

24th ANNUAL U. S. NATIONAL SOARING COMPETITIONS

by LLOYD M. LICHER



Photo: Rose Marie Licher

The sign that greets a visitor to Harris Hill. That tow going off means activity up on the field. Better not dwaddle here.

Each National contest seems to be different in a fairly distinctive way. This one was marked by the seeming singularity of purpose, that of selecting a National Soaring Champion. Although provisions had been made in the rules for selecting champions in the two-place, feminine, junior and club categories there were no entries for any of them. The whole emphasis was on the main event. Then too, every competitor seemed to be flying for maximum points, regardless of experience or equipment, rather than for FAI awards. Nor was there a class competition. The lowest performance ships were 1-26's, which turned in very credible flights. The other noteworthy feature of the contest was that a number of different contestants led each day's flying and the cumulative standings. Positions shifted radically and often and few pilots did not have the excuse of one bad day to explain their final standing.

The weekend prior to the contest saw many of the pilots who did not have far to travel active on Harris Hill in preparations and practice flying. Registrations began on Monday afternoon, July 1st, when Katy Jones

arrived with her office and set up shop to process applications. By the morning of opening day, Tuesday, July 2nd, some 29 contestants had entered.

The official opening ceremony was held near the big hangar after the first pilot's meeting. An invocation was given by the Rev. Lullus D. Bell; welcoming speeches were given by acting Mayor Luther Woolf and First Ward Supervisor John Gridley; and Miss Joan Clauss, the 1957 Glider Queen, was introduced and then given a ride in a glider.

First Contest Day

Following the brief official start of the meet the contestants were allowed to choose take-off times in order of previously drawn lots. Through a technicality in registering, Paul Schweizer was one of the last to choose. In spite of a late start after 1:00 p.m. he nevertheless managed to make the best flight of the day. It earned him 1,000 points and first choice of take-off time next day. The task for this first day was a goal and return race to the Warren Eaton airport at Norwich, N. Y., 76 miles to the NE.

A portrait of Warren Eaton looks approvingly down on a pilot's meeting in the Harris Hill administration building during the 24th Nationals.

Photo: Elmira Advertiser

