

# WORLD'S FIRST ONE-DESIGN REGATTA

Give people the tools to work with, and even the "stunt" of Sunday afternoon soaring races becomes the pleasant and accepted pastime of businessmen et al.

When normal and mature people can go out and enjoy an afternoon of pleasant soaring competition, soaring will graduate from the lunatic fringe of the sporting world. That has been the public attitude toward the sport.

The emphasis has been especially upon the alleged peculiarities needed for a soaring enthusiast: the eccentricity, the fanatic enthusiasm, the mad youth. This is now simply not true. It has been proven. Here below is the proof.

September 3, 1955 was the Saturday beginning of Labor Day weekend. Gathered at one of the best, and best known soaring sites in the world, was a group of people that especially struck one as being normal and mature. The crowd of soaring pilots and ground officials standing by for a new form of soaring event to begin, was made up of a fully democratic range of persons. There were doctors, lawyers, engineers, master mechanics, professional executive and transport pilots, seasoned businessmen.

Equally important, the aircraft which were tuned and on the line were from a brand-new, one-design family of standard sailplanes, the Schweizer Model SGS 1-26 and 1-26A, the latter being kit-built or partly 'do-it-yourself,' but in all essentials identical to the factory-built 1-26.

Harris Hill in Chemung County, N. Y. is a sunny, wind-swept upland, and the site of a steady 25-year history of soaring. It was here on the flight strip that these new one-design

by

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about like a bunch of streamlined thistles until official starting time approached.

That phrase "official starting time" is the key to the novelty, pioneer aspect, and the potent point of this particular afternoon.

Competition soaring pilots are not accustomed to any such phrase. They are a bunch of rugged and free individuals during most soaring contests. One of the very basic secrets and mysteries of soaring competition has been the art of knowing when the day would be ripe for soaring, and putting in one's secret bid for a starting time two or three hours ahead, in order to be assured of one's choice of take-off time.

Soaring competition has generally been a race—for distance or some-

times plain speed to a destination—but it has seldom looked like much of a race to spectators, and it has been a queer kind of race to the competitors. It has been like downhill ski racing, run alone, pitting the competitor against the rigors of the course, leaving it to him to imagine how the game is going with respect to his opponents. Too, ocean racing under sail has been a lonely operation with only rare glimpses of any of the competition, but it at least has the camaraderie of a group start, and a common anchorage at the finish.

Not so with classic soaring contests. Each pilot is off to the races when he personally feels like it. The standard arrangement—and it will always have its place—looks about as



PILOTS WHO FLEW SCHWEIZER 1-26 SAILPLANES IN WORLD'S FIRST ONE-DESIGN SOARING REGATTA AT HARRIS HILL, ELMIRA, N. Y., Sept. 3-5, 1955.

L. to R. (Front): Lt. David McNay, USAF, Vienna, Ohio AFB; Joe Perucci, Binghamton, N. Y.; Don Ryon, Rochester, N. Y.; Gretchen Dambach, Wurtsboro, N. Y.; Harlan Shaffer, Ft. Wayne, Indiana. (Standing): Dr. Harner Selvidge, Birmingham, Mich.; Tennis Mahoney, Ft. Wayne, Ind.; Art Millay, Chester, Pa.; Don Pollard, Roanoke, Va.; and Otto Zauner, Vineland, N. J.

"1-26" sailplanes rested colorfully in glistening coats of lacquer or enamel, completely ready for several hours of buoyant flight that day. Harris Hill is only a few minutes drive from Elmira, N. Y. and is thus the headquarters of the Elmira Area Soaring Corp., the official host for the contest.

By 1:00 p.m. it was obvious to everyone that the afternoon would be satisfactory for soaring. Both the Stearman and Waco towplanes were warmed up and taxied out to the flightline to begin launching sailplanes and all was in readiness for the first take-off by a competitor.

Off they went, seven of these pioneer one-designers in all, and one-by-one released from their tows about half a mile above the hill to float