



The Associated Glider Clubs' Schweizer TG-2 Makes the First Flight of the Competition

Pacific Coast Championships

By JIM SPURGEON

With excerpts from the THERMAL

GLIDING in San Diego should be on a pension—it's sixty-six years old now. The long period since John J. Montgomery made his first flight here in 1883 was climaxed on February 26 and 27, 1949, with the Third Annual Pacific Coast Midwinter Soaring Championships, which were held at the Torrey Pines Gliderport.

The two-day contest, co-sponsored by the Associated Glider Clubs of So. Calif. and the San Diego Junior Chamber of Commerce, sanctioned by the SSA, drew the nation's top talent in the art of soaring. Eighteen ships were entered in the meet and a total of twenty-two pilots were registered, among them such soaring figures as MacCready, Robinson, Parker, Stiglmeier, Tuntland and Johnson. The show created great interest among the general public: over 10,000 people witnessed the spectacle of graceful motorless flight along the shores of the Pacific, and many more have since seen newsreels of the event in their own neighborhood theatres.

At one time there were 14 sailplanes soaring together, giving the photographers a field day. Several of the ships "posed" just off the edge of the cliff, 300 feet above the water.



The John J. Montgomery Soaring Club did O.K.

The contestants had gained altitudes ranging from 100 to 400 feet above the edge of the cliff, when suddenly there was a lull in the wind. Many of the pilots who had over 2½ hours duration strove desperately to avoid coming down, as everyone was competing for first place in duration, but at last the heavier ships and more cautious pilots landed one after the other.

Among the last six remaining in the air there was a real contest to stay up longest and still land at the gliderport on top of the cliff. A beach landing was disqualifying.

Milton Kuntz—TG-3, Bob Fronius—Robin, and Dick Johnson—TG-2 all slipped below the edge of the cliff, hoping vainly for the wind to pick up again. John Robinson—Zanonia, Paul MacCready—Orlik, and Harold Huber—Senior Albatross were all hanging on just above.

Kuntz landed on the beach first. Then Fronius and Johnson did likewise, after flying at half mast on the cliff for some time. Robinson dropped a little below the edge and then slipped in over the top to make the field after all. Seconds later the wind blew stronger. MacCready and Huber, with ships of lightest wing loading, remained aloft to battle it out for first and second place duration, after again reaching comfortable altitude. (Comfortable means above 100 feet.) Soon all the ships were being launched to soar again as the wind remained steady.

The Stearman went to the rescue of all those who went "beach-combing" except Bill Kuntz, who had to be fancy and auto-towed from the beach. He soared on all the pebbles along the way and made the Gliderport on his own.

The Championship was awarded to Paul MacCready. The present U. S. National Champion flew his Polish-built Orlik and won the John J. Montgomery Memorial Trophy for amassing the greatest number of points in the Contest. He also won the Ryan Aircraft Duration Trophy with his 5 hrs. 15 min. flight.