

A

DREAM

COME

TRUE

by OTHMAR SCHWARZENBERGER

A few years ago, while I was still scaring my flight instructor trying to hold the wings of an old primary straight and level, I heard for the first time of the mountain wave in Bishop, California. A picture, showing the "Orlik" high above the Sierra Nevada was so fascinating that it made me wish to fly way up there myself some day. But Switzerland is quite a way from California and even after I made Texas my second home, I was still not too close.

Before I came over here I had, like many of my European soaring friends, the idea that Bishop must be a well established Soaring Center such as we have at many places in Europe. To fly there should be very easy. However, after getting familiar with soaring in the states, I found that actually little flying is being done in the wave. When I learned last year in Elsinore that the Project Jet-Stream was going to be in Bishop this spring I made plans to spend my vacation there at the same time. Well knowing that the wave does not always coincide with the time of one's arrival in the Owens Valley . . . I managed to get over four weeks of leave from my employer. He also made it possible for me to get a physical check up and a pressure chamber test by the Air Force before I left for Bishop.

I was really excited upon arrival in the "wave country," on March 29, and after a long and hurried drive through the blooming deserts from Texas to California the brisk mountain air and the view of all the snow caps around Inyo County was a great change and almost like the Alps . . . but one thing was new . . . the mountain wave.

As for a welcome, Dr. Kuettner and Larry Edgar each soared over 40,000 feet the first day I was there . . . good reason for excitement. During the following days I learned slowly the facts and problems about high altitude flying with sailplanes. I was very fortunate to have such experienced instructors as the Jet-

Stream Project group and Bob Symons. It was amazing to see a small crew of only four handling such a big workprogram.

On my part, I was interested in how an individual can get to fly in the wave. If you are in possession of a sailplane, say a 1-23, it would take many alterations and additional equipment before the ship would be safe up to the 40,000 feet level. The only 1-23 I know of for such flights is Bill Ivan's record ship. Some of the old surplus Pratt-Reads and TG-3s are doing a fine job once they are modified and equipped. Even though their performance is not comparing with the 1-23 or the new 2-25 in sinking speed and glide angle, the SCSA Pratt-Read had, for many years, an outstanding flight record. George Deibert's TG-3, during my stay in Bishop was the only flyable private sailplane there, and has been used many seasons in the wave. George very kindly let me fly his ship and I had some unforgettable hours above 30,000 feet over the Sierra in this silver TG-3.

Once I had a ship to fly, I still had to be equipped with sufficient clothing, oxygen and emergency equipment. Through Dr. Kuettner's help I received the equipment necessary to make safe flying possible. If bought by an individual this outfit, including leather suit, boots, helmet, gloves, pressure oxygen mask, parachute, goggles and bailout-bottle would be very expensive. Radios in the gliders are very advisable for ground to air and towplane to glider communications.

Flying in the wave was new to me and quite different from soaring over Grand Prairie or in my native Swiss Alps. Handling the heavy TG-3 was rather easy except in areas of severe turbulence. New to me was, of course, the altitude and the strong head or tail winds, but by following the exact instructions of the pilots who spend many hours exploring the giant elevator, I felt very safe and confident.

Before I left, I decided to be back in Bishop as soon as my next vacation comes up. It would be a wonderful event if this little mountain village with its well built airport not only had a name for good fishing and hunting in the Western States, but also for its outstanding soaring possibilities because it is well known to-day all over the world in flying circles. I believe that Bishop could very well meet the requirements for a year round national soaring center. This would certainly help flying enthusiasts from all over the country to do soaring at its best . . . way up there in the mountain wave.

NORTHEASTERN STATES

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top off a towering cumulus. Everyone took to the air, and those on the ground were treated to soaring's most beautiful sight—seven ships wheeling in a thermal and working the ridge below, like so many graceful and silent birds in a stately dance. The best flights lasted to three hours, and were halted only because people wanted to get an early start home. Bud Briggs took to the air in the Schenectady 2-22 and made a "C" flight of one hour 11', a fine way to finish the meet.

A surprise barbecue was held that evening, for the faithful who stayed on to clean up tag ends, and for the Schenectady group who couldn't tear themselves away. Briggs suddenly found himself carrying on the Wurtsboro tradition by buying the group beer for his "C" flight.

Statistics-wise—flights totaled 76, for a total of 43 hours 38', which includes many short checkout flights and is a good record considering the uncertain or downright poor weather.

The meet committee was as follows:

Planning and organization: Steve Bennis, Steve Orban, Don Lawrence.

Operations: Steve Bennis.

Ground Crew: Everybody in MASA present, Kurt Rosner in charge.

Tow Pilots: Steve Bennis, Steve Orban, Larry Lytle in MASA's Stearman, Bob Brieling and Dick Troy in the Schenectady L-5.

Registration and Dispatching: Gretchen Dambach.

Food: Virginia Bennis, June Camacho.

Quarters: Tiddum Potter.

Prizes: Dave Potter.