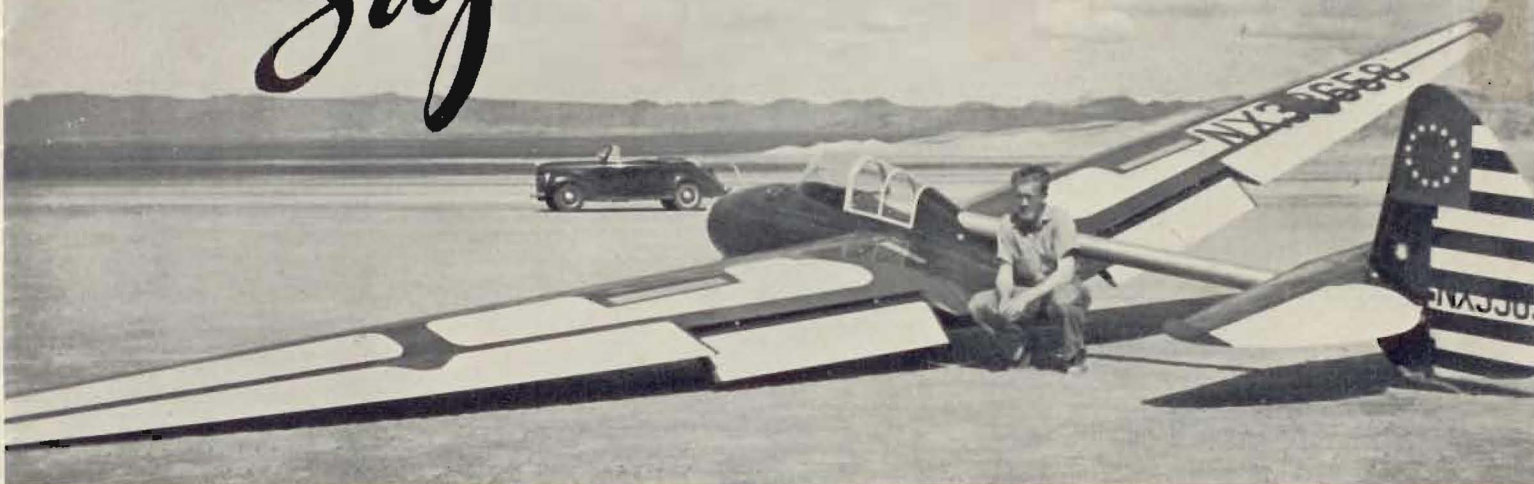


Super Albatross



by Wm. Frank Kelsey

SINCE the outbreak of hostilities nearly all of California has been designated as a restricted zone so far as private flying is concerned; however by traveling a bit east (200 miles by road) to a place called Baker, Calif.—you can just barely get yourself into "free" territory again.

Baker is definitely desert with a capital "hot," being not far from the southern end of Death Valley, altitude just 900 feet above sea level.

The first Glider expedition to Baker was made last May 11-12, 1942, to test fly my new Super Albatross which I had just finished for the Annual West Coast Championship Meet at Arvin, which we didn't have this year.

First a word about the ship—

It is a copy of the original Super that Woody Brown flew so successfully at Arvin a couple of years ago, incidentally winning the meet with John Robinson close behind. The main changes being, "beefing" up all over in general, increased cockpit and head room, stabilizer and elevator mounted above the boom instead of the pendulum flippers, increased ground angle by increased wing incidences, slotted spoilers, a very "snazzy" paint job (if I do say so myself) and last but not least, slotted flaps that can be controlled from the cockpit individually—more about these later.

The ship is fitted with both pellet and dial variometers, altimeter, air speed, bank and turn, compass, chute and two very ample adjustable ventilators (a must for any soaring ship), clock and vibrator for the instrument

board; and a completely enclosed trailer that sleeps four.

The site at Baker is a dry lake called Soda Lake and is just off the main highway to the south of the town. It is designated as an auxiliary landing field for Silver Lake Airport some ten miles to the north of Baker in the same valley.

Part of the lake is covered with puffy crust of blisters but a car can drive very nicely at a good rate of speed and a tow can be made for about three miles.

A few preliminary check flights were made after which 2600 feet of steel wire was laid out and tows to 1600 feet made.

After five flights were made dust devils were noticed and soon lift was located and after a slow climb to 2000 feet a glide was started for some hills about three miles distant. Good lift was again found and after spiralling for several minutes the cloud base was reached, and at 7600 feet a nice cloud had formed from the thermal I had located.

As the ship was new and not being familiar with the art of blind flying, I left well enough alone and contented myself with chasing around under each new cloud as I spotted them starting to form and spent the next two and one half hours between 4000 and 7600 feet which was all but in the clouds.

A new theory was tried out on this flight, which is a pet of Howe Morrison who was runnerup in the last Arvin contest and currently an instructor in the 29 Palms Air Academy.

His theory is that as you approach the vertical turn