

REPORT FROM COLORADO

by JOE GREENBAUM

The active soaring group in Colorado is The Denver Soaring Club, Inc., The club secretary is Merv Hicks of 1345 Elmira Street, Aurora, Colorado.

Aside from pleasure soaring, the club members accomplished the following this season:

Merv Hicks, who holds a commercial glider rating among others, finished his Silver C badge.

Bob Heizer in an exciting 4 hr. 54 min. flight just missed his Silver C after reaching 18,100 ft. Bob has qualified as a Commercial Glider Pilot.

Bill Shipman, our expert at long lazy flying, made private glider pilot.

Not active this year, in Colorado, but still avid enthusiasts, are: Dave Stacey, owner of the magnificent red Schweizer 121; Dave Johnson, who has a brother Dick, spent the season in California and didn't get the bubble L-K licensed; Timothy Lucero has an L-K trailer in his back yard; Doc Allabee has an idle TG-3; Bolter Smith sold his TG-2 to some boys in Utah and is without a ship at present; and of course, Fred Ruble gives us tows behind the 440 HP Waco UPF-7. Fred is flattopping, tiptanking, oxygenating, and generally remaking a TG-3 which will open new horizons for him next year.

Fred and Marge Ruble flew in the club TG-3 for an evening ride of an hour after the club members had flown the ship on six flights of five hours total duration. All this during one good Colorado Soaring day. At the risk of sounding like Texans we must claim the best soaring weather in the world. If this sounds like a strong statement read of the four flights that impressed us as typical Colorado Soaring:

Bill Shipmann lounges, lazes, drifts, to Gold C Height

Joe Greenbaum had just landed with passenger Doc Ross. He swore that it had been a forty-minute struggle against tremendous lift with spoilers open at 80 mph, and apologized (unnecessarily) to Doc Ross for making him late for Sunday dinner, "We might have spun down faster but I found an area of reduced sink and spiralled in that awhile."

Bill took all this with his customary king-size grain of salt and quite easily eased into the cockpit saying, "I'll probaly be down in ten minutes."

Climbing quickly to 2000 ft. east of the field, Bill released at 1:45 p.m. and began flying around. Soaring? No, not really. Turning right off tow Bill headed north for aways; about two miles. Then he turned back making a very large figure eight and arrived over the field with an extra thousand feet or so above release.

There was much comment on the ground about "Airline turns," and "Come on Bill, rack it around." But Bill was smiling contentedly at the Robinson, steady at ten feet per second climb, and admiring the afternoon sun on the Colorado Rockies. The sky was clear, only a few fragile remnants of strato-cumulus off to the north with an occasional puff of ethereal cumulus over Bill that quickly disappeared. Just a blue thermal day.

The altimeter wound up to 16,800 ASL while Bill eased the ship this way and that, flying more than two hours with tremendous wide turns. He cruised fifteen miles east to Barr Lake and then floated back to the field to end a two hour and forty-five minute flight that had perhaps thirty minutes of wide spiralling. "Nothing but climb," said Bill as we questioned his soaring technique. "Besides, it's fun to fly that way!"

Merv Hicks Flies Five Hours, One Minute in Weak Lift

Merv is a fine pilot. He flies a sailplane with skill and pleasure compounded equally. On September 8, 1953, Merv carried our club Schweizer TG-3 around the blue sky for five hours and one stretched-out minute. This was the climax of two years of intensive effort and extreme bad luck. He tried many times to whip the duration leg and each time it eluded him. Weather, wind shifts and flying dual at the wrong times managed to defeat him.

But this was another day. The ship was ready at the end of the runway, barograph smoked, plexiglas shining with Wilco wax, tow rope all stretched out and Merv drove up. Protesting mildly, "It doesn't look like much of a day," he was bundled into the Schweizer, thermos of water behind him on one side, camera on the other;

with straw hat and parachute he was ready to try one more time.

Off tow at ten-thirty Merv was down in just ten minutes and suggested in his gentlemanly manner that Bill Shipman give it a try. This proved to be really one of Bill's "ten minute flights" and he nearly beat the tow ship down. Just before the glider landed the first little dust devil of the day twisted away at our feet, trotted across the runway and tossed a few leaves and bits of chaff into the air. Merv had a gleam in his eye, "If I get away by 11:30?" He glanced at the sky, at Bill on final, "Well, maybe."

Once again he was packed in — this time we *did* turn on the barograph. Poor Bill would have been without a trace had he gotten away, as we turned it off when Merv landed the first time and forgot to restart it when Bill took off.

Merv released at 1000 ft. and 11:35 a.m. He came downwind, hunting, and at six hundred feet caught a vague whisper of zero sink. This is the stuff that Merv thrives on. The ship whipped around in a quick turn and soon pushed him quite far from the runway and he eased back to the field. We waited anxiously. In the suddenly windstill air the light whistle of the glider could be heard. Then a whisper of air curled around us, spinning a dusty little whirlwind, it breathed deeply, and lo and behold, there was the big brother of the earlier dust devil. Swiftly it sped south on the runway and lifted skyward. Merv, still coming back to the field, approached the cloud of dust visible to us but not to him. We waited tensely for his reaction. A little short of the dust he began a tentative turn that tightened quickly as he headed away from the center of lift. A rapid chandelle that flattened out in the core and Merv had it centered on his second turn. He was away!

We went and had coffee and then settled down to a long afternoon of watching the most beautiful of man-made machines sailing the sky.

The air was clean and sharp, all thermals blue, and cloudless day. Occasional dust devils paraded across the airport at twenty minute intervals until 3:00 p.m. Merv soared a beat about five miles long, from two to five miles west of the field. The wind, very light easterly, carried each dust devil out to him, their whipping tails disappearing upwards as they crossed the edge of the field. This constant source of lift was light, though, never exceed-

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