

# THE 1956 SNOWBIRD MEET

by HOWARD E. BURR

The 1956 Snowbird Meet has come and gone. This annual affair has grown steadily each year and our aim was to make this year's the biggest and best yet.

Because of the success of the American Team in Europe it seemed only logical that we tie in a program of recognition for those who were directly involved in this success.

Exploratory announcements were sent out early in November. A word of appreciation is extended to all for their cooperation with our RSVP. The importance of this can only be appreciated by those who are close to the planning of such affairs.

We thought we would again hold a Thanksgiving dinner at Harris Hill for those who spent most of the day traveling to Elmira. It was a real success and the EASC gals, Crevia Wilkins, Sylvia Wilkins, Carolyn Burr, Maxine Carris, and Biz Smith did a wonderful job which all who attended will agree.

Several were on hand to test a strong west and southwest wind Thursday. Bill Bowley was first off in his beautiful 1-23F. He released in a thermal right off the winch and immediately climbed up to the wild blue yonder. Wild it was, too, the 40 mph wind being very turbulent. Dale Gustin was next with his beautiful blue flattop LK. He, too, found a thermal immediately and got up and away. Steve Bennis was third. However, he had quite a struggle, but finally managed to get up and away. Yours truly tried it next and found extreme turbulence and almost all down. After returning from the airport those on the hill reported the wind shifted from west to southwest just after take-off, thus the rugged experience.

It must have been rugged for I noticed that no one else took off and that those who did were back and put their ships away after a couple of hours even though the conditions remained the same throughout the day.

Friday was the first day of actual competition. After the pilots' meeting

at ten all the pilots were anxiously watching to see if a weak northwest wind would develop into a soarable condition. Dale Gustin finally gave it a try, taking off at 11:36. Bill Bowley followed at 11:41 with Steve Bennis next at 11:47. Pilots continued to winch off until all the serious contenders were in the air. Some pilots returned occasionally to pick up

After a very fine meal the evening program got underway. Lt. Col. Floyd J. Sweet made a report as to the progress and immediate activities of the SSA. After this each club present made a report as to their club activities during the past season. One of the most interesting reports was that of Dr. McKee of the newly formed Pittsburgh group. Their's was a movie narrated by Dick Huppertz with portions of it acted out by the club members. It was a wow, and I'm sure they will be in demand to show it again and again in the future. Following this, slides and movies were shown. Spirits ran high as Larry Gehrlein showed movies of the progress at his newly acquired gliderport. Larry always does things in a big way and this was no exception.



Photo: Dave Warren  
Typical of the awards made by EASC to the members of the U. S. International Soaring Team, is this certificate which was presented to World Champion Paul B. MacCready, Jr., at the 1956 Snowbird Meet.

club points by carrying a new passenger or to switch pilots. Sixteen to eighteen ships were in the air continuously all afternoon. The ridge was dependable and thermals were prevalent. An afternoon like this makes everyone feel the effort required to attend such a meet is well worth while.

After sun down, all pilots, crews and friends of soaring were the guests of Schweizer Aircraft at a swiss steak supper in the dining room. This made a good opportunity for those who were outdoors all day to thaw out and visit with old friends.

Saturday found the leading contenders anxious to get off. Dale Gustin was ahead by only a few points so Bill Bowley was eager to get the jump on him if possible. The wind on the ridge was weak, but everyone seemed to prefer winch launches in hopes the wind would pick up. A tow plane problem arose which delayed the aero towing until mid-afternoon. Winch tow was not adequate to get away and as a result few qualifying flights were made. It must have been particularly annoying to our many Canadian friends who only arrived that day and did not have the pleas-