

# *The* FIFTH ANNUAL WESTERN MEET

by DAVID A. MATLIN, President  
Southern California Soaring Association

**W**HEN Vic Saudek and I met in the middle of May to make arrangements for a modified version of our Annual Western Gliding and Soaring Championships at Bishop, California, over Memorial Day week-end, May 30 and 31, 1942, prospects for a successful meet, or even for holding a meet, did not look very bright.

Five of our best pilots and ship owners were instructors at 29 Palms; five other pilots had already gone or were getting ready to leave with Harvey Stephens for the new glider school at Wickenburg, Arizona; Gus Briegleb and Dr. Klemperer were back East and would not return in time for the meet; Volmer Jensen and Hawley Bowlus were engaged in production and could not attend the meet; and others were working in defense plants which would not close on Saturday, Memorial Day. In addition to all this, the chances were that the army would cancel the meet, in the event we went ahead with our plans. Also added was the fact that Bishop is 275 miles from Los Angeles and the local papers were filled with news to the effect that California would be included in the proposed nation wide gasoline rationing plan.

However, Vic and I decided that if the Association was going to hold any meet this year that we had better proceed with our plans, especially in view of the fact that Vic himself was getting ready to leave Los Angeles for the East. First of all, we advised George Deibert and Robert Symons of Bishop that the Southern California Soaring Association intended to hold the meet at Bishop and for them to make the necessary arrangements in that city. We then wrote to the Commanding General of the Fourth Interceptor Command and to the Commanding General of the West Coast Army Air Forces Training Center at Santa Ana and invited them and their staffs to attend the meet. We felt that if the army was going to cancel the meet that we would be immediately notified of that fact which would save us further work on the arrangements. We felt quite relieved when the answers expressed the best wishes of the two Generals for a successful meet.

On the Thursday before the meet some of us motored up to Bishop which is on the main highway from Los Angeles to Reno, Nevada, and in making the trip some of the most beautiful scenery in America can be seen. At Lone Pine, which is 60 miles south of Bishop, we

could see Mt. Whitney, highest point in the United States and 14,501 feet in altitude, by looking to our left. By turning our heads to the right we could see Death Valley, lowest point in the United States and probably one of the hottest places in the world.

Between Lone Pine and Bishop are two small towns, Independence and Big Pine, and it was interesting to note that the four cities had airports near the main highway and that the airports were filled with small power planes. Later we ascertained that there are many C.P.T.P. operators on these four fields.

We arrived in Bishop that night and I immediately called George Deibert and ascertained that satisfactory arrangements had been made for the use of the Bishop field, and that everything was in readiness for the meet. The next morning I inspected the field and was agreeably surprised at what I saw. The field has an area of about 4 square miles and it has five runways, each being approximately 200 feet wide and 5800 feet long, and all of the five runways are paved. The field is in the middle of a valley some 20 miles wide and possibly 100 miles long, surrounded on the east and west by the High Sierras, which range up to over 14,000 feet in altitude. The Bishop field itself has an altitude of 4100 feet. There are four C.P.T.P. operators using the field with most of the students coming from Central California.

That afternoon our party drove up to the High Sierras and walked around a few of the hundreds of lakes nestling in the mountains, and we watched the State Fish Hatchery stock some of the lakes with thousands of trout. Either the high altitude or the sight of the trout intensified our appetites to an astonishing degree.

That afternoon we returned to Bishop and after dinner we walked up and down the streets looking for either glider pilots or gliders. We did not see any and were getting quite discouraged when we suddenly ran into the first pilot—Red Slatter. A few minutes later we met another one of the Association members and for the next hour we stood on one of the street corners and watched Bob Symons drive up and down the streets of Bishop with his glider. Later, we found out that Bob Symons was the cause for the rumor that over a dozen sailplanes had arrived in Bishop for the meet. Saturday morning at 6 a.m. Vic Saudek telephoned me and stated that he and Bill Eichleay had driven up during the night and that