

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SOARING ASSOCIATION 1955 REGATTA

by WILLIAM T. ROYCE

The table top was clean and felt cool against the forearms which leaned heavily upon it. The calendar on the wall behind the counter showed an impressive picture of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and made the information available to anyone interested that this was Sunday, September 4, 1955. Brightly showing its face to the entire restaurant from the far wall was a large clock whose smiling hands indicated 10 minutes past 10. Peering through the darkness beyond the window one could dimly see in the parking lot across the street the outline of the car with the trailer and 1-23 sailplane. With its wings folded and tucked along its sides it looked tired and forlorn.

The four people around the dinner table quietly awaiting their steaks were encompassed in an aura of tiredness and forlornness too. This moment here in a pleasant restaurant in Inyokern, California in the great Mojave Desert was the end for them of the S.C.S.A. 1955 Soaring Regatta. To make this contest a success they had expended many hours of planning and hard work beginning back in last May; Bill Hoverman as Contest Chairman and contestant; your author as Director of Field Operations at Elsinore and crew chief for Bill. The fair damsels at our sides had borne our absorption through the months, had courageously helped as crew members, had willingly typed the sheaves of contest paper work, and had graciously played second fiddle to the weary 1-23 resting across the street. Now, the work was over, the fun was ended; the release from tension was followed by a feeling of "end of summer-romance" depression. Oh, but the never failing miracle of food and drink! The steaks were the best in the world. Each accompanying dish right through desert was superb, and a freshly brewed pot of coffee completed the magic. "Summer-romance" depression had fled; like doting parents we fawned over the memory of this fascinating

child we had spawned. Conversation and laughter surrounded all four as we began reminiscing. Bill suddenly asked, "I wonder where each person who played a part in the regatta is at this moment?"

Ray Parker, we knew, was enjoying a party at Twenty-Nine Palms. He had not flown on this last day of the contest because it was his wedding anniversary. Yesterday at the pool at El Mirage Ray had prompted much laughter when he admonished the bachelors, "Don't get married on a holiday, it interferes with your soaring." Ray's marriage has won him a championship crew of wife and daughter. Ray's longest flight was made on the 6th of August when he flew 230 miles from El Mirage across the Colorado River into Arizona.

Mention of Twenty-Nine Palms brought to mind that Carl Ziler and Vivien Thompson were considering flying there and back at take-off this morning. As we learned later they accomplished this goal and return. All summer long Carl had conscientiously carried his barograph on each flight. After the last contest date, he had run out of ink, and during the past week he and Vivien and Bob Lucas, his crew chief, had tried in vain to buy some. They carried the barograph on this last flight without operating it. As a matter of fact they had picked Twenty-Nine Palms for a goal and return only because Carl's interpretation of the weather deemed it a wise selection. At 9:30 at night when all those at the barbecue at El Mirage were discussing Lyle Maxey's new International Goal and Return record, Frank Kerns (designer and builder of Jenny Mae's fuselage and Lyle's crew chief) suddenly said, "Say, I'll bet Carl and Vivien broke the National two-place record." A quick check revealed that this was so! Carl has proved himself a true philosopher. His daughter was bemoaning the fact that her daddy would not get the record because of no barogram. Patting her lovingly on the head.

Carl said, "It's all right, honey, daddy can do it again."

As a more expansive mood settled upon the four around the table, another cup of coffee was poured and she of the blonde hair repeated a story Carl had told her about Bill Bowmar. We all knew that at this moment Bill was back in L.A. where the press of business had kept him from flying his "Rigid Midget." Carl's story concerned itself with the contest day on August 6th. Carl was flying East from El Mirage and when he was beyond Daggett, he heard Bill Bowmar calling his wife, Caroline, on the radio. She was his crew, and when she acknowledged Bill's call, he told her he was down to 2700' and was having trouble negotiating the area from Victorville across to Daggett. Blythely, Caroline called Bill and told him to go ahead and strike out for Daggett because only a half hour ago she had seen Carl Ziler go by and he had less than 2000' and made it. Carl said he and Vivien had a good laugh, because when they flew past the spot Caroline was talking about, they had over 10,000 feet. Caroline was encouraging Bill, and guess what happened. Sure enough, Bill got lower and lower and then caught a booming thermal and proceeded merrily on his way!

Thoughts of flying in the direction of Victorville and Daggett reminded Hoverman of Saturday, July 30th. He relived aloud the flight that day. It was the highlight of the contest for him. After seven hours and 35 minutes of flying, Bill landed at Beaver Dam, Arizona, in the same field that Lyle Maxey had landed in 10 minutes earlier and into which Bill Ivans landed five minutes later. This spot was 260 air miles from El Mirage. Paul Bikle was along on this flight and he sneaked through the narrow gorge above Beaver Dam and landed two miles short of St. George, Utah for an overall distance of 280 miles. Considering the modifications that Bikle has made to his 1-23, and that