

THE SNOWBIRD MEET

1955

by HOWARD E. BURR

The annual Snowbird Soaring Meet was held again on famous Harris Hill, November 25 and 26.

From the standpoint of hours flown it was by far the most successful Snowbird ever.

Conditions were perfect right from the start. Thanksgiving Day, which was not a contest day, found almost a dozen ships warming up for things to come. The wind was on the ridge although rather weak at noon. However, it increased in velocity as the day progressed. By sundown it was possible to cruise almost anywhere at 3,000 feet as the whole mass of valley air seemed to be rising. Dale Gustin logged the most time, having been in the air three hours and thirty minutes.

Back on the ground, Mrs. Harry Wilkins, Sylvia Wilkins and Carolyn Burr were preparing a Thanksgiving Dinner in the Administration Building for those who were arriving after spending the day traveling or flying.

After a magnificent turkey dinner with all the trimmings, Ed Seymour, President of the Rochester Soaring Club, presented his movies and slides of bob sledding in both the Adirondacks and Italy. Ed, as many of you already know, has been on the American Olympic Bob Sled Team for a number of years and knows whereof he speaks.

Tom Breyemeier of the Rochester Club displayed his slides of soaring in Switzerland taken during his recent visit while he studied at Zurich University. Thus ended this pre-contest day. What a way to start a four day weekend!

Friday morning, Harris Hill bustled with the activity of field crews getting the winch out, crews assembling gliders, pilots registering, the arrival of contestants and, of course, a pilots meeting to officially get things under way.

Bob Distin gave as complete a

weather analysis as was possible with available information. Prospects appeared rather poor as the northwest wind that was already on the ridge was not expected to increase much above 8 to 10 knots.

George Downs brough nailed yours truly for a flight in his new Hummingbird. Who could refuse such an offer? So off we went to be the first in the air. The ridge lift was too weak, but the overcast was breaking up so that it began to appear as



George Downs brough, Bertha Ryan, Ginny Bennis and Howie Burr talk it over during the Snowbird Meet.

though thermals would soon be popping. We landed at the airport and George showed me how we could taxi into position and take off. Boy this was really living. A sailplane that was completely independent of extra hands (and airplane tows!).

Arriving back on Harris Hill again after a fine demonstration, it was found that launchings by airplane tow were well under way and that a few were fortunate in being able to utilize the weak lift.

Thirty-four launches were made altogether and thirteen were longer than the 30 minute minimum required for a contest flight. While Friday wasn't a super day a lot of fly-

ing was done and a good time was had by all.

At 6 o'clock we all convened at the Schweizer factory where a swiss-steak supper was served to approximately 150 pilots and crew members. That fine meal was appreciated by all as SAC's gestures always are. A display of 1-26 production was available to all interested persons. Simultaneously a special meeting of 1-26 owners was held in the Conference Room.

About 8 o'clock we returned to Harris Hill where each club present gave a report of their year's activities. This has been an interesting feature of our Friday night session for a number of years and this year was no exception.

The youngest club to report was the newly formed Pittsburgh Club under the guidance of Dr. McKee. The club reporting the most flights was the University of Ohio group who had logged several thousand flights, most of which were training flights.

Following the reports was a report of the SSA by the Secretary, Paul A.

Schweizer, after which Ed Seymour showed the film, "The Mountain Wave."

Saturday morning Bob Distin's weather analysis showed that at 6,000 feet ASL the wind was from the north and his prediction was that as the day progressed the wind would be out of the north at lower altitudes. Sure enough the meeting was hardly over when it began to look as though the ridge was soarable. Eight or ten ships were soon launched, several thermals were found and it appeared as though the leading contenders were in for a long duration flight, if they were to hold their positions. Conditions soon changed, however,