by the Ross Stephens Aircraft Company when Ross was associated with Harvey Stephens in Hollywood, California. The new ship was built at Wichita Falls, Texas, home of the Ross family and headquarters of the Texas Expedition. Design and construction details will be explained in a future technical article, but the changes from the original design can be briefly listed as an increase in span, making a higher aspect ratio, new ailerons, longer fuselage with roomier cockpit, higher elevators of new design, change in location of the landing wheel, and wings joining in the center of the fuselage rather than to the wing root fittings.

Privileged to see much of the actual construction during the four weeks in Texas, I could not help but be impressed by the meticulous care used even in the smallest details of construction. It has given me much confidence in flying it.

The first impressions one gets when seeing the ship for the first time are its smallness and its beauty of line. Of course, it is probable that I am somewhat prejudiced but I have had several experienced pilots agree with me that it is the most beautiful ship we have ever seen. The perfection of the unbroken line of the fuselage from nose to tail harmonizes with the graceful sweep of the tapered gull wings. The impossibility of obtaining perfectly matched mahogany plywood used to cover the fuselage and leading edge of the wings, as well as the desire for a striking appearance, decide us in favor of a paint rather than a natural wood finish. The striping and trimming are deep red on white and help accentuate the lines.

Lifting off the transparent cockpit cover of pyralin on light steel tubing, I noticed that the inside matched the exterior, white walls with red seat and red wing spars of the shoulder wings joining behind. In back there is a very spacious compartment for baggage or barographs. The instrument board is of black crackle finish and includes a Horn variometer, Plath compass, Askania altimeter and airspeed, Siemens electric turn indicator, simple ball bank and automobile clock.

Strapping on my parachute and sliding into the seat, I found for the first time in any sailplane, ample and comfortable room for my six feet four inches. One of the boys lowered the enclosure over my head and I fastened it with a snap lock on either side. My first impression was the remarkably fine visibility. Forward, down, sideways and back over my shoulders I could see all I wanted to. The instruments are mounted almost at eye level, yet I seemed to have ample vision ahead over them.