



FLASH! New Single-Place National Altitude Record subject to homologation by the SSA and official approval by the NAA. John Robinson (above) telegraphs, "Flew Zanonja January 1, 1949, from Bishop to Muroc, Calif., reached ceiling 33,300 feet, gained 24,000 feet, three hours on oxygen."

Bishop Soaring

By HARLAND ROSS

BOTH the Official and unofficial National Soaring Altitude Records were exceeded twice in two days during a sensational wave soaring expedition held at Bishop, California, over the Christmas holidays.

Paul MacCready, Jr., of New Haven, Conn., climbed the "Orlik" to 29,500 feet asl (above sea level) in a lenticular wave condition from a low point in free flight of 9,860 feet asl on December 31, 1948.

On the following day, John Robinson of Arcadia, Calif., made the outstanding flight of the entire two-week expedition when he piloted the record holding Ross-Stephens "Zanonja" to 24,000 feet above low point and to 33,300 feet asl.

Since John landed at Muroc Army Air Base and returned to his home the next day, I was unable to obtain all the highlights of his flight.

He took off at noon on January 1 and was towed by our BT-13 to 10,000 feet where he released near Mt. Tom west of Bishop in the lee of the Sierras. He climbed up on the wave and started South where I had pointed out the best type of cloud for his altitude attempt. He was on oxygen for three hours and his canopy was iced over for the complete flight. He reached his best altitude near Independence, Calif. Due to the Owens Valley becoming overcast he was forced to fly south toward the desert and landed just before dark at Muroc, a distance of approximately 175 miles.

Others present on the expedition at Bishop were: Fred Walters, Carl Walters and Dick Lyon with the Walters L-K; John MacDonald and Bob Symons with the Inyo-Mono Soaring Association TG-3; Dick Johnson with the rebuilt "Tiny Mite."

Lew Mass and John Olley crewed for the "Orlik" and "Zanonja" respectively. I served as "JATO"—Jack of All Trades Official—doing towing, crewing, officiating, etc. as needed.

Paul MacCready was the first to arrive and stayed the full two weeks, sitting out some very cold days with the temperature down near zero. He made some sink tests on his "Orlik" and both he and I flew the "Tiny Mite" to pronounce it very good.

During the first week two very weak fronts passed and Paul made one flight after dark, releasing at 10,000 ft. asl and climbed to 13,000 before returning to the field and landed by the use of a flare and the field lights. A few days later he was towed to the lee of the Sierra Mountains and released at 9,000 asl and climbed in the wave to 18,000 asl before the lift weakened.

After checking the weather on December 31, 1948, and finding a weak front moving in from the West with high lenticular clouds over the mountains, he obtained the winds aloft from the morning balloon run.

The surface wind was from the South at 3 m.p.h. From there up to 9,000 ft. asl it was light and variable. At 10,000 ft. the wind was 12 m.p.h. from the West, the velocity increasing up to 33 m.p.h. at 16,000 ft. while the direction stayed practically constant. From 18,000 to 20,000 ft. it was from 300° at from 25 to 28 m.p.h. From 25,000 ft. to 45,000 ft. it gradually swung around from 260° to 240° and the velocity increased from 32 to 76 m.p.h.

Rather sharp shears occurred between 12,000 ft. and 14,000 ft. the velocity jumping from 18 to 31 m.p.h. and between 30,000 ft. and 35,000 ft. where the velocity went from 43 to 75 m.p.h.