

The Best One YET

by Arthur Lawrence

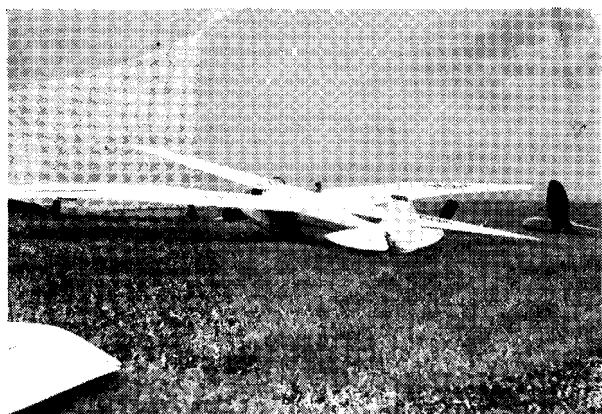
Bob Stanley's flight from Elmira, to Harrisburg brought to a close the most successful National Soaring contest yet held. During the meet, nine new silver "C" awards were won, and the first three golden "C"s to be made in the United States were recorded. The American altitude record was exceeded some seven times, and the figure raised to nearly three times the previous one, with an altitude of 17,264 feet by Bob Stanley. The meet record for distance was broken by the winner of the contest, Chester Decker, with a goal flight of 233 miles to Atlantic City, N. J. The two seater altitude and distance record for this country also went by the board when Lewin Barringer flew 101 miles and attained 6,560 feet in the Airhopper's Schweizer on separate flights.

Among the more spectacular incidents were two thunderstorm flights by Bob Stanley. Bob is one of the small number of high ranking soaring pilots in the United States with an instrument rating, and consequently, is one of the few who have attempted to fly into the raging interiors of these mountainous clouds. On both flights he was forced to leave the cloud because his instruments iced up. His first attempt left his ship with a broken seat and set of loosened control cables. Later during the meet, he again rode a storm to 17,264 feet above the point of release or over 20,000 feet above sea level, to better his previous altitude mark and make what will be the new American record.

Also included in the spectacular category, were the two initiations into the caterpillar club. Udo Fischer, soaring without either blind flying experience or instruments, was sucked into a cloud and wisely decided to leave before the going got too rough. His story appears elsewhere in this issue.

The second initiation was made while Bob Stanley was putting on a stunting exhibition. He had previously spliced a spar that was damaged when he caught the wing in some standing wheat upon landing. While he was in

Lawrence & Schweitzer Sailplanes. Grunau Baby in background.



Loomis

a spiral dive at a velocity of 110 miles per hour, his left wing broke off at the splice. Bob stayed with the ship experimenting with ways and means of regaining control. He finally gave up, and, after great difficulty, bailed out at about 1,000 feet. The ship landed with one wing completely intact, and the fuselage only slightly damaged.

Among the more lucrative prizes was an award for the first pilot to reach the airport at Norwich, N. Y. On the first favorable morning most of the pilots named this as their goal, among them, Decker and Stanley. Merboth was first off, then Decker, and later Stanley. Gradually Stanley overtook, and finally passed Decker, and set out to catch Merboth. He entered a cloud and, upon emerging, spied a sailplane far ahead. With a desperate burst of speed, he closed the gap between them, and was amazed to recognize Decker again in the lead. Although neither of them knew it, Merboth had strayed off his course. By this time they could see their goal 20 miles away. They began to dive toward the field, at well over 100 miles per hour, neck and neck. As they skimmed over the fence, and landed without slackening the terrific pace, there was not a spectator who could determine the winner. Both pilots and all witnesses agreed that it was a dead heat.

A new feature of the Meet this year was the inauguration of the National Sailplane Derby, sponsored by Richard duPont. This event, the first speed trial ever included in a national meet, provides a prize for the fastest time turned in on a goal flight to a certain point which will be selected before each National Soaring Meet. The goal this year was Harrisburg. On the last Sunday of the meet, Bob Stanley again took the spot light when he borrowed the IBIS from Bob Platt (who bought it from the Soaring Society) and made the 125 miles in four hours and 19 minutes, to wrest the \$1,000 award at the last minute from Chester Decker.

We could go on indefinitely telling interesting and thrilling experiences. However, let us look for a while at some of the significant results.

Taking contest performances first, the storm flights on instruments deserve to be considered as the most outstanding advance of the year. Credit goes to Bob Stanley for showing the way. His background and experience as an instrument pilot enabled him to make a systematic study of this type of cloud flying, and his reports, to be published in this and later issues of SOARING, will be poured over by the rest of us with avidity.

The fact should not be lost sight of that the cloud flights made at Elmira—30 flights from 5,000 feet up to 17,264 were recorded—were the outgrowth of two pilots' meetings held on June 27 and 28, when our good friend B. L. Wiggin of the U. S. Weather Bureau talked on

Wolf Hirth telling Parker Leonard.



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