

THE MIDWESTERN

By ED KNIGHT

Contest Chairman

THE highly successful revival of the Midwest Soaring Contest in July, 1948, was held as part of the Toledo summer festival. Both the Army and the Navy had declined to put on the desired air show for the festival, and other plans were rejected as too expensive or not sufficiently interesting to the general public. For the Aquarama Committee, the organization sponsoring the festival, a soaring contest proved to be the ideal solution, because of its low cost and wide appeal.

Fortunately, Johnny Nowak was living in Toledo and agreed to be our Contest Director. Through his efforts, such old-timers as R. E. Franklin and Emerson Melhose were persuaded to join the contest, the former as Barograph and Rules Official, the latter as Operations Chief. Next we contacted the CAA, worked out details with the Airport Manager, Control Tower and Weather Bureau, arranged for housing, towplanes, prizes, publicity, entertainment, and wrote the SSA for information, suggestions and sanction.

After four bulletins had been sent to SSA members in the Midwest area, eleven entries were received, and by Thursday night, July 22, most of the sailplanes were in the hangars at the Toledo Municipal Airport, ready for an early start Friday morning.

Thursday night, incidentally, proved to be a little hectic for the Contest Chairman. We had written the Air Force asking for a troop glider pick-up demonstration, but due to certain insurance and other requirements we could not meet, Headquarters in Washington regretted the invitation. The Test division of the Air Force at Wright Field, however, promised to send a C-46 transport and a Chase cargo glider over from Dayton, to arrive Friday afternoon.

At 6:30 Thursday evening the airport called and asked if I knew anything about a troop glider and tow plane from Greenville, S. C. I replied that I did but that Washington had told us they could not come to the contest—and that was as far as I got. The airport informed me that fourteen Air Force officers and men were waiting at the field for cars, if not a reception committee. A hurried phone call arranged hotel rooms and transportation for the unexpected arrivals.

Needless to say, this group from Greenville and the group from Dayton gave a splendid demonstration of two different types of Air Force gliders and added a great deal to our three-day contest.

At eight o'clock Friday morning the pilots were briefed on local field rules, flight patterns and general safety precautions. Don Coleman of the Weather Bureau and Larry Thompson, former weather forecaster in the Armed Services, forecast good soaring by noon, or as soon as the temperature had risen about ten degrees. When a guinea pig flight at eleven reported a few weak thermals, the first day's activities began.

Johnny Nowak managed to direct the over-all operation and at the same time keep the public informed on everything that was happening from the glider opera-



Operation Toledo—Nowak at the mike.

tions tower, a platform on the roof of a station wagon. The local Naval Reserve furnished a power supply truck with loudspeaker equipment. Communication with the Control Tower of the airport was maintained with a transmitter in a private plane. Our operations could be moved at a moment's notice in case of any change in wind direction. Everything was on wheels!

The real job was done by Paul Adams. He made every tow of the contest, as our second tow plane had failed to arrive. Paul even ate his lunch in the cockpit of the Stearman.

Because soaring is relatively unknown in the Toledo area, it was decided to limit cross-country flying to one day, Saturday. The remainder of the contest was held in the vicinity of the airport to favor the spectators.

Eighteen tows on Friday produced no outstanding flights—one hour and twenty minutes was the longest, and about four thousand feet was the best altitude. Each landing formed part of the daily spot landing competition.

Saturday morning was again overcast but a good afternoon of soaring was predicted. At noon a guinea pig flight reported widely scattered but strong thermals and most of the contestants filed cross-country flight plans. Twenty-four take-offs were made.

The largest goal prize, five new automobile tires and tubes, had been donated by the Akron Chamber of Commerce. Floyd Sweet, Dick Comey and Charles Kohls set their sights for Akron, 115 miles away. Others chose locations closer to the field but had to return because of poor thermal conditions.

Sweet, Comey and Kohls played around over the airport for quite a long time before starting off. Dick Comey gained altitude to 5000 feet, followed a curved chain of clouds in the lee of Lake Erie and managed to reach Akron. Floyd Sweet and Charles Kohls lost contact with this thermal chain and landed near Mansfield, Ohio, some 65 miles from Toledo.

Sunday turned out to be one of those days that soaring pilots dream about. By ten o'clock the sky was dotted with little puffs of white cumulus. This would