



# Spiraling

with E. J.

More about our Columnist: It was an old non-startable 'Hisso' that gave E J his introduction to flying and flying machines. *To be continued*

WITHOUT FEAR of contradiction (as if this writer ever had such) we would say that within a fifty mile radius of Denver you will find every known phenomena that makes soaring possible. Ridges of medium height extend for miles, high mountains, plains that roll for hundreds of miles — slope winds, waves, jet streams and thermals both wet and dry. Situated well in front of the Rampart Ranges of the Rockies, is a table-top mountain, the sides of which rise abruptly from the surrounding plains, which makes the ultimate as a launching site for sailplanes. No matter which way she blows, there is a slope facing the wind. Strong thermals abound, so it is an ideal get-away site for XC flights.

My go at their conditions was in the merry month of May and I found them very good.

We were launching from Sky Ranch Airport, about six miles east of the city and well out on the rolling plains. The altitude of this site is about 6,000 feet and one needs a rather hefty tug for a reasonably fast aero tow to 2,000. We used a BT-13 which did it nicely, the conventional 220 HP Stearman does it very laboriously. We had actually two days of flying, the other three days at hand on this expedition were rained out. We will never forget the anguished explanations of the local fellows — "It is never supposed to do this here, come see the irrigation canals."

But the two days of good weather showed well enough the superlative thermals, strong, real 'Texas type' that went to 14,000 feet. Wally Wilberg made 17,000 feet ASL late in the afternoon of the first day, and that after a solid overcast had moved in. Visibility was per the Denver C of C tourist folders. Flying eastward one could see for miles in all directions. The highest obstruction between there and Kansas City, — a low three wire fence. Here was 'glide stretchers heaven.' The roads below extended limitlessly and straight as a gun barrel.

Sojourning in the Denver area is quite an active group of sailplainists, though as far as we know they do not have a formal organizational set-up. Dr. David Stacey of the U. of C. at Boulder, owns one of the two Schweizer 1-21's in existence. Fred Ruble, Doc Allaby, Joe Irvine, et al are Denver residents. The current National Two-Place Champion, David Johnson (brother of Dick) lives at nearby Colorado Springs.

This marvelous soaring area around Denver, (Colorado), should and will some day come to be one of our best known soaring sites. It would be an ideal place for Nats or Worlds soaring contests.

— E. J. Reeves

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## THE SAILPLANE IN RESEARCH, TRAINING AND SPORT (continued)

Still another meteorological source of energy was discovered by Wolf Hirth in 1930 when he made a flight of fifty-four miles from Elmira of thermal up-currents. The exact behavior of these up-currents is not understood today, in spite of the fact that they still provide a source of discomfort for airline passengers and a source of structural loading for high speed airplanes. The more severe form of thermal up-currents, thunderstorms, were studied in detail by the U. S. Weather Bureau in 1946 in Florida. Sailplanes took part in this research by flying right up through the thunderstorms and recording continuously the vertical velocities, ice, rain and turbulence. The sailplane possesses a unique feature in such research in that it is unusually strong and accelerations from turbulence are not as severe on it as on a high speed airplane.

It was with thermal currents as his only "fuel" that a young Mississippi State College student, Dick Johnson, in 1951 broke the international distance record held for thirteen years by a Russian woman. He flew 545 miles in eight hours forty-one minutes averaging 63.5 miles per hour and thus broke the Russian record by 80 miles.

Though the Russian record had been established in sport, there was more to their long supremacy than was evident to the casual observer. The Gliding Congress of 1938 was held on the plains of the Ukraine under Government subsidy. The pilots and machines, some fifty in number, that were gathered for the event were held for one month while Government meteorologists waited for ideal weather. Once the meteorologists gave the signal, the ships were launched. The majority of these sailplanes had been specifically designed for long distance soaring. Needless to say, most of the international records fell during that congress to Russia. A combination of the highest order of scientific knowledge of meteorology, aerodynamics, and pilotage tactics went in to these triumphant flights.

In contrast to the Russians, the record-breaking flight of Dick Johnson represented the individual enterprise of a few scattered amateurs and scientists. In 1947 a national soaring contest was held in Wichita Falls, Texas, the first to be held away from the hills of Elmira, New York. During the Texas contest, one Russian record was broken by Paul MacCready, a young college student from Yale Uni-