

\$1,000 Distance Awards Offered at Elmira; 'Big Larry' of 'Flying Gehrleins' Is Donor

SOARING ACTIVITY at famed Harris Hill, Elmira, N. Y., will be of heightened interest in the coming year through announcement of \$1,000 in cash awards for longest cross-country flights made from there in the 12-month period ending Oct. 1, 1953.

Donor of the awards is Lawrence Gehrlein of Erie, Pa.

Awards will be \$500 for the winner in the class of high performance sailplanes, or Class A; and \$250 each for medium sailplanes, or Class B, and trainers, or Class C. Trophies will be given in addition to the prize money.

Presentation will be made at the banquet of the 1953 Snow Bird Meet, traditional Thanksgiving-time gliding event at Elmira.

Details of the competition, as announced by Mr. Gehrlein, are as follows:

Dates are from Oct. 1, 1952, to Oct. 1, 1953. Contest is open to all members of the Soaring Society of America. There is no limit to the number of flights which a contestant may make in the year. The *five best* flights of each contestant will count towards the prizes. Score for a flight is figured as one point for each mile flown, airline distance. No other contest flights will count.

Ships may be either two place or single. In two place, the trophy goes to the pilot that is designated on landing card. A contestant may enter one class only — A, B, or C. A class B may fly in Class A, but Class A cannot fly in Class B. Takeoff must be from either Harris Hill or Chemung County Airport, any type of tow. Airplane tow from Harris Hill shall be not more than 2,000 feet; Chemung Airport, not more than 3,000 feet.

Requirements governing entry of flights in the contest include the following: Takeoff card with an official observer's signature; official observer as defined by the SSA. A landing card with exact location, longitude and latitude, and description in detail. Three signatures from residents of landing point. Complete flight report, to be submitted to Mr. Gehrlein, 2709 West 12th St., Erie, Pa.

The first winch launch of a glider was made at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904.



'BIG LARRY' GEHRLEIN in his 1-23C, with 3 of 5 other 'Flying Gehrleins.'



'LITTLE LARRY,' 16 years old, in the 1-19.

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LAWRENCE GEHRLEIN, donor of the \$1,000 Elmira distance awards, is the "Big Larry" of the animated family known widely in soaring as "The Flying Gehrleins."

There are six in the family. They own one airplane and five gliders. Three of them fly — "Big Larry," his wife, Grace, and their oldest son, 16-year-old Lawrence Gehrlein, Jr., or "Little Larry." The youngsters, Jay, Rodney and Cindy, aged 11, 7 and 5, are crew and co-pilots.

Both Big Larry and Little Larry competed in this year's National Soaring Contest, the only father-and-son pair of contestants. Gehrlein, Sr., flew a Schweizer 1-23C, and Jr. a 1-19.

It was in 1929 that the older Gehrlein was bitten by the glider bug. He hitchhiked from his home in Erie, Pa., to the Cleveland Air Races for the first glider meet held in the United States. Best flight there in that day of primitive gliders was — less than one minute!

Larry slept out under a billboard during the three-day meet. At home, he started to build his own glider but his parents stopped that.

It was not till 1949 that he finally got to flying a power plane, and bought the family a Stinson. On one of their trips, in July, 1950, they flew to Elmira and watched the glider activity there. They were so impressed that they decided to fly to Texas for the Nationals, to be held the following week.

They got completely sold on soaring. Big and Little Larry took instruction at the Elmira Glider School. Today, both hold Silver "C" badges. The Gehrleins fly regularly at Elmira, and attend most meets in the Northeastern region.

The Gehrleins operate a welding shop in Erie, which is gradually becoming more of a glider shop. The "Flying Gehrleins" insignia, seen on their planes, are figures of six welders of ascending size.

ON THE COVER

GEHRLEINS: 'Nuff said!
GIRL: She stepped right out of Jon Carsey's photo collection on to our cover! Don't you like the contrast in sun and shadow, angles and curves? She says, "Sunny holidays to y'all!"