

What's Cooking

By EMIL KISSEL

WHAT kind of soaring facilities are there between San Francisco and New York? By means of a light plane this winter, I visited as many places as I could.

In the San Francisco Bay area, the SSNC has been fairly active until the rainy season turned every adobe runway into sticky mud. The two club ships (TG-3 Schweizers) were operated out of Tracy Airport and Stockton, but are stored at Abel Field awaiting the good spring weather and a try at slope soaring on the nearby hills. (Out west anything under 3000 ft. is a hill.) The intention is to use PT-17 tows and perhaps for the first time, the Bay area will be fully exploited for its soaring facilities. Maurice Garbell gave a talk that was well received by members of SSNC. Les Arnold has his commercial glider rating and has done a considerable amount of low altitude thermal soaring around Tracy in the club TG-3. Art Hunter intends to build a Briegleb BG-8. George Congdon is rebuilding his Wolf but is going right after his commercial at the Rossart School.

Art McCarthy is operating the Rossart Soaring and Gliding School at Stockton Sky Harbor. Art was at the Twentynine Palms school during the war and has a PT-17 towplane and two TG-3's plus other privately owned gliders. The field has dirt runways with excellent approaches and considerable construction going on. Art operates seven days a week using airplane tow and auto tow. A dozen or more Schweizer TG-3A's may be added to the equipment. With the Sierra Nevada Mountains not far to the east, the distance record may soon fall.

Further down the valley Frank Kelsey has his super Albatross at Fresno, but no full time operation is contemplated. Frank went up to 8100 ft. November 10, which is remarkable in presumably stable air.

At Tulare Bud Kimball holds forth at the Municipal Airport with a PT-17 towplane and Schweizer 2-22 and 1-19 and an NC Baby Albatross. He is instructing power and flying crop dusters for Rankin Aviation Industries and developing the soaring potentialities in this area. Bud is noted for his acrobatics at air shows in the Los Angeles area. Topping the endurance record has him weighing the possibilities. He is an old timer in the sport and has many definite ideas on what ails soaring and how to cure it. All indications are that this operation will not be repeated next summer.

El Mirage Airport (near the dry lake from which it gets its name) is without a doubt the most ambitious project in soaring schools. Gus Briegleb is tackling the fundamentals in this desert area of king-size thermals. It is to be a full-time school by June with auto, winch and aero-tow available. I can attest to the size of these thermals from the rough rides I got flying my T-craft from the Bakersfield pass to El Mirage on a November afternoon. These fabulous westerners claimed it was a poor soaring day. Gus owns this surplus Army airport some ninety miles from downtown Los Angeles and is now busy constructing a tower, bunkhouse, lunch counter,

and other facilities. Partial flight operations started in January, with full-time operation expected by June. I hope that he makes a success of this set-up as it will be a large boost for the soaring movement. On the design boards he has the BG-10 and 12 which will add new ships to his proven BG-6, 7, and 8.

A sidelight here is the successful test flight of a small high performance sailplane built by Irving Prue made here November 10. Outstanding features are its size, 40 ft. span and aspect ratio 18, and magnesium wings plus a fuselage made from a B-38 belly tank.

About thirty miles west lies Palmdale Airport. Here Nelson has established a distributors' school for the Nelson Dragonfly. The airport is another of those king-size jobs with 7200-ft. runways. Myron Wells gave me a ride in the first NC ship. This NC was a one-year test of the tenacity and financial ability of the company to go through all the CAA tests and requirements to get that approved type certificate. The 25 hp. 2-cycle, 4-cylinder magnesium engine starts surprisingly easy on the ground and in the air. The ship has the usual high-grade mahogany finish and the canopy is something to be admired. The rate of climb averages out at 200 ft. a minute with a maximum of 275 ft. per minute at sea level, and minimum sink at about 4 ft. a second with the gear extended. It is a little heavy on the controls but we were flying at minimum sink speed (48 mph). They are in production and will certainly solve many of the enthusiasts' problems.

The country through Arizona and New Mexico is mountainous but you can land almost anywhere and this is the site of Dick Johnson's two-place distance record. It proves the widely held contention that the further you get away from the coastal areas the better are the soaring conditions. I didn't get to stop at Ray Parkers' school at Twentynine Palms, which is quite a way inland, so, therefore, don't know what's going on there. Vernie Ross has a two-place ready to go and will have the Ross Ranger II in time for the nationals.

(Continued on page 17)



Vernie Ross and his twoplace — The Ranger I.