

TEXAS Takes THE Spotlight

A Preview of the Second Annual
Southwest Soaring Meet



Last May, Lewin Barringer took off in a Minimoa from the Wichita Falls airport by winch tow, and flew 210 miles to a new national record. The people of Texas suddenly realized that they were in the center of one of the finest soaring regions of the United States. They knew that the conditions under which the record was established were by no means the best that would occur, but were, in fact, worse than average. They wanted an opportunity to show the rest of the country what can really be done. This spring the Junior Chamber of Commerce of Wichita Falls has created that opportunity by organizing and sponsoring the Second Annual Southwestern Soaring Meet.

The remarkable thermal conditions prevailing over the plains are worthy of note. At this time of year, great cumulus cloud masses form nearly every day, their bases being from 6,500 to 8,000 feet above the ground. The thermals are extremely powerful and long-lived. Well defined cold fronts are common, occurring sometimes as often as three times a week. They can be seen hours before they arrive and often extend over 1,000 miles. Their rate of travel is so constant that their time of arrival can be accurately predicted and distance flights can be planned well in advance. There is only one possible drawback, the extent of which will be determined at the coming meet. Some authorities claim that there is an inversion at about 2,000 feet, and that the strong thermals start above this point. It took Barringer over a week of unsuccessful trials before he got away from the airport. On the other hand, Harland Ross made 7,000 feet in a utility from automobile tow. If this inversion is not a permanent condition, the plains of Texas will probably provide soaring country equal to the best in the world. Even if there is an inversion, the possibilities of high performance from airplane tow are practically unlimited. The 2nd Southwestern Soaring Meet will tell the story.

The Wichita Falls Airport, at which the meet will take place, is an ideal location. It is 4,000 feet by 3,500 feet, running north and south in the direction of the prevailing wind. There is a 3,500-foot concrete runway, 150 feet wide from north to south. Its altitude is 980 feet. A mile from the airport is a government beam and weather station, with two men on 24-hour duty. There are hangars for 25 airplanes and an airport cafe.

The launching will be handled by a winch with 6,000 feet of wire, leased from the Broadmoor Sport and Training Camp at Denver. The contest committee is requiring that 400 feet of rope be attached to the end



Wichita Falls—Looking toward airport.

of the wire tow line. A fleet trainer will be available to any who desire airplane tows and who have the necessary qualifications.

The South Central Region of the United States, which includes Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas, is not thickly populated. Therefore, there are not the opportunities of close club relations and get-togethers that exist in the East. Most of the ships in this mid-central area are built by the pilot owners and most of the pilots have never had a chance to obtain A, B or C Licenses. The lack of licenses is due to a dearth of N.A.A. men in their districts, and also partly because of government regulations regarding unlicensed ships. Ninety per cent of the boys of the mid-central area have never seen a high performance ship in action and have never witnessed a thermal flight. In the State of Texas there is but one pilot who has had any soaring time.

To encourage and increase soaring activity in this area, the Wichita Falls Junior Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring the meet. Its sole purpose is for the advancement of soaring flight and aviation in general in the Southwest.

The entry list is not large, but its quality cannot be disputed. Jay Buxton has assisted nobly in rounding up the California boys who are on their way to the National Meet. The line-up from the West Coast is as follows: Lucretia Buxton, Jay Buxton, Harvey Stephens, John Robinson, Woody Brown, Dick Essery, and possibly Stan Hall.

Jay Buxton, Stan Hall, and Harvey Stephens plan to bring their ships as far as Wichita Falls, and Jay will go on to the National Meet.

Eugene Ardel of the Broadmoor Sport and Training Camp in Denver is bringing his Grunau Baby Sailplane, a secondary ship, and the winch. Other entries are Vernie Ross, Wichita Falls, flying Ross Ranger intermediate sailplane; Tom Oler, Watonga, Oklahoma, in Cessna Secondary; five members of the Denton Club of Denton, Texas, will fly their Franklin; Rolla School of Mines in Rolla, Missouri, in their two-place Universal.

An invitation has been extended to Bob Stanley of Pensacola to compete in the meet and then go on to New York with the others. Hawley Bowlus says there is a possibility of two or three of his ships stopping on the way to Elmira.

Following the suggestions of the S.S.A., state records

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