

HITTING THE JACKPOT AT MINDEN

by EARL MENEFFEE

Eureka! Eureka I tell you, we've found it! And wots that you might ask. Well wot we've found is just about the best pay-off for hardbitten, hardworking, mistreated, misunderstood, maladjusted, glider-guiders yet. We've found a soaring site absolutely—yes, I said absolutely (and I'm well aware as I say these profound words that certain Easterners will mutter something about "those bragging Californians") but nevertheless I reiterate; we've found the best gol-durn soaring site in these here United States! Period. Well now I've made the claim and just anyone is welcome to come out and try to disprove it.

We did literally and figuratively (and actually too!) hit the jackpot at Minden, Nevada recently. It all started several years ago when reports from all sorts of sources began drifting in about the tremendous soaring potential near Reno. Finally, early this summer our very active and up-and-coming Sacramento Soaring Club took the initiative (I won't say "bull by the horns," for fear of certain unnamed, cynical, aforementioned Easterners might misconstrue my intent) and went up over the Sierras to check into the matter.

To say that they were impressed is to put it only lightly for actually their next move was to fly their tow-plane to the Minden Airport in anticipation. They were kind enough to inform our San Francisco Bay group of their discovery, and we all joined in for a real free-for-all of tremendous soaring. Now the Sacramento gang really has no driving need for a new site as their home location is in itself worthy of consideration for a National Contest. Flights were made out of their Lincoln Airport home base this last Spring of 209 and 135 miles on a rather mediocre day. So when they jumped to Minden you can bet sumpin was cooking! Well, here's what we found.

Minden Airport to begin with is on the eastern side of the Sierra rampart just east of beautiful Lake Tahoe, and almost in the center of the Carson Valley. The airport is one of the

ex-Army fields having broad paved runways running practically every direction, the longest being about 7800 ft. One fairly large hanger is on the site and the field is cared for and guarded by Harry Atkinson and his wife and family, who couldn't have been more hospitable to our glider gang if they tried. As I said before—Lake Tahoe with all its beauty, its wonderful boating, fishing, swimming, etc., is all of a half-hour's drive to the West. Reno is about forty-five minutes' drive to the North and little need be said of its many and varied attractions. If



Vic Swierkowski's
LK beside the first-
class hangar at
Minden.

anyone lacks information on this town merely write the Reno Chamber of Commerce or Harrolds Club and I'm sure they'll be glad to send you an information word or two.

To the South of Minden about forty minutes' drive lie Faith, Hope, and Charity valleys in a typical High-Sierra setting with the accompanying attractions of good camping, hiking, trout fishing, et al. We won't speak of what lies to the East of Minden. In other words here is a site that has really got it. A spot where a glider-weary wife can hope to enjoy herself for a change while her poor misguided husband is knocking himself out with some of the most terrific thermals he has ever shaken a control stick at. Oh yes, the soaring—

Well fellows, it's like this—have you ever found a place where you can absolutely positively count on

for thermal activity? Day after day that is? Well I hate to say this but: THIS IS IT! We're not yacking about little ole stuff like they fed us somewheres down in the South-Central part of the U. S. during the '50 Nat'l's. You know that stuff of "Great day fellows, zero-sink all over." Heck no, these thermals run up to 2000 ft. per minute. Yep, you heard that right—2000 feet a minute going UP. Cloud base? Usually around 20,000 ft. A.S.L.!!! This is no place for rank beginners, nor is it any place to fool around with poor equipment. But it is a spot where Gold C altitude legs can be plucked from the vine merely by coming prepared. Oxygen systems in good working order are highly recommended. Also make sure your barograph is turned on and you might even wind the gadget at times.

To give an idea of actual conditions: the first weekend the weather was only a little encouraging, yet Les Arnold in his TG-3 "Redwing" went up to 16,500 ft. A.S.L. under

clouds about 10 miles East of the field, crossed over the Carson Valley on a Westerly heading, crossed over the Sierras and out over Lake Tahoe to our utter amazement when he recounted the flight after landing. A couple of weekends later, Labor Day weekend in fact, two flights were made to altitudes of 19,700 ft. A.S.L. involving altitude gains of approximately 14,000 ft. Another flight of over five hours in a P-R by Glenn Rogers of Sacramento involved a climb to 18,000 ft. A.S.L. after which Glenn decided it might be good enough for his Gold C altitude leg, so not having his barograph turned on he practically forced his way down to within 2000 ft. of the ground, turned the barograph to ON and returned to 18,300 ft. for almost 12,000 gain. Incidentally, he did not have oxygen along on this trip and it