



Photos by James Walsh, courtesy Elmira Sunday Telegram

Frank Hurtt taking off in a TG-2 from snow covered Harris Hill

Snowbirds, 1947

By GENE BARDWELL

PILOTS and other gliderfolk from three states converged on Harris Hill, Elmira, N. Y., for the annual Snowbird Soaring Meet, Thanksgiving weekend. The score or more soaring fans and flyers from out-of-town points in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania who came to the Glider Capital were welcomed by about double that number of gliding enthusiasts from the host community. Sub-freezing temperatures failed to cool the ardor of the Snowbirds, although many flights at the informal get-together were abbreviated by reason of the wintry atmosphere.

On Friday, Nov. 28, a west wind prevailed when pilots took to the air in the afternoon. After several flights made on the ridge, two visiting pilots, after considerable time aloft, made one too many thrusts out over the valley and had to land their ships "down below." Of course it was the frigid air which made these oldtimers' faces red!

After an early morning snowfall on Saturday, the weather was clear, with a good ridge wind. Thermals to 200 ft. prevailed throughout the day. Howie Burr's TG-3 flight of two hours and five minutes proved to be the longest flight of the three-day meet. Physical discomfort from the low temperatures persuaded many flyers to land back on the Hill before exhausting the lift.

Stronger thermals and a brisk ridge wind made for fine soaring Sunday. Scattered snow squalls did not deter the hardy pilots from enjoying an aggregate of many hours aloft. Besides the activity on the Hill, a few launchings were made via airplane from the County Airport. In one of these, Paul Schweizer,

making a test flight in Dick Comey's 1-21 (which had undergone some modifications in the Schweizer factory), reached 4,000 feet. He reported a temperature reading of 10°+ at that altitude. . . .

George Tabery entertained the gallery of spectators (most of whom watched from inside the Administration Building, lounge), with aerobatics. Frank Rhodes made a short flight in his Pratt-Read after an airplane tow from the Hill—the only plane tow made from the Hill during the meet. Auto-pulley and straight auto tows, provided by the Elmira Area Soaring Corporation sponsoring the meet, were employed for all the other launchings.



Dick McGrath, Chairman of the Meet, Paul A. Schweizer, Secretary of the SSA, George Tabery, aerobatic expert.