

LOOKING BACK

July 4-14 of this year 1955, the dates for the 22nd Annual National Soaring Championships in the United States, will mark the 25th or Silver Anniversary of officially organized sanctioned gliding and soaring tournaments in the country.

Lest you become a bit confused with the 'numbers' it might be well to point out that during the war years of 1942, 43, 44, and 45, no national competitions were held. This year's event is therefore the 22nd such. And 1955 is the 25th anniversary year since the first contest was held in 1930.

The oldest official SSA material posing in our archives is 'GLIDING AND SOARING BULLETIN' No. 3 and dated May 1932. Although a volume designation is not shown, the issues of the same 'Bulletin' in 1933 indicate Volume 2. It is therefore safe to assume that No. 3 of 1932 was of Volume 1 and the third issue after the birth of the publication. This being so, if really it is, then one is to assume that the account of the 1st National Gliding and Soaring Meet held in 1930, was not reported in any official publication. This for the very good reason that apparently no official publication existed at that time.

For its historical significance and other reasons, the present Editors of SOARING should like very much to obtain the detailed happenings of this first National meet. Still active in the soaring movement are individuals who should be able to fill in this valuable and interesting information. We shall look forward to receiving the same and promise a full disclosure in this section.

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Those having any interest whatsoever in the historical aspects of aviation in general and soaring in particular, must revel at every opportunity to visit, view and examine close up, the exceptional aircraft collection of the National Museum at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.

This aircraft collection of the National Museum portrays the history and development of aeronautics

through the medium of original full sized aircraft, accessories of technical and historic interest, accurate scale models, and pictorial illustrations. It aims to portray, through important objects, the outstanding facts in the history of flight. It is being constantly added to and improved, each accession being selected either to fill existing gaps or to keep abreast of developments. The majority of the specimens are received as gifts from persons patriotically interested in the national aircraft collection.

Of special interest to the soaring man are the many devices employed in the early efforts of man to sustain and control flight in heavier-than-air machines. Included in this category are such original types as Lilienthal's 1894 glider, Chanute's 1898 hang types, etc.

It would seem quite a good idea that members of SSA commence some planning towards making available to the museum, certain of the modern-day high performance types. Unless this is done we may see a considerable interruption in the continuity of this historically famous collection.

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The Aeronautical Annual of 1897 was published at Boston, Mass., and London. The dedication of this particular issue was—"To the Memory of those who, intelligently believing in the possibility of mechanical flight, have lived and derided, and died in sorrow and obscurity."

This 1897 edition contained sixteen articles which were illustrated by eighteen plates. Quite a number of the illustrations are from actual photographs, the others being for the most part line drawings, all quite good and clear. Eleven of the sixteen articles dealt with glider flight or gliding devices. Ten of the eighteen plates alluded to gliding and gliding machines, some real, some imaginary. Titles and authors of some of the principal articles were as follows—'Story of Experiments in Mechanical Flights' by S. P. Langley—'Recent Experiments in Gliding Flight' by Octave Chanute—'Our Teachers in Sailing Flight' by Otto Lilienthal—and 'Gliding Experiments' by Percy S. Pilchere.

25TH ANNIVERSARY CONTEST

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committee to work with the Elmira group in arrangements for the 25th Anniversary celebration. An effort will be made to try to get as many oldtimers as possible to be present for a special reunion day on July 2nd.

Elmira newspapers of a quarter-century ago contain the following information:

On July 2, 1930 Jack O'Meara made the first glider flight from South Mountain, Elmira, Sherman P. Voorhees was the official observer, while Pilot O'Meara's ground crew consisted of F. Slee Crocker, P. H. Salmon, Ed Segar, and Al MacLatchie.

The following day, O'Meara made a flight of one hour and 11 minutes. This duration had been exceeded however on the Pacific Coast by Hawley Bowlus whose flight of seven and one half hours was a record at that time.

In those early days of gliding and soaring at Elmira, four or five different hills were used as launching sites, according to the wind direction on the different days. Thermals had not been discovered yet, and it was ridge lift which kept the gliders aloft, after their launching via shock cord or auto tow.

Suspension of the national meets during World War II accounts for the forthcoming contest's being the 22nd altho the first was held 25 years ago—at Elmira, in November, 1930. Comparing the official results of that meet with the records made in recent years shows the mighty advances which have been made in a quarter-century of motorless flight.

First prize in the first National went to Wolf Hirth of Germany who soared 2,928 feet above his starting point. Warren Eaton's 2,409 feet above starting point gave him second place, while third went to Jack O'Meara of Akron, Ohio who gained 2,037 feet in his best altitude flight of the contest.

Similar heights now are exceeded in any normal weekend of glider flight, while high-performance, especially-equipped sailplanes have been flown to 44,000 feet above sea level, as is well known by soaring enthusiasts everywhere.

Some of these contrasts will be exemplified at Elmira next July in the special events being planned to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the first national contest.