

Wurtsboro WEEK-END

by Lewin B. Barringer

The long winter and slow arrival of spring had kept many of us on the ground, so pent-up desire for flying was almost at the bursting point. We hardly needed any encouragement to get out and do things, but we had an unexpected incentive in the coincidental arrival in New York of several distinguished foreign pilots and designers.

Focus of interest for the week-end was the scheduled test flying of the rebuilt and slightly redesigned Schweizer all-metal two seater sailplane at Wurtsboro, New York, familiar stamping ground of the Airhoppers Gliding and Soaring Club of New York City.

When we arrived, quite a group was already on hand, but no sailplane. As we were settling down to a picnic lunch, Emil Lehecka, and Henry and Natalie Wightman finally arrived from Peekskill with it; and, later, Ernest and Paul Schweizer and the entire personnel of the Schweizer Metal Aircraft Company. By that time we knew that here assembled was the most international group yet to witness American gliding and soaring. Included in the group were: A. Ivanoff, well known British (formerly Russian) Silver C Soaring Pilot and his friend, G. S. E. Howard, sportsman pilot and private aeroplane owner; Professor Sato, leading Japanese sailplane designed en route from Berlin to Tokyo; Mr. Garbell, a noted sailplane designer from Italy and formerly from Latvia; Alexis Dawydoff, naturalized Russian and Soaring Editor for *Air Trails*; Hans Groenhoff, naturalized German and ace photographer for the *Sportsman Pilot*; and a number of pilots.

By the time that sandwiches had been washed down by hot coffee the Schweizer was assembled but not yet ready for flight. As several willing helpers assisted the painstaking Schweizers with safetying of control cables, installation of gap covers, and final check-up, we walked around the ship to look it over. The graceful fifty-two foot wing looked sturdy as well as shiny with its gleaming natural dural leading edge and fabric covered rear portion painted red.

The cream colored fuselage has a new cockpit cover which combines excellent streamlining with fine visibility for both front and rear cockpit. The only noticeable change, aside from the cockpit cover, since this ship first appeared last summer, was slightly more washout at the tapered wing tips and a vertical fin which was lacking at first.

Emil Lehecka, senior pilot of the Airhoppers and present National soaring champion, made the test flight when everything was ready. Using winch tow he lifted after a very short run, and made a short 360 around the field. On the second flight, he climbed to about five hundred feet and gave us a real chance to see the ship's



Assembling the Schweizer. Ernest Schweizer, left, Paul Schweizer under wing.

performance. Its low sinking speed and flat gliding ration definitely put it in the high performance class.

Then Emil checked out Henry Wightman. Henry was testing the ship for the Soaring Society, who have ordered the second two-place Schweizer (still under construction). We were amazed to note no difference in performance with the addition of 200 pounds in a ship weighing in empty at only 450 pounds.

What wind there was, was in the wrong direction and thermals were few and far between and very weak when encountered (thanks, no doubt, to the cold air and high cirrus overcast cutting off the sun's radiation), so little real soaring was possible. However, Emil caught a little lift now and then on some of his flights and, by judicious spiraling extended a three minute flight to five minutes.

After a masterly solo by Hank, Emil took Ivanoff up and then Howard. Both of them were most enthusiastic. Next, he went up with a newspaper photographer and remained there for 9½ minutes. Then came my turn to take the ship aloft. My first reaction, as it leapt off the ground, was its feeling of stability; my second, as I cut loose and turned left, was its excellent control; and my third, as I circled the field, was its unparalleled visibility. It flew so smoothly, quietly, and effortlessly that I quite fell in love with it. Slipping in and landing after a leisurely 3 minute 360, I called over to Helen. She came on the run, climbed over the wing into the rear seat and strapped herself in. This was a moment of which I had dreamed for a long time—taking my wife up with me in a sailplane. Although soaring conditions were not present, it was even better than I had hoped.

As soon as we left the ground we began talking back and forth. So perfect was the streamlining of the cockpit enclosures and wing roots that we didn't have to raise our voices above a whisper to be heard, although we sat several feet apart and flew between 35 and 40 miles an hour. Here was sport flying at its best—motorless flying with a passenger! The way the ship responded to the least bit of rising air made me sure that it would stay aloft for many hours and make flights of several hundred miles in the proper conditions.

When we came down after a flight that was actually a minute longer than my solo hop, we skimmed low over the boundary hedge, pulled open the spoilers, touched the ground and came to a quick stop as I held the stick forward and pushed on the foot brake. Turning around

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