

TWENTY YEARS AGO

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The 8th Annual U. S. National Soaring Contest was the big news of Vol. 1, Nos. 7 and 8 issues of SOARING. No. 7 was the pre-contest issue and told of the famous soaring men and machines already entered in the upcoming 8th National.

It was to turn out to be a great contest indeed. The first American tournament with an international flavor. Peter Riedel, the German pilot and holder of Silver C Badge No. 7 (International), was to enter the competitions with his "Sperber Senior" sailplane, then considered to be probably the world's finest high-performance sailplane. Three Lithuanian pilots—Jonas Pyragius, Bronius Os-kinis, and Kurt Seimon—were entered in 'Minimoas'.

Such American greats as Richard Dupont, Silver C No. 12 (Int.; U. S. No. 1), and twice National Champion (1934 and 1935); Chet Decker, Silver C No. 32 (Int.; U. S. No. 2) and defending National Champion; Stanley Smith, Silver C No. 236 (Int.; U. S. No. 4) and a former National Champion (1933); and Lewin Barringer, Silver C No. 65 (Int.; U. S. No. 3) were to be contestants (NOTE: At this time the Gold and Diamond Badges were not even dreamed of.)

Other American soaring men—famous, near famous, and to become famous—in the sport were entered:

Paul Bikle, Detroit, Mich.; Dana Darling, Greenfield, Mass.; Bill Dolger, N. Y. City; Howard and Joe Funk, Akron, Ohio; Art Hoffman, N. Y. City; Herman Kursawe, St. Albans, N. Y.; Don Lawrence, Newark, N. J.; Warren Merboth, Glen Rock, N. Y.; Harland Ross, Wichita Falls, Texas; Vic Saudek, Pittsburg, Pa.; Gus Scheurer, Irvington, N. J.; Art Schultz, Berkley, Mich.; Youston Sekella, Elmira, N. Y.; Earl Southee, Elmira, N. Y.; Paul and Ernie Schweizer, Peekskill, N. Y.; Emil Lehecka, N. Y. City; Jay Buxton, L. A., Calif.; Floyd Sweet, Elmira, N. Y.; Lt. Com. Ralph S. Barnaby, USN.; Stan Corcoran, Chicago, Ill.; Cleve Hyde, Buffalo, N. Y.; Bill Placek, Randy Chapman.

There were in all 147 pilot entries in this sixteen day contest. An excellent Fred Loomis photograph shows the entire group—and moves this writer to wonder at the fact that some of the chaps were ever so young.

Some of the outstanding soaring craft to be seen in the contest and of the 54 sailplane entries to score highest were:

The "Sperber Sr.", flown by Riedel; The "Albatross" by Decker; "Minimoas" in the hands of Barringer, DuPont, and the Lithuanians; The "RS-1", later to be known as the "Zanonia," by Ross; The "ABC" by Art Schultz; The "SGU-1", the Schweizer brother's first all-metal ship and forerunner of a long line of famous sailplanes; The "Rhonbuzard" imported from Germany by the Elmira Association of Commerce; The "Transporter" by Jay Buxton; Numerous versions of the famous "Franklin line of sailplanes; A "Grunau" and a "Pruffling"; A "Rhonsperber" by Lehecka.

The 8th got off to an auspicious start on June 26th. Riedel, the German, promptly showed his mettle by reeling off 108 miles of distance, only to have the score nullified by reason of his starting before 3 PM the Official Starting hour. The same fate befell Decker in a 60 mile flight to Williamsport, Pa.

Contest points were awarded for altitude, time, and distance, all in accordance with a published "Point Awards System Graph" the exact workings of which is a bit unclear to this writer. But it must have been a good and satisfactory system all the same.

Minimum contest performances were set at distance 7 mi—altitude gained 1,000 ft.—duration sixty minutes. On one of the better days mention is proudly made of 19 of the 147 pilots attaining or exceeding at least one of these minimums. "Day after day it was necessary to resort to airplane tows to get the high performance ships into position where they could take hold of thermal up-currents. The large number of utility ships without airplane tow permits

had to remain on the ground."

July 6th was one of the best distance days. Dr. Karl Lang, the contest Meteorologist, advised a southwesterly course. On this day Riedel again showed his prowess by accomplishing the best distance of the entire contest—133 miles into western Pa. Decker did 51 miles and Barringer 25 for the next best flights.

July 7th saw Harland Ross getting the feel of his new RS-1 on a distance flight of 121 miles, the second best of the entire contest. It was becoming apparent that this machine was a goer, as was to be proven in later years when the great John Robinson flew it to some of the best distances ever to be accomplished in this country, up to the time. Barringer had 97 mi. on this day, Lehecka and Decker each 100 miles and Riedel 117.

A day by day scoring of the contest is not recounted. There were apparently a number of days on which distance flying was not attempted. The contestants busied themselves with altitude and duration flying. These performances it appears paid off as well in points under the scoring system as did the distance performances.

Accounts of four accidents were reported resulting in no serious injury to the pilots but washing out the machines.

In a design competition at this contest a committee awarded first prize to Art Schultz for his "ABC" sailplane over Harland Ross' RS-1—an action we imagine that gave rise to some criticism as time went by and the RS-1 proved itself to be one of America's best high-performance designs.

It is interesting, we think, to note those men and machines entered in this 8th National two decades ago that are still active in tournament soaring. Of the 147 pilots entered we note four who flew in the 24th. twenty years later. They are Stan Smith, Paul Schweizer, Paul Bikle and Dana Darling. As far as we can tell, only one machine of the 8th vintage was flying in the 24th. That being the famous RS-1 "Zanonia". Also interestingly enough, two of these pilots were front runners in the 24th after twenty summers of competition soaring.

But just as important and interesting a fact to note, is that a great number of these pilot entries of twenty years ago are still active in the sport. No few of whom continue

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