

THE SOUTHWESTERN

By HAL CRONKHITE

Contest Director



Photo Associates

1948 Southwest Soaring Champion John Robinson in the cockpit with Crew Chief John Olley at his side.

THE 1948 edition of the Southwest Soaring Contest was a typically well-run, enjoyable regional event held at NTAC Airport, Grand Prairie, Texas, from July 24 through August 1. It was hampered by the lack of good long distance soaring weather, a matter slightly beyond the sponsors' control.

Sponsored by the Texas Soaring Association, the North Texas Agricultural College and the Grand Prairie Chamber of Commerce, the contest held the sanction of the Soaring Society of America.

Saturday, July 24, proved to be the best day, insofar as weather was concerned. Taking advantage of this, Johnny Robinson made the longest flight of the meet, a matter of 209 miles, to Kirkland, just three miles short of his goal, Childress.

Raymon Parker and Richard Lyon succeeded in making goal flights to Olney Municipal Airport, 112 miles away, landing three minutes apart. The ground crews of each pilot were on hand when they landed.

Dick Johnson set down near Paradise, 49 miles from departure; Wally Wiberg flew two miles west of Rhome and Joe Irvine two miles west of Boyd. Flying the "Screamin' Wiener," Bob Thomas came down near Scotland after a flight of 102 miles. Bob was slightly shaken on landing when the wheel bearing of the craft froze.

The remaining Contest days were not favorable to good distance flights. Two factors hampered the soaring competitors. A daily inversion, preventing thermal activity until a temperature of 96 to 100 degrees was reached, seldom permitted early takeoffs. Only three flights were started before 12:30 P.M.,

CST. Thus much valuable time, essential to record flights, was lost.

The second undesirable condition was rain, which occurred almost daily with storms extending over large areas. These were especially prevalent in North Texas near the Oklahoma line. Many pilots were forced down in these areas since they were not able to penetrate or bypass the storms.

July 28 was scheduled for the International 100 Kilometer Speed Dash. The course lay between NTAC Airport, and Graham Municipal Airport at Graham, a distance of about 90 miles. But a strong wind normal to the 100 kilometer course prevailed on that day and this, with the added hindrance of poor thermal activity, caused cancellation of the speed dash and the declaration of July 28 as a "no contest day."

The special event days, Sunday, July 25, and August 1, were successful from the point of showmanship and the excellent manner in which the events were coordinated. Success can be attributed to the careful planning of Vangene Skiles and Paul Allen as well as to the skill of the contestants.

John Robinson made the best altitude gained during the meet to win the \$50 cash prize posted by the First National Bank of Grand Prairie. Robinson gained 12,850 feet with a maximum altitude of 14,500 feet above takeoff point.

A close contender was Joe Irvine, who reached 14,000 feet maximum with a gain of 11,000 feet, qualifying for Golden "C" altitude.

Dick Lyon won the \$100 cash prize awarded by the Dalworth Company and M.A.C. Builder, Inc., of Grand Prairie, for the longest two-place distance with passenger. Lyon covered 77 miles to Bowie with Lyman Wiard as his companion on the hop.

Assisting the Contest Director was a staff that deserves commendation: Vernie Ross of Wichita Falls, in charge of Barograph and Records; Ted Lange, of the U. S. Weather Bureau, Fort Worth, Weather Forecaster; Vernon Fincher, of Denton, Takeoff and Operations Chief; Lyman Wiard of Fort Worth, Contest Communications; Vangene Skiles of Denton, Spectators; and Paul Allen of Grand Prairie, Special Events; John Hall of Denton, Chief Tow-Pilot.

Throughout the meet the pilots exhibited fine sportsmanship and all seemed well pleased. Living accommodations and food provided at the North Texas Agricultural College drew high praise.

There were nine days of competition, July 24 to Aug. 1. No contest points were awarded on July 25, July 28, and Aug. 1. Only a pilot's five best scores counted. Only those earning at least 50 per cent of the average of the top three contestants points participated in the point award fund.