1940 Eastern States MEET

Labor Day week-end the Eastern States Glider Meet was held at Liberty Corners, New Jersey.

Saturday was a fairly good flying day so far as visibility and ceiling were concerned, but high clouds screened out the sunshine and there was no thermal activity. Approximately 80 flights were made but none of them were soaring flights.

The contest attracted a real array of planes and pilots. Don Lawrence brought both his Cadet and his Lawrence sailplane, more familiarly known as the "Yellow Peril." Les Barton had his English designed Kestrel sailplane. The Airhoppers of Hicksville, Long Island, brought only their Franklin Utility. George Law had his new Huetter sailplane which he recently purchased from Dick du Pont. The Hudson Valley group brought their Schweizer, Aero Club Albatross their open primary glider, and Herman Kursawe his nice new Kirby Kite. That in anybody's language is a real array of ships.

Saturday night, the pilots had one of those rare chances of being between very severe storms. To the east of them was the tail end of the hurricane that came in from the sea at Cape Hatteras. To the west of them was a very well developed line squall, thunder, lightning, torrential rains, hail, and all. Because of severe gusts and high wind velocity gliding activity ceased about 7 P. M. Just after this it became quite dark and the pilots could watch the progress of the storm to the west. To the east were huge banks of dark forbidding nimbus clouds.

All of the gliders were disassembled, put on trailers and stored away in the combination barn and hangar, before the wind succeeded in blowing them over and breaking them up.

After rain squalls Saturday night everything was pretty wet by Sunday morning which rather put a damper on the spirits of the pilots. After consulting a set of weather maps the consensus was that there might be another break between the two low pressures areas that were causing so much damage east and west.

The first break in the weather was a slight breaking away of the clouds. Some of the boys could not resist the temptation to rig their ships even though it was still raining. There was another shower or two and then some clearer weather with a ceiling of about 600 feet. A six hundred foot ceiling, after having zero zero conditions, looks like ceiling unlimited to glider pilots, and some of the first winch tows were up into the clouds. But the clouds lifted until there was just a thin veil of low fast-moving clouds, above which high white clouds were visible. It was these high white clouds that changed the tune of everything, because right here was the evidence of a low passing storm beneath a high canopy of fair weather clouds. By six P.M. on Sunday afternoon the sun was shining ever so slightly and the pilots were gliding in earnest. Only a few of the ships were rigged but those that were got in some flying. About forty gliding flights were made and there was glider activity until the pilots couldn't see the field any more.

Labor Day dawned bright and clear but, before the gliders were set up, fog drifted in and visibility was nearly zero. Ed. Quarterman bought a pair of sun glasses and explained to the pilots that they would be flying in bright sunshine in just an hour or so. With some hesitation they put their ships together and ate their breakfast. Sure enough it cleared up and a real day of gliding started. What happened was what Ed. had guessed might happen. The soaring site was on the top of a hill where there was bright sunshine, and this caused the top of the hill to become warm and heat the air above it. This warm air rose and the low fog that had been lying in the valleys rose up the hill to take the place of the warm air that had already risen. As the fog rose it cooled and this caused more fog. It was not until the sun had a chance to warm much of the atmosphere that the water that caused the fog went back into the air as water vapor.

As often happens after a stormy period the wind on the glider field changed direction about every quarter hour so there was some trouble in moving the winch around the field in order to tow the gliders into the wind every time. Ed. Quarterman had a chance to get off on an airplane tow because of the delay caused by moving the winch. He describes his flight as follows:

"The tow plane flew in from a field farther south in New Jersey and was accompanied by another plane that had a fire siren attached to it. The two planes approached the field, circled to the left as is the required procedure and then the plane with the siren started the worst screeching I ever heard. I guess he wanted to tell us to cease operations while the plane landed. I can now appreciate the effect of screeching bombs that are being used abroad.

"I had to borrow a parachute for my airplane tow from Don Lawrence, and then I found that I had to fly our ship without the cowling. The glider was wheeled on to the take-off line and the tow plane, which was a Wright powered Stearman bi-plane, taxied to a point about three hundred feet in front of me. The pilot turned the plane about and headed into the wind. A rope was attached to the tail skid of the plane and the nose of the glider and so arranged that either of us might release the tow rope.

"I waved O. K. and the pilot opened the throttle of the plane's motor. The glider picked up flying speed quickly and I climbed to about forty feet, then I dove the glider so the plane could also get off the ground. Presently I found myself sitting out in the breeze trailing an airplane at about fifty miles an hour. If you don't think it is hard to see in a fifty mile wind, then some day stand up in the back seat of an open car when it is doing fifty. I kept the glider behind the plane and a little above it and just hung on until my altimeter read twenty-five hundred feet. It was the easiest altitude that I ever gained in a glider. Usually we start tight spirals at about three hundred feet and by the time we get to two thousand we are a bit weary of circling.

(*Continued on page* 11)