

## A NEW EMPHASIS AT THE TWELFTH

by Ed Roth

The closing banquet on July 13th brought to an enthusiastic ending, a contest over which had prevailed a more serious spirit than in previous years. The attention that the nation at large is giving to defense and its problems subtly pervaded the atmosphere at Harris Hill. True, there was the same contagious fervor over the contest flights that spreads from champion to ground worker as there has always been, but the presence of high Army officials, and the delivery of the first Army Glider added a note of gravity to the event.

John Robinson was again named Soaring Champion of the United States—a distinction which he has now won for two successive years, 1940 and 1941. In his sailplane the "Zanonia," he totaled some 2130 points, against 1506 and 1409 respectively for his nearest competitors, William Putnam and Chester Decker. Robinson's longest flight was 170 miles to Troy, N. Y.; he made the second highest altitude of the Meet, 14,250 feet. His ability to turn in such records almost daily served to earn him the championship.

The contest was officially opened at 2:00 o'clock on June 28th with Mayor Lester D. Gardner of the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences as principal speaker. Other distinguished guests included Comm. Ralph Barnaby of the U. S. Navy, last year's President of the Soaring Society; Comm. Albert Rice of the Army Air Corps; and Lt. Comm. Donald Smith of the Naval Reserve. No flights made on this day were officially counted, so there was very little activity in the air.

Sunday, June 29th, the contest really got under way with four point-winning flights. Lyle Maxey flew a Midwest 27 miles to Ulster, Pa., Dick Johnson soared 37 miles to Apalachin, N. Y. in a two-place Schweizer, Robinson piloted his "Zanonia" 39 miles to Windham Center, Pa., and Chet Decker followed the same path making 41 miles to Warren Center, Pa. in his "Minimoa." Numerous short hops were made from the hill for the entertainment of the spectators, as well as for experience for the less-practiced pilots. This day, as well as for the rest of the contest, Ray Parker and Parker Leonard were kept busy giving passenger hops in the two-placers.

Monday, June 30th, brought a decline in activity with only two contest flights. Decker flew 49 miles to Whitney Pt., N. Y., and Bill Putnam was not far behind with a 38 mile flight in the Orlik to Newark Valley, N. Y. Lack of wind and thermals kept most of the other pilots grounded.

Tuesday found more favorable conditions giving a new incentive to the accumulation of points. Several pilots, including the Canadian entrant, James Simpson of Montreal, flying a Kirby Kite, made 50 mile flights to Binghamton, N. Y. Robinson flew 152 miles to the Hudson River, reaching an altitude of 14,250, thus turning in one of the best performances of the Meet. The ironical touch came when Lyle Maxey soaring through a thundercloud found his altimeter registering 18,200 feet—what



James A. Simpson of Montreal, Canada, second from right, and crew, the only foreign pilot at the Twelfth Annual National Soaring Contest.

was apparently a new American altitude record—his barograph was only set for around 14,000, so anything above that would have been unofficial. Actually it was discovered that through an error in his altimeter his maximum altitude was about 16,000 feet. Nevertheless, the 14,400 point where his barograph went off set the maximum altitude made at the Meet.

Wednesday, the 2nd, offered all kinds of excitement. It was Earl Southee Day, with Brig. Gen. Donald H. Connolly of the C. A. A. being the guest speaker. It also marked a new era in Gliding and Soaring when the first Army glider was delivered to Major Fred R. Dent, jr.

Several 40 mile flights were made, but by far the most spectacular news of the day was made by Decker's 225 mile trip to Wapping, Conn., just outside of Hartford. No new distance record was established by this, but its importance was due to the fact that before this no one had been able to get across into the New England States from this direction due to lack of favorable conditions.

July 3rd was sort of the "day after," with only Putnam and Laine making contest flights.

The 4th arrived, and rain with it, making cross-country flying impossible. The atmosphere cleared enough to make passenger hopping profitable, but for the most part, any activity on the Hill was strictly of a non-soaring variety.

Saturday, the 5th, was better with Robinson making his flight to Troy, Decker following close behind with 160 miles to Schenectady, and Putnam bringing up the rear with 129 miles to Dolgeville, N. Y.

July 6th and 7th were exceedingly dull, with bad weather grounding the ships most of the day. One bright spot was caused by the arrival of Zack Mosely of "Smilin' Jack" fame. He and his attractive wife are annual visitors at our contests. On the former day an estimated crowd of 10,000 people gathered in spite of the bad weather,