

TWENTY YEARS AGO

Auto towing to 2,600 feet! Would this be a world's record that still stands?

Emerson Mehlhose tells of auto towing on the frozen Maumee River near Toledo, Ohio, using a Funk two-seater glider attaining altitudes of well over 2,000 feet. Participating in this high-auto-tow caper along with Mehlhose were such soaring greats as Ed Knight, "Silent John" Nowak and other members of the Toledo Glider Club and the ABC Club of the Detroit, Michigan, area.

There is, of course, no official record category of this type of performance but it is interesting to speculate as to whether or not anyone has bettered this mark of 2,600 feet. For some of the details of the operation we will quote from Emerson's article which appeared in Vol. 1, No. 3.

"The section of the river where the towing would be done is three quarters of a mile wide and between four and five miles long. The ice here was eighteen inches thick and covered with a thick crust of snow.

"I made one tow with the 2,000 foot line and attained an altitude of 1,200 feet. When the angle of the tow line and the glider's line of flight became about forty-five degrees near the top of the climb, I found the pull was too great, and the tow car could no longer gain traction, in spite of the usually successful combination of snow and skid chains. By hauling back on the stick at 1,200 feet, the tow car could be brought to a full stop.

"A Toledo Ford dealer offered us

his courtesy car, a 1936 V8 Phaeton. By loading the tonneau with five passengers and excess baggage, the traction of the rear wheels was increased, so that we could tow much higher.

"The tow line was now lengthened to 4,000 feet. The ship took the air and climbed easily. At 1,000 feet I had to signal for less speed. The low pitched hum of the wire grew louder and louder. The altimeter registered 2,300 feet but where was the car? I tried to locate the car by guessing where the line should go. Did the car go through the ice? Finally I caught sight of it—much smaller and further away than I had expected. It was then that I realized how long a mile of wire looks when hung on the nose of a glider.

"Maybe we can squeeze another hundred feet out of 'er I muttered hopefully, as I hauled back a bit more. The speed became less—the tow car wheels were slipping—ease off a bit. The speed began to increase. I hauled back, stepping up, losing speed, easing off gaining speed, until finally I was up to 2,600 feet."

Five fine photographs of the operation embellish this splendid article. One shows John Nowak flying the ABC Club's Franklin, another is an overall view and still others show the Toledo Club's Funk attached to the aforementioned Ford Phaeton.

And what would all of this prove if anything? Just that glider men can always have a lot of mighty interesting fun, rain or shine, cold or hot, no matter the weather. And along the line, and as a by-product if you wish,

prove many facts of flying just as Lilienthal, the Wright Brothers and others did. Man learned to fly that way, and he will learn still more about flying just as long as he has a yen for adventures such as this.

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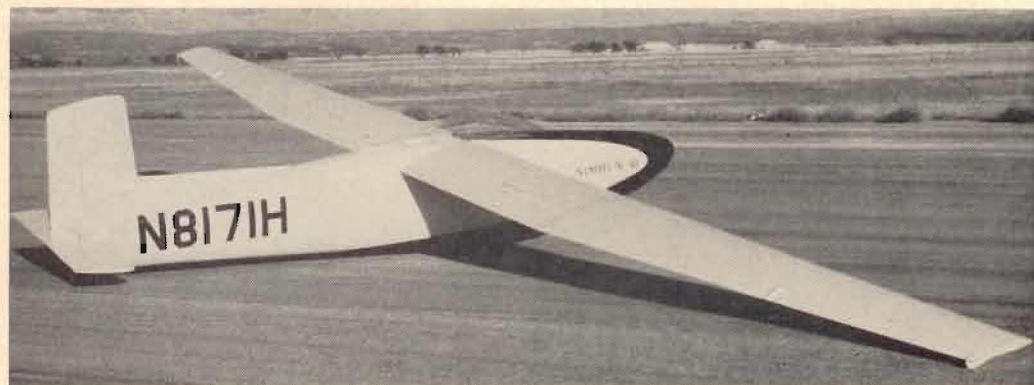
The "Rhonsperber" (named for a small hawk found in the Rhon mountains of Germany), high performance sailplane designed by Hans Jacob at Darmstadt, Germany, is shown in photographs and three-view. It was said to have a glide angle of 1:20 and sink of 2.5 FPS. Later tests proved these estimates to be more than conservative. A gull-winged ship of beautiful lines, it bears a marked resemblance to Harlan Ross' "Ibis" and "Zanonia," and the Polish "Orlik" all to come some time later. Here again we have the conception of the great Jacob setting a pattern that other designers would do well to follow.

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Young Pete Bonotaux (he's still young—but he was younger then) wrote a splendid article entitled, "Gliding and Soaring at Greenwood Lake," and located the place on the northern New Jersey-southern New York state lines. An accompanying photo shows a "Sesquiplane," two-place glider. This was a new one to us, perhaps Bowers knows of it. Anyway here was an active group, operating off the ridges and over the ice.

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A photo captioned "The Briegleb Utility at Lake Elsinore" shows a rather trim strutted wing single place with open cockpit which we could guess as being the forerunner of the BG-6. A youngish looking chap seated in the cockpit could indeed be the "Old Master" Gus himself.



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