

competitive as a bunch of sea gulls on a seawall, casually drifting off by ones or twos according to no evident whim or pattern, lovely to watch, but resulting in considerable question among spectators—and gulls—as to relative standings concerning skill of flight or degree of accomplishment.

Official starting time there was indeed, and no one was to cross the starting line, running north and south along Harris Hill flight strip, until it arrived and was officially announced by a timer who would whip a roll of white cloth out along the ground, plainly visible even to a pilot soaring several thousand feet above the field.

Here was a new challenge. This meant a pre-start contest behind the start line. It meant that the pilots were handed a special problem to deal with, and in plain view of one another and the spectators and officials at the soaring site below. It is one thing to have freedom to cruise miles of nearby sky, warming up to the job and getting a go at several updrafts before satisfying the conservative self that it is time to say goodbye to the launching site and disappear toward the horizon. It is another thing to be assigned a stand-by-until-starting-time position in the scheme of things.

So it was that the pre-start maneuvering was exciting and suspenseful for all concerned. The pre-start launchings ran over a period of about 3/4 hour prior to official starting time, OST for short, and this required the first-offs to soar around in the staging area for the better part of that time. Fellows that gained good commanding positions from which they could aim nicely in a dive for the starting line proceeded to lose these positions as the lift which they were enjoying tapered off. They then watched others who had been struggling well below them soar up past them and reverse the advantages.

The starting 'line' was actually an invisible gate or portal through which the aircraft were to pass, somewhat

analogous to the famous box over home plate, through which a baseball pitcher must ram his shots. In this case the portal had a ceiling that was 2500' above Harris Hill, sides that were 1800' apart at the ends of the flight strip, and a threshold or sill 500' above ground.

When OST came, and the ships dove for the portal, it was to be a matter of "TILT" and go back and try again for the unwary ones that strayed beyond the confines of this gate.

The suspense was truly terrific as OST approached, and the pre-start contest was just as all had hoped it would turn out. The pilots did a magnificent job of meeting the chal-

north to Seneca Lake and the edge of Watkins Glen, hence southwest some 16 miles to Costa lightplane strip west of Corning, finally homestretched, - - - stre-e-e-etched, that is, back to the Hill, or at least almost to the hill, depending upon who it was.

One fellow, Art Millay wasn't it, in fact landed way back on the second leg of the course and right next to the Watkins Glen race course for sports cars. Just to give the winners who made it nicely all the way an extra sense of accomplishment, Joe Perrucci, flying engineer, also slid into a field in that general area, and necessarily was retrieved by his ground crew and trailer.

Top pilots that first day, in order of finish and accordingly best time and score: Otto Zauner, Don Pollard, Lt. Dave McNay. Otto had just recently been one of the first to finish and license a 1-26A built at home from the basic Schweizer kit. Don and Dave are both building 1-26's and had to borrow ships to fly in the meet.

Incidental to the 1-26 contest, and run off with a separate start somewhat later in the afternoon, an open contest was allowed for any other sailplane types along the same

course. The pilots involved all entered ships of substantially special high performance category. Happily, Paul Schweizer in his 1-23D and Clarence See in the 2-25 were each equipped with two-way radio. Paul's car, parked at the starting line and also equipped with two-way, served as a howgozit communications center. The amusing thing was that the high performance jobs started late enough in the day to have a really tough time of it. All of those around the car (and the 'word' also was immediately put on the P.A. system at the hill) could hear Paul and Clarence muttering about thermals that kept giving out and having conferences back and forth about where to try for next. The suspense concerning their ability to get home again was thus considerable before they had even round-



WATCHING PRACTICE SOARING FLIGHT AT ONE-DESIGN SAILPLANE REGATTA AT HARRIS HILL, ELMIRA; N. Y. Sept. 3-5, 1955 are Art Millay, Chester, Pa. (center) and his crew beside the Schweizer 1-26 sailplane which Millay built from a kit.

lenge, working the 1/2 square mile or so back of the line for all it was worth, and winding up generally with advantageous positions for the final dive to the line.

The fleet came across quite well grouped. They were centered well within the boundaries of the portal, and thrilled the entire crowd on the ground with the sight and idea of silent, motorless aircraft being handled with exact timing on a predetermined flight plan and schedule.

That kicked off the first of two afternoons of similar competition. That first day, the 3rd, the ships were off on a triangular course totaling 41 miles in length by the time they crossed back over the start-finish line at Harris Hill. They traversed some lovely scenery, met some real challenges, went from Harris Hill