

BEGINNER'S LUCK

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

It all began quite innocently. One day in July 1955 I landed my Piper Pacer at Thunderbird Field, North of Scottsdale, and there was a glider working on auto tow. It had appeared in the hangar a few weeks before and stirred up an old curiosity about soaring which had first been aroused twenty years ago in an article by Richard du Pont. Nothing pressing. I thought I knew the sky a little after eight hundred hours of power time during the last seven years.

After a one minute flight the glider landed and I met Don Barnard. For those who do not know him, you might describe his appearance as a cross between Mahatma Ghandi and an R.A.F. Squadron Commander. Most of his conversation is about soaring and he can express something of the poetry and humor of flight as well as its technical part. He has a wonderful bass voice; his enthusiasm is unlimited and he has the soaring pilot's deathless conviction that on the next flight he will encounter lift which is "ten meters up, everywhere." I had wondered for years why this sport was not popular in Arizona. It took a Bernard to get it started. There is not a better instructor in the United States. Having two commitments at the time which left no room for sporting activity, I made arrangements to fly as soon as I could. On 19 February, 1956, I went out to Falcon Field where the group had moved.

If I had to pick out one experience in my life which was more disappointing than all others it would be that first soaring flight. We released at 2,000 and quickly soared to cloud base at 5,100, then flew to Mesa and back with Don shouting instructions from the back seat and saying over and over: "This is a terrific day, y'know what I mean." From the ground, soaring looked effortless and graceful—it was not. Repeatedly I had heard it compared to sailing, but I found no similarity. My stomach was impervious to fairly severe turbulence but seemed to disapprove the continual circling. For seventeen years I had been told how *quiet* it

was; Don's LK sounds rather like a peanut vendor's convention in a blacksmith shop. Maybe there was nothing in this game after all? I could not believe it. A few weeks later I went back for my next lesson.

Before I got started the Arizona Soaring Association had been formed. The first meeting I attended found the choice of a name under consideration. Not being a member, I had no voice in the discussion, but since there

were on the line. The TG-3 was tied down on the apron, minus a wing. "What happened?" It had blown off the trailer and got broken on the trailing edge. The pilot who had planned to fly it was now busy in the pod of the Baby installing a variometer. He asked my permission to fly and with Don's recommendation I said yes. In the LK we took off on a short dual ride and landed just in time to see the Baby getting into the air. Its flight was a short one. After missing two thermals the pilot got well downwind of the field and pulled spoilers for the approach. The Baby does not go very fast even with a tail wind and this condition is materially aggravated by a strong head wind. He let it sink without even lowering the nose to gain speed. Somebody made a nervous joke about having to pull him out of the watermelon patch. The sailplane did not turn into



Mid-Continent Photo

Miss Tony Page awards the TAIL END TONY trophy to Joseph C. Lincoln at the awards banquet after the 23rd National Soaring Contest at Grand Prairie, Texas. Note the expressions on the faces of the onlookers.

was already the Soaring Society of America I thought ARIZONA SOARING SOCIETY would be nice. The name "Society" is a bit more elegant than "Association," and it would have given us a dramatic set of initials, but some of the members thought it was a little too personal, and one or two Republicans feared the unsavory political connotation. I joined the ASA. Then late in March Don made a trip to Los Angeles and returned with a Bowlus Albatross which I bought.

Wednesday, 4 April, my telephone rang. A few of the boys are going out today, can you make it? It's a workday. Oh well, maybe for an hour or so. When I arrived in early afternoon the LK, Pratt-Read, and Baby

the cultivated field, it did not increase speed; it came on interminably and at last hit a wide ditch with a splintering crash that left one of the wings broken forward at a 45 degree angle. It was a brutal thing to see. All of a sudden we realized the pilot might be hurt and ran over to have a look. There was some blood spattered about the cockpit and we made ready to take him to the hospital, but the damage was only a minor cut on the forehead and a severe headache. An expensive lesson: if you loan your sailplane be prepared to lose it.

Three o'clock, and two sailplanes broken since noon. I was sick with disgust and suddenly remembered

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