

# BEGINNER'S LUCK

by TAIL END TONY, alias JOSEPH C. LINCOLN  
SSA - ASA  
(concluded)

West of Fort Worth saw the first stop to circle for altitude, less than a dozen turns, and I was at Weatherford before having to do any real work. Back at 7200 I headed for Mineral Wells, and over the turn point got my biggest thermal of the contest. It carried up to 10,000 and the air was so cold I was afraid of freezing solid. I tightened the belly and pulled my jacket on backwards as far as it would go. Then began a long glide against a strong head wind. Half way down I circled with Bill Coverdale for a while and then passed

## Seventh Day

An out and return to Waco; 75 miles away and dead into the wind. Five miles out we were almost down but scraped aloft again in rather weak lift. Then the work began. Stronger lift and heavy sink all the way. Navigation without a compass was no problem as long as Fort Worth and Dallas were in sight, but when they vanished we came over the area where the surveyors had studied modern art and thought the land would be much cuter if it was laid out 30 degrees off compass points. I was lost



The author as he appeared in his new Schweizer 1-23D during the 1957 Nationals.

Photo  
Ernest  
Schweizer

on. Lift grew weaker and weaker because of the overcast, and finally I was standing still; each climb and glide put me over the same point. I headed on course for the last glide and made my best score of the meet.

When turning base leg I saw two horses browsing in the field. In Texas everything is much bigger than it is anywhere else, but the horses had never seen a bird even close to this size. They looked up with interest, then with alarm. When last seen they were headed for the Louisiana border at seventy miles an hour.

at once, then conceived the idea of flying straight into the wind which could be ascertained in a few seconds after each climb by observing the cloud shadows. This worked fine and I was soon relocated on my chart. After two and a half hours I got impatient with my very slow speed and pushed it a little faster. Lift was passed up and we got under a big cloud when suddenly there was the horrible realization that I was hanging in the balance between gravity and thermal pull. Several turns followed with rising desperation but it

was too late. The landing was made in a corn field under a sky of beautiful cumulus in all directions as far as the eye could see. I got out and spat. Even the gods had to rub it in that day; a few seconds after touchdown a thermal came by which was so strong it tempted me to try getting aloft without a tow. Moral: It's better to go slow upstairs than sit on the ground and watch the Fords go by.

Presently a farmer drove up in his new car. "Does it take much wind to keep them things up in the air?"

"Yes, a hell of a lot," I said.

## Eighth Day

Out and return to Breckenridge, Texas, 108 miles away. I had been inspired by the feat of young Briegleb completing the difficult 300 Km. triangle and got in trouble shortly after leaving tow. On downwind leg for a return to the field I hit a weak thermal at 600 ft. I'll show these people who can fly. Up we went to 800 and 1000 where I noticed we were out of gliding distance to the field, but what does it matter; still going up. One hundred feet more and then nothing; in ten minutes we were down in a small field. I went up to a farmhouse and called the crew. They had left. The farmer and I talked then I called again, then talked some more and called again. Several hours later they arrived with a tooth-shaking Texas babe in tow. She was a lovely creature, lightly caparisoned and magnificently equipped, especially on the sail-side between the neck and waist.

We were first home, beating the Jenny Mae by twenty minutes; although we had to drive and missed the turn point by a small margin of 104 miles.

## Last Day

A triangle flight to Russell Field, Denton, and back. Scores had to be in by four o'clock because the awards banquet was tonight.

After a good start I fell into a hole short of Russell Field, worked my way up, then fell clear down and had to land there. Interestingly it was the same hole that gave Maxey his last scare of the contest. A few minutes after I was down he passed over us at 6000 and the Jenny Mae flew north, regal and triumphant. At her next landing she brought home the champion of the United States.

I called the crew and waited, called and waited, read a magazine, called and waited. After four hours I called for a tow home, and Gus Briegleb came in with the TSA Waco. I cut at Arlington and glided back through silken air. Thirty seconds after land-