



The challenge of the sky awaits

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The Sixteenth National

By PAUL SCHWEIZER, Contest Director

THE Sixteenth Annual National Soaring Contest was held at Harris Hill, Elmira, New York, from July 2 through July 10, 1949. Paul MacCready, Jr., won the National Championship for the second year in a row, as a result of consistently fine performances in his Polish-built Orlik. Paul made the longest flight on each of the free distance days, in addition to holding his own in the other phases of the competition.

The 16th National will stand out as the one in which "set task" flying was tried for the first time. It proved to be very competitive, reduced the expenses of the contestants and was generally liked by all. Since this was the first attempt, the full possibilities of this type of competition were only scratched, and future contests will no doubt explore them further. Set task flying seems here to stay.

It was not long on Saturday morning, July 2, before the sailplanes were in the air, off for distance and goal flights. In the afternoon the Contest was officially opened by Admiral Price of the United States Navy. A fleet of thirty-six Navy F8F Bearcats saluted Harris Hill and spelled out in flying formation the letters "N. S. C." for National Soaring Contest, with the famed "Blue Angels" performing shortly thereafter. The show was on. A day-by-day account follows.

Saturday, July 2: There was good soaring weather, and in order to get things going with a minimum of confusion, the day was designated Class One, straight-away distance, and distance to pilot-chosen goals. Releasing from the standard 2000 foot tow Paul MacCready headed west—reminiscent of his Ohio flight of last year—and turned in the best performance of the day, 140 miles to North Clymer, N. Y. Stan Smith made 98

miles to Vernon, N. Y., in his Lawrence "Excess Toe" Bill Coverdale 95 miles to Oneonta, N. Y., in his Minimoa; Dick Comey 93 miles to Darien, N. Y., in his 1-21. Most pilots got away for good distances.

Sunday, July 3: The task for the day was Class Two with points for speed and distance to Cortland Airport (48 miles) and return. Thermals did not develop as well as was expected. E. J. Reeves (1-23) made the best showing, getting to Cortland and coming just over half-way back. Fritz Compton (L-K) made the goal but missed connections with an upcurrent seven miles later. Smith, Coverdale, MacCready and Frutchy (1-23) all landed within a stone's throw of Cortland. McHenry (L-K) and Charles (Olympia) hit the dirt 8 and 14 miles further back respectively. Comey, Scribner, Sweet and Tietzel all got too close to the lee side of Lake Cayuga, and had to put in at Ithaca Airport, some 32 miles from Elmira.

Monday, July 4: The task for the Fourth was a speed dash to Tri-Cities Airport, 41.5 miles, just west of Binghamton. This task was chosen since general conditions for distance soaring were not too good, and a front was expected in the early afternoon that would give good speeds to the goal. Everyone was anxious to get going before the front could come and leave stable air in its wake. As the first few take-offs were being made a dark thundercloud appeared in the west, and shortly thereafter a violent storm hit Harris Hill, drenching the operations. Six sailplanes had taken off before the storm, and it seemed only a very brief time before reports came in that Bikle, Trager and Compton had made the goal, within six minutes of each other—1 hour 10 minutes (40.8 mph), 1 hour 11 minutes (35.1 mph) and 1 hour