

ranking members of the U. S. Army Air Forces were much in evidence at the Hill during the running of this 12th National. Already the aviation division of both Army and Navy had admitted many airmen from the ranks of the gliding and soaring fraternity.

This was to be the last National Contest for four long war years—a time that was to see nearly every single soaring enthusiast engage either directly or indirectly in military aviation. Many of these soaring men who enjoyed the sport and the fellowship of the 12th National, were to never again see the green hills of Western New York through the canopy of their graceful sailplanes.



Shackcord launching an early "Franklin"

1942, '43, '44, and '45. No National Soaring Contests were conducted during these war years. Hardly a handful of soaring pilots were left in civilian pursuits and many of those not attached to the military were busily engaged in other war work. Even the continuation of the magazine SOARING became a problem for lack of individuals with soaring knowhow. The magazine was kept alive through the efforts of Alex Dawydoff, Ben Shupack, and Taylor Boyer.

Some of soaring's greatest pilots and most ardent supporters were to pass on during this four year period. Mrs. Genevieve Warren Eaton died in 1942. She was the first wife of Mr. Warren E. Eaton and had continued in her lifetime to give soaring in America much needed support. Mr. Jay Buxton died in 1942 and Major Lewin Barringer was reported missing on an overseas flight. Mr. Richard Du Pont was to lose his life in 1943 while testing military aircraft and on the same fatal flight the life of Howard Morrison was taken. These losses were followed a year later by the death of Randy Chapman and young Dallas Wise. Soaring paid heavily in these and other losses during the war years.

The only soaring accomplishment of note during these years was a great altitude flight by Capt. Shelly Charles when he established a new American record of 19,434 ft., in a thunderstorm flight.

1946—13th Annual National Soaring Contest. Harris Hill, Elmira, N. Y. The great John Robinson returned to this 13th National to take the Championship for the third time.

*Best Performances:*

Distance—184 miles. Altitude—11,500 ft.

Runnerup to Robinson in this 13th contest was an airlines pilot, Capt. Francis B. Compton of Florida. The

tance record of 314 miles was to be set up by Dick Johnson as pilot and Bob Sparling as passenger. This flight was made in a Schweizer TG-2 and stands today as the National Two-place Record.

1947—14th National Soaring Contest. Sheppard Field, Wichita Falls, Tex. Immediately after the war a group of Texans having seen what could be done along the lines of motorless flight, with the accomplishments of the Ross brothers, Barringer, Brown and others before them, became successful bidders for the 14th National. For the first time in the history of this American aviation event, the national competitions were to be conducted at a site other than Elmira, N. Y. The Texans were not exactly modest in their claims as to what might be accomplished soaring-wise in their area.

Major Richard J. Comey, late of the U. S. Army Airforces, had competed for the first time in the 13th. His performances in that contest had not been what you would call spectacular, although he had flown perhaps not the best contest machine. The Schweizer brothers had designed and built their first 1-21 and with this

Mr. Warren Eaton, hand on glider, entertains dignitaries at early contest



Loomis photo

best altitude was attained by Geo. Taberry. Again it was Robinson's ability to score consistently that won for him his third National Championship. Performances in this tournament were not spectacular; only four flights exceeded 100 miles and the 200 mile mark was not attained.

Classification of the different machines was attempted in this meet and for the first time a speed factor figured in the scoring. Neither of these innovations proved too successful at this time, but it was a step in the right direction and was to lead to an entirely new and improved scoring system in future contests.

Later in 1946 a new two-seater dis-

machine Dick Comey came to Wichita Falls for the 14th. All who saw Schweizer's newest all-metal sailplane, agreed that it was probably the finest "hunk" of aircraft of its kind they had ever seen. It was to be seen if its pilot could make it go. He could as he proved, do just that. Richard J. Comey became America's National Soaring Champion in 1947 at the 14th.

This 14th National was to become the "daddy of 'em all" as far as both attendance and performance were concerned. In addition to over 50 machines of American pilots, the French were to send a team with 4 ships,

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