



Myron Wells about to take a passenger off for his first hop in the Dragonfly—cloud base 15,000 feet

POWERED SAILPLANES

By GUS BRIEGLER

SOME time ago, Myron Wells, Harry Perl and Howard Johnson brought a powered glider, the Nelson Dragonfly, to El Mirage Field, Calif., for demonstration. The simplicity with which it was assembled, started and taxied around the field was amazing and I became quite enthused with its performance.

After watching Myron put it through its paces, the author was invited to have a ride in the ship. My first impression was one of surprise over the ease with which it could be taxied and its extremely good visibility. The cockpit was quite simple and only an airspeed, altimeter, tachometer and voltmeter greeted my eyes. The trim tab was immediately above my head and was easily adjusted to compensate for the forward center of gravity.

As we got into position for the take-off, Myron opened the throttle full and the tachometer showed approximately 3700 r.p.m. As the craft left the ground, Myron cautioned me about climbing too fast and I maintained an airspeed of approximately 50 miles per hour. At this speed the normal climb of the ship is approximately 240 to 250 feet per minute.

We climbed to about 500 feet and encountered a strong thermal, whereupon I started to bank the ship and easily climbed to 1500 feet above the field (4380 ASL). Myron turned off the gas line and as soon as the engine started to die, I switched off the ignition and soon found that we were soaring without power and with no difficulty. This operation had taken less than ten minutes from the time we started to taxi.

The controls were quite responsive and within a very short period of time, I noticed that we were 5000 feet above the airport and Myron suggested that we go back and land where we had taken off.

The three wheels of the ship are retracted within the pod. At 1000 feet I cranked down the landing gear and checked the locking arrangement. I was informed that the ship is equipped with a conventional skid and that it can be landed on the skid without injury in an emergency. It was suggested that if landings were to be made in soft plowed fields or similar terrain, the best landing could be made by leaving wheels up and landing on the skid with engine off. I noticed that there is relatively small propeller clearance with the gear up; obviously a spinning propeller would be broken in a skid landing. It is interesting to note that a two-cycle engine will invariably stop in the same position each time and the company purposely arranged to have the propeller stop in a horizontal position.

I landed slightly tail low, thus making a main wheel landing and found that the ship handled very well. I was informed that nose wheel landings are not recommended and can cause bad porpoising when done by a novice. I helped to dismantle the Dragonfly and get it mounted on the trailer. Three people accomplished this in approximately 12 to 15 minutes. This operation and the ship's performance certainly pleased me and I immediately began thinking over possibilities of this type of aircraft for my glider school and decided to talk to Ted Nelson concerning the lease of one. Mr. Nelson was very agreeable concerning this and worked out a number of details which allowed me to have Dragonfly No. 504, the fourth of seven he manufactured.

Glider school operators and manufacturers needed a vast amount of information pertaining to auxiliary powered gliders, and I agreed with him that we would keep a complete log of cost, hours flown, number of students and passengers flown, as well as a complete