

THE 22nd U.S. NATIONAL SOARING CHAMPIONSHIPS

A Brief Summary of the Facts, Figures and Events of the Silver Anniversary Celebration of Tournament Soaring in America.

by E. J. REEVES

The period July 2nd through 14th was one of fevered activity at Harris Hill, Elmira, N. Y. There had gathered America's and some of the world's leading soaring personalities. Thirty-odd of the nation's leading soaring men along with perhaps a hundred crewmen, made up the flying contingent. Scores of observers, official and otherwise, along with the many members of the contest operations team, joined in the one last event of sportive aviation still in existence in this country.

That this congress of aviation sportsmen and scientists wound up in perhaps the most interesting and enjoyable meet in the history of the event, there can be little doubt. The time had at last come in tournament soaring in this country, when almost the entire list of competitors had equipped themselves with machines of near or identical fineness. At the same time it became apparent that the players in this game at the 22nd were almost all seasoned veterans with wide experience in competition flying and few there were if any who had not done battle over this terrain and in the odities of weather common to the area.

Here then in the running of this Silver Anniversary event, the stage was ideally set for the selection of the most skillful, with a rules set-up that would put these pilots in the air over the same course at approximate-

ly the same time of day for a majority of the days allowable in the tournament. This added not only zest to the game but created a set of situations that would in the final scoring show with a greater degree of certainty just who the more skillful were.

The contest would run, weather permitting, for a full nine days. Five

isfactory and decisive end-result is going to be largely dependent upon the number of days that will be workable. If weather develops weak and spotty with few days soarable, then we will fly ourselves into a most controversial situation. On the other hand if we find an extended period of fitting weather, we will indeed find the men able to most skillfully deal with the conditions at hand, and determine a champion under a formula with the element of chance weighing the least possible. To be kept in mind is the rule requirement that each pilot will drop the score of one task and one open day when calculating his final point total.

This 'drop days' requirement of the rules came in for considerable criticism at the final pilot's meeting at the conclusion of the contest. The pro and con on this question we will leave to your conclusion. The final results do not indicate to this observer that it made any material difference one way or the other.

With this background, we will get down to the actual flying day by day and see—through the eyes of this observer, just how it went. We will imagine if possible, how this man played it smart—or lucky if you insist, and how another through no fault of his own—fell upon evil days and was kept out of the winners' circle. In any event we will be bound by those final marks on the score board—however we like it. This observer will go unhesitatingly on record as saying that it was a most properly monitored sporting event and the best men won. The margin of victory was narrow to be sure—but no more so than in many of our great tests of skill and daring in the world of sport.

July 5th was the first contest day and had been preceded by three allowable practice days which had pro-



Staff Photo

Lt. Col. Floyd J. Sweet, SSA President, accepts the Warren E. Eaton bust, in opening day ceremonies at Harris Hill.

would be tasks designated by a Contest Board and four would be at the choice of the individual pilot. The first day would be a task assignment followed alternately with open choice. A contest day would be any day that one or more pilots exceeded a distance of 25 miles and any distance flown would be scored. Markings would be on the basis of one point per mile with bonuses of 20% for goal and 30% for goal and return. In lieu of the bonus, a speed factor would figure which would amount to about the same as the bonus. The overall mile of distance is therefore, going to be worth one and just a fraction point.

As in any full scale contest, a sat-