

A QUARTER CENTURY of SOARING CONTESTS IN AMERICA

This year's National Soaring Championship events will mark the 25th or "Silver Anniversary" year of officially sanctioned competitions. The following condensed statement gives a few of the interesting facts during that period.

1930—1st National Gliding Contest. South Mountain, Elmira, N. Y. Albert Hastings was the winner and first National Soaring Champion.
Best Performances:

Altitude, 2,128 feet. Distance, 21 miles.

The site of this and several of the early contests at Elmira, had been chosen by Dr. Wolfgang B. Klemperer who had had extensive experience in ridge soaring in Germany. Headquarters were set up at the old Canton Avenue Airport which was within gliding distance from the top of South Mountain where the gliders (all primary types) were launched by shockcord. Twenty-five pilots and fourteen gliders were officially entered.

1931—2nd National Gliding Contest. South Mountain, Elmira, N. Y. Al Hastings repeated in winning the championship for the second time.

Best Performances:

Altitude, 3,130 feet. Duration, 7 hours 30 minutes. Distance, 15 miles.

In this second National as in the first, Warren Eaton, often referred to as "Father of SSA," was one of the more enthusiastic competing pilots. Also prominently identified with these and many other National competitions was Mr. Earl Southee.

1932—3rd National Glider Meet. South Mountain, Elmira, N. Y. Jack O'Mera who, at Dr. Klemperer's direction, had made flights from a number of possible sites around Elmira, became the 3rd National Champion.
Best Performances:

Altitude, 5,370 feet. Duration, 8 hours 18 minutes. Distance, 67 miles.

This contest was sanctioned by The Soaring Society of America, which had just been incorporated and chartered on May 10th, 1932. Mr. Warren Eaton was President, Mr. Earl Southee was a Director and one of the original incorporators, along with

by

E. J. REEVES

Mr. Eaton, Capt. Ralph S. Barnaby, William Enyart, Franklin Iszard and others.

1933—4th Annual National Soaring Contest. Ridge No. 6, Elmira, N. Y.

"Stanley W. 'Stan' Smith of Lyndonville, N. Y., a member of the intrepid University of Michigan outfit, piled up the most points of any pilot



Mr. Warren E. Eaton
Father of SSA

during the contest. He won these points with a 'Franklin.' The above is quoted directly from "THE GLIDING AND SOARING BULLETIN," official publication of SSA, dated September 1933.

Ridge No. 6, the site of this 4th National, is a part of the old Rhodes Farm and the Rhodes farmstead was headquarters for the activity. The farm is still occupied by some of the second generation Rhodes, and many of the oldtimers attending modern day contests at nearby Harris Hill make it a practice to take enjoyable farm style meals with the Rhodes. The launching site on old

No. 6 is hallowed ground to these enthusiasts, many of whom are still active in the movement.

Runners-up to Smith in this early contest were such soaring greats as Richard C. Du Pont who placed second, Martin Schempp of German soaring fame, Jack O'Mera who had won the 3rd National, Hank Harris (who was later to lose his life in an unusual and unfortunate accident with a tow-car and for whom famous Harris Hill is named), and Lt. Col. Floyd J. Sweet, USAF, the current President of The Soaring Society of America. Seven sailplanes and fifteen utility gliders were in the competitions. The great Mr. Eaton was particularly prominent in this 4th National, giving the principal address at the opening day ceremonies and performing aerobatics in the air show.

Best Performances:

Altitude, 4,334 feet. Duration, 196 minutes. Distance, 18.4 miles.

1934—5th Annual National Soaring Contest. Ridge No. 6 and Bud's Ridge, Elmira, N. Y. Both of these ridge sites were located on the Rhodes Farm and the one "Bud's Ridge" had been located by and named for Mr. Bud Iszard, one of the early day devotees and presently one of Elmira's leading business men, being among other things the head of Iszards, the largest department store in Elmira. Extensive aerial photographs of these sites had been made by then Lt. Comdr., now Capt. Ralph S. Barnaby, USN (Retired).

Young Richard C. Du Pont of the famous family of Delaware Du Ponts, who had been runner-up to first place in the previous year's contest, was declared the winner of this 5th National by quite a wide margin. Flying one of W. Hawley Bowlus' first high-performance machines, young Du Pont during this contest was to demonstrate for the first time in America, the possibilities of long distance soaring flights. This was to be the first time the boys got out much farther than shouting distance from the famous old ridge sites around Elmira. His 158-mile cross country