

## GOLDEN "C" ALTITUDE

by John Robinson

The weather conditions on July 4, 1939 at the Tenth Annual National Soaring Contest at Elmira, New York, were excellent for soaring. Tall cumulus clouds of the thunderhead type were forming. Indicating strong thermals. As the wind was from the south, the only take-off method in use was airplane towing. It was getting late when it was my turn to take off, so I decided to go up for altitude and return to Harris Hill to land.

The towplane towed me up in my sailplane "Robin" to 1500 feet altitude where I found a thermal and released the towline. By flying in small circles I remained within this updraft and gained altitude at the rate of 5 feet per second. Soon the rate of climb increased to 10 feet per second and then a cloud formed directly overhead. I turned on my turn indicator for blind flying and entered the cloud base at 4000 feet.

Flying entirely by instruments, I continued to spiral upward and encountered increasing turbulence of the air. Soon I was climbing 15 and then 20 feet per second, which is equal to 1200 feet per minute. It was very rough, but not as much so as I had expected in this type of energetic cloud. My airspeed indicator soon clogged up completely with moisture and the thermometer showed it was getting quite cold, although I was still warm inside my closed cockpit.

I came out of the top of this cloud in the neighborhood of 10,000 feet. Seeing a higher cloud only a few miles distant, I glided over to it, and, after going through several strong downdrafts, found another updraft and soon was spiralling up at the rate of 20 feet per second

again. My hood soon frosted over, it rained a little, and then it started to hail. This was bad! If the hail stones grew very large, they could easily damage a sailplane. They made a terrific noise on the wings and hood and I decided the best way to keep my sailplane from getting holes in it was to get out of this cloud. This I did as quickly as possible, encountering a 25 feet per second downdraft in so doing. About this time I read my altimeter at 12,500 feet. Later the calibration of my barograph showed my highest point as 11,550 feet above point of release, which was 13,000 feet above the field.

There were no more clouds at my level, but there were plenty below me. I headed south, for, with the south wind I had been drifting north all the time while climbing in the clouds. I didn't know just where I was and I couldn't see any familiar land marks through the breaks in the clouds. While I was covering quite some distance, the clouds were closing together until it was solid overcast below me with tall peaks rising up at intervals. Finally I saw a small hole in the clouds far below, and, deciding I had glided about far enough, I stalled the ship and forced it into a tailspin. In this maneuver, which is the only way to lose a lot of altitude quickly, I was sinking 32 feet per second and was coming straight down.

After dropping 5000 feet this way, I straightened the ship out just below the cloud base and found I was only a few miles from Harris Hill. Over the Hill I put on a stunting exhibition with my spare altitude, just to let off steam, for I was the second soaring pilot in America to officially complete the requirements for the Golden "C" honor.

## OLYMPIC SAILPLANE PLANS

We have finally received definite news regarding the Olympic Sailplane, although we still have nothing more than high hopes that we will ever get our set of plans. The fact that it seems to take between three and five weeks for correspondence to travel between here and Germany seems to be the chief cause of delay. The following is a copy of the last letter that we received from the Aero Club of Germany, which tells the story quite well.

The National Aeronautic Association,

Today, (Jan. 6,) we received your letter of October 19th, with the copy of the letter of Mr. H. Wightman, of August 15 (this was a follow-up of an earlier one) which, unfortunately, we did not receive.

We are sending a set of production plans for the Soaring plane, type "DFS Olympia," to be used following point 5 of the circular letter, sent March 5 to all the National Aero Clubs of the FAI. . . . It is possible to make copies of these plans.

Attached, we are sending you a certificate of the Secretary of Aviation which contains a certificate of airworthiness....

Very truly yours,

(Signed) von der Groeben.

The plans mentioned in the letter have not yet arrived.

When, and if, they do, an estimate will be made of the cost of reproducing them, and of changing the dimensions from the metric to the English system, and the plans distributed at cost. It is doubtful whether the cost will be low enough to injure the business of those who are selling plans commercially.

In case it turns out that the plans have been lost in transit, there is an excellent possibility that we will be able to obtain a set of prints from South America, where several of the craft are under construction.

Regarding the entrance of a United States team in the 1940 Olympics, it seems doubtful, at the present time, that there will be any 1940 Olympics at the originally planned location in Finland. Although we are not in possession of official information regarding the fate of the proposed contest, no plans are being made to make up a team.

Further, on the subject of soaring in Finland, the comments of a British observer in that country are of interest. After dwelling at length on the excellent meteorological conditions, and the development of the sport in the sub-arctic, he remarked that, since the country consisted of 30% lakes, and 65% forests, he wondered what kind of a contest they would have had if the Russians had stayed at home.