

On Wednesday, July 3, it was Glider Night at Eldridge Park. Everyone connected with the contest was allowed free passage to all concessions at the amusement park in the center of Elmira. The next evening was dedicated to an observance of the 25th anniversary of SSA. An Old Timers Banquet for those who had been in the sport at the time of SSA's founding was held at the Mark Twain Hotel. On Friday the downtown movie theatres provided free tickets to pilots and crews as their contribution to the entertainment of the visitors.

The crowd of spectators on July 4th and over the weekend was quite sizable. The poor soaring weather on Thursday, which made many pilots try two or three attempts at the task, resulted in a good show for the people on the ground. On Saturday, a fly-over of four Lockheed Starfire jets was arranged. Their whining low passes at high speed were in sharp contrast to the silent circling of the sailplanes that had since departed on their open day. Sunday was a rest day for the competitors. The spot landing contest provided spectator appeal during the afternoon. In the evening Walt Hausler, SSA Film Librarian, showed some select films in the administration building.

On Tuesday the American Legion put on a fine pancake supper for everyone connected with the contest. To help shake down the food a square dance followed, with music donated by a local group of union musicians. The SSA Directors who were in the area convened at the Schweizer plant during the evening to lay some groundwork for their scheduled meeting on Thursday.

For the evening of the last contest day on Wednesday, a visit to the Pleasant Valley Wineries at Hammondsport, N. Y. was arranged. Since not many of the pilots exceeded 100 miles on this open day a large share of the contestants and their crews were back in time to join the tour.

Thursday was a day of rest following the last day of competition. Another spot landing contest was organized and conducted while the SSA Directors held their official Board meeting at the Schweizer plant. A report of the Board actions is given elsewhere in this issue under SSA News. The official close of the contest was the Awards Banquet that evening which is described in a separate article following the tallies of the scorekeeper.



The scorekeeper, Don Ryon, explains the take-off selection procedure while his wife Gretchen prepares to administer it.

CONTEST CAMEOS

Bill Coverdale did a remarkable job in bending his new 1-26 to his will. One wonders how much higher he might have placed if he would have had a little more penetration at his disposal. Nevertheless, he said he had more fun in the 1-26 than he ever got out of other ships.

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Larry Gehrlein told a good one. After spiralling 186 miles to Pittsfield, Mass. and landing he was offered a chance to fly a U-control model airplane. Whereupon doing so he promptly got air sick.

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Coder told of working a thermal so low he could see through the second story window of a farm house. He also said he saw Bikle disappear out of sight for 15 minutes below the crest of a 200-foot high ridge before picking up and continuing on once.

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There were four towplanes doing the hauling, a Stearman, a Waco UPF, a Fleet biplane and Steve Benis' PT-23. Tow intervals varied from three to five minutes on different days.

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Bob Smith's cap had a long green celluloid visor which no doubt contributed greatly to his ability to see the kind of air soaring pilots need.

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Ernie Schweizer's photographic art was appreciated by all. His many black and white candid shots of personalities and activity at the meet were displayed as 8 by 10 enlargements covering one wall in the administration building.

After the first few days it was decided to announce the task of the day first thing at pilot's meeting. By knowing it while listening to the subsequent weather briefing the pilots were better able to plan their strategy for the day and it worked out to everyone's satisfaction

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Of the two LO-150's in the contest Harold Jensen's had just been delivered. He had to spend the first few days repairing some minor shipping damage. His was supposedly the last glider built by Wolf Hirth, who is evidently retiring from that business although his designs will continue to be manufactured by others.

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Local press coverage of the Nationals was confined to the sports pages of the Elmira Advertiser and Star-Gazette this year. This was more insignificant than in previous years but was nevertheless ably handled by Bill Weingartner and Ed Collins of the respective sports staffs.

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Peter Riedel was an enthusiastic spectator over the weekend. He is a famous German soaring pilot who led the scoring in Elmira Nationals during the mid-thirties. (See Twenty Years Ago, page 28). Peter now works for Pan American engineering in Kansas City.

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Dick Ball showed foresight on his flight to Danbury, Conn. When a landing became imminent over a plush looking area he picked out an estate with a swimming pool and large field to set down in. He was greeted by a butler in striped black pants who drove him about in the family car.

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