

New England weather wasn't very helpful to the first meet officially sponsored by the newly formed New England Soaring Association on the weekend of June 4th and 5th at their base of operations, Hiller Airport, Barre, Massachusetts. Cloudy skies and some light showers on Saturday temporarily dampened the soaring conditions but not the spirits of those who drove or flew in from various parts of New England. Jimmy Klein's 1-23, Earl Brooks' L-K, M.I.T.'s 2-22, and Don Taupier's 1-19 were already at the field, and others soon arrived: Dana Darling's L-K, Earl Brooks' Pratt-Reed, Luke Newcomb's BG-6, the Vermont Club's TG-2, and Chuck Kerr's L-K, newly outfitted with its flat top and bubble canopy.

Despite the gray weather, the meet attracted people from every state in New England, including many non-gliding pilots who expressed a keen interest in the sport. Dick Comey appeared with a younger member of the Comey family on Sunday and signed up to become one of the charter members of the NESAs. Dick mentioned he would be out at Elmira for the first week of the Nationals and is looking forward to doing some soaring again. We certainly hope to see more of him around NESAs. Though Saturday was no good for



Earl Brooks, President of New England Soaring Association, at first general meeting at Hiller Airport, Barre, Mass.

soaring flights, we gave several passenger rides and had a surprisingly good number of spectators. Sunday the sky cleared eventually and big "juicy" cumulus clouds began to pop forth, so that we were able to take up quite a few more on demonstration rides and work in some individual soaring flights as well, one of which lasted for well over an hour. Jimmy Klein and Earl Brooks put on aerobic demonstrations in their respective ships.

The only untoward event was the unscheduled landing of the TG-2 when its tow rope broke soon after take-

# SOARING RETURNS TO NEW ENGLAND

by  
CONNIE RIPLEY

off. Jimmy Klein brought it in easily to an uneventful landing in a nearby farmer's field, but the cavalcade of cars which took off from the field gave a dramatic flourish to the day's activities. Competitions had been planned, but the weather and number of people wanting rides deferred the contests to a later date.

We stacked the planes away on trailers or tied them down on the field Sunday evening and went in to enjoy a delicious fried chicken dinner at the airport restaurant. Even before we had settled down to relish that first taste of beer though, everyone agreed that it had been a most rewarding weekend, largely due to getting the group together again, meeting so many new people interested in gliding, and seeing several old familiar faces which we hadn't seen in quite a while. Flightwise, previous weekends had been better, of course, especially that day in May when Earl Brooks soared high over the Massachusetts countryside to outlast the clock for 5 and 1/2 hours and complete the final leg on his silver "C." But June, July, August, and September are still before us and there are lots of thermals and cumulus clouds left in and around "them thar New England hills."

Saturday night was the first general meeting of the newly incorporated NESAs, but the association's history doesn't begin there, so let me retrogress a little—back to Labor Day weekend of last year, when 20 people and four ships gathered up at North Conway for an "off-the-cuff" meet. Earl Brooks came from Hartford, Connecticut, Don Taupier from Holyoke in Western Massachusetts, Jimmy Klein from Boston and Chuck Kerr from Auburn, Maine, to name a few, and with lovely hot, clear days, they soared for hours over the ridges of the eastern slopes of the White Mountains, more widely known actually for their ski slopes than their ridge winds. So much fun was had by all, so many people had been attracted to the field by our activities, and most of the participants had come long distances for it, that it

was decided there was ample justification for forming a New England soaring club if a somewhat more central location could be found. A couple of weeks later Jimmy Klein and Earl Brooks chanced to hear about Hiller Airport and went out to look it over. A sod field with a long gravel runway, located near the approximate population center of New England (considering soaring pilots, that is), overnight and restaurant facilities right on the field, a spring-fed pool



Henry Ebbett lands the Champlain Valley Club's TG-2 in farmer's field after rope broke on take off.

and picnic area next to the runway strip, not to mention extremely cooperative and interested airport management in the person of Mrs. Catherine Hiller, seemed to make it a highly desirable spot. The only question left was "what are the soaring conditions like?"

Barre is in rolling hill country, quite flat compared to the mountainous areas west and north of it, and there is no pronounced ridge close by. Though by this time it was late September or early October, Jimmy and Earl both brought out their sailplanes and found good thermal activity all around the field. Of course, the real test would come the next spring, but it was enough to start minds clicking and plans rolling. Winter activities, such as marriages (Betty Brown became Mrs. James H. Klein) and skiing, slowed the pace somewhat, but along about April things started up again. Earl, Jimmy, Dana, Don, and several others met together at Hiller to hash over ideas for a club of some sort.

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