

# The AMERICAN OPEN SOARING Meet

At the time that this article is being written, five days of the American Open Soaring Meet have passed. Although the weather during those days was most unfavorable, a fair amount of flying was done, and much happened that was worthy of note.

On Saturday, August 26, the opening day of the meet, 9 ships were present. During the pilot's meeting and registration which took place in the morning, the wind was blowing from the east. Since either a west wind for the Elberta Beach site or a north wind for Crystal Downs was required for soaring on the dunes, it was decided that flying should be done from the airport. Shortly before noon, however, the wind shifted into the west. While pilots and launching equipment were being rounded up to go to Elberta, it changed to the north. The word was passed around to go to Crystal Downs, but by the time the winch was ready to leave headquarters there was a fine breeze on the Elberta Dunes. A messenger was dispatched to Crystal Downs to recall those who had already left. The winch arrived at Elberta to find a north wind blowing. It was finally decided to stop chasing the breezes about the country and fly at the airport. As soon as this was done a steady west wind blew for the rest of the afternoon. Ted Bellak in his *Minimoa*, and Stan Corcoran, with the *Cinema* single place, succeeded in squeezing six or seven minute flights out of weak thermals but no outstanding flights were made.

On Sunday, August 27, a south wind blew all day. C. A. A. tests were run off all morning. Although thermal conditions were poor, several pilots at the new Thompsonville thermal site succeeded in making flights of over 25 minutes, and exceeding the minimum altitude requirements of 1000 feet. No cross country flights were made.

On Monday the wind continued from the south. There was no excitement until Vic Saudek, the barograph and weather man, discovered a cold front approaching from the west which was due to arrive at about nine the next morning. Everybody stopped flying early, and the rest of the day was devoted to preparations for long distance flights. Elaborate plans were devised for launching four ships by airplane tow during the short interval between the time that the front would reach the lake shore and the time it would pass the take off sites. Maps of surrounding states were placed in all ships. On the following morning, Vic, who had stayed up all night listening to weather reports, announced that the front had moved only 10 miles, and was rapidly disintegrating.

On Tuesday the sky was full of cumulus clouds at extremely low altitudes. The wind in the morning was from the south. Pat McHenry in his Gull-wing Franklin, attained 1800 feet from the Thompsonville site, making the last couple of hundred feet inside a cloud. Later the wind shifted into the north, affording the first dune soaring of the meet. The clouds coming in from the lake afforded an 800 foot ceiling and several pilots found themselves inadvertently flying blind. Several near accidents resulted from the fact that these pilots could see the ground below them, but did not realize that they could not see other ships at their own altitude.

The two most outstanding features of the meet were the new Thompsonville thermal soaring site, and the two new sailplanes which were entered in competition for the

first time. First a few words about Thompsonville.

The Frankfort Soaring Association felt that, in order to complete their soaring facilities, an inland thermal site was necessary. After much searching, they discovered a huge sandy field about fifteen miles inland from the lake. It had been cleared for cultivation, but later was abandoned. Because of the complete lack of any sign of human habitation for several miles around, and the barrenness of the country, it immediately became known as Siberia. At the present time there is one 4000 foot runway and one 3000 foot runway, at right angles to each other. There are a few scattered trees which do not present any hazard but which are sometimes in the way. When these are removed, and a couple of fences are taken down, both runways will be over 4000 feet long. It will be possible to obtain launchings to over 1000 feet even with two-place ships. Even in spite of the high overcast that prevailed during the entire time that the location was used, many thermal flights were made. This field should prove to be one of the best thermal sites in the country.

In regard to cross country flights, the field is ideally located. It lies just behind the sandy, sparsely cultivated area near the lake. To the south and east there is open farming country. There are also numerous large wooded areas, but they are far enough away so that they may be detoured without too much loss of time. It is not necessary to gain excessive altitude before leaving the field.

The two new designs, mentioned earlier, are the *Cinema* two-place, and the *Midwest* sailplane, both being flown for the first time during a contest. The *Cinema*, as may be suspected from the name was designed by Stan Corcoran and Ted Bellak, along the lines of the well-known *Cinema* single place in which Stan flew 202 miles. It has a very similar appearance to its predecessor with a wing spread of 54 feet. The high wing design provides excellent visibility for the passenger, but causes a slight lack of headroom, which is not serious. The front cockpit is slightly small for a large man like your editor but is excellent for most people. Unfortunately it was impossible to compare its performance with that of the *Schweizer*, since both ships were never in the air at the same time. However, having made one flight with a 110 lb. passenger, it seems to us that the sinking speed is probably slightly less than that of the *Schweizer*, and the glide slightly steeper. The *Cinema* is slightly slower. The maneuverability of both is probably about the same but the *Cinema* requires less control pressure by the pilot. The designers claim that the rudder is too small and will be enlarged. However, it seemed adequate at all times except when taxiing below flying speeds. At the present time Vic Saudek is working on the engineering data necessary for a C. A. A. type certificate. The ship will be produced by the Frankfort Sailplane Company. As yet no prices have been announced.

The *Midwest* Sailplane is a high wing, strut braced craft, similar to the A. B. C. sailplane and in a class with the *Wolf*. The outstanding design feature is the interchangeable utility and high performance wings. The fuselage is of steel tubing, covered with fabric. Folding tail surfaces are employed. The utility wings are of two spar wood and fabric construction, braced with two vee

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