

# TWENTY YEARS AGO

From the May-June 1937 Issue of SOARING.

by E. J. REEVES

SAILPLANE AND GLIDER, the official organ of the British Gliding Association had in its March 1937 issue, devoted much space to activities in America under the newly formed SSA, welcomed the publication of SSA's official journal SOARING, and expressed all good wishes for the success of the American venture.

In a friendly manner, and possibly quite justifiably, an Editorial in this issue of Sailplane, took the Americans to task for overstressing the practical advantages of gliding, namely the preliminary flight training of military pilots. It seems that the British then as now, believe that soaring flight is its own justification, an end in itself.

Also referred to is an 'Open Letter' to the SSA by Mr. Philip Wills. The text of Mr. Will's letter is not quoted but one can guess that it must have been quite pointed, in that SOARING'S Editor, Mr. Lewin Barringer suggests that "... remarks which seem to be based on misconceptions." At any rate it must have been a lively exchange as both gentlemen are noted for their ability to express themselves with great clarity.

Successful first flights of Art Schultz's new ABC sailplane were described. This ship had been built by the ABC Glider Club of Detroit, Michigan. These first soaring flights were along Lake Michigan's sand dunes—the same site, incidentally, which saw Octave Chanute's experimental flights with 'Hang Type' gliders nearly 50 years previously.

New Yorkers had discovered a new ridge site at Ellenville in the Catskill Mountains. Shock-cord launchings from atop the 1400 ft. ridge were described by Hans Groenhoff. The author's usual superb photographs showed Chet Decker's 'Albatross' and Bill Placek's 'Gull Wing Franklin.' The beauty and desirability of the site were quite apparant. It was a launching from this site which sent Lewin Barringer on perhaps a world record cross country flight which utilized exclusively ridge lift and covered nearly 160 miles of distance. This is the locus of Metropolitan Air Hopper's current operations at Wurtsboro

which is just a few miles down-ridge from this Ellenville site.

Gerald A. Casey of the Sou Cal group told of strong up-current at Palos Verdes' 1,000 foot cliffs along the Pacific in the L. A. area. These were days when L. A. citizens operated their gliders from their own back yards, as it were.

But now, progress so called, being what it is in the area, these same chaps go out no less than 75 miles to find a site suitable for glider launching. This Palos Verdes site is presently used for industrial and residential building and glider launching is long since passed.

Planning was in progress for the 8th Annual National Soaring Contest to be held June 26 thru July 11th, 1937 on Harris Hill, Elmira, N. Y.

Official contest flights might take place from any site near Elmira which was so designated an official site by the Contest Board.

Launchings will be by any of the following methods, dependant upon the pilot's desire and subject to the suitability of his equipment:

Shock Cord—Only participants of the contest are allowed to stretch the cords. Auto Tow—The total length of the rope will be deducted from altitude performance. Winch Tow—The total length of the unwound part of the rope will be deducted from altitude performance, unless the actual release point is triangulated. It is expected that on calm days winch tows may be made high enough to permit thermal soaring. Airplane Tow—Airplane towing will take place on occasions designated by the Contest Board.

The events of this 8th National would be as follows:

- (A) Airline Distance
- (B) Distance with return to starting point
- (C) Altitude above take-off point
- (D) Duration

Bonus Points for carrying passengers!

- $\frac{1}{3}$  increase for 1 passenger
- $\frac{1}{2}$  increase for 2 passengers
- $\frac{2}{3}$  increase for 3 passengers

Such was contesting twenty years ago, and it might after all have been just as much fun as the way we do it now—maybe more.

## SOARING TECHNIQUES

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lovely gull-winged plane with a sink of 2.2 f.p.s. at 44 m.p.h. Its L/D was listed by the Poles as 24 to 1 when it was brought to this country in 1938. Paul was able to get in some flying at Bishop that Christmas vacation of 1947. While several groups became involved in the Bishop project I have an account of Paul's flight to 22,000 feet when the canopy of the Orlik cracked to pieces. Judging from the date (Dec. 1947) this was one of the very first high altitude wave flights in this country. As an after-math in getting a new canopy with other changes the performance of the Orlik was upped to an L/D ratio of 28 to 1, putting it in the class of the Zanonias.

The real race in the 1948 Nationals turned out to be between Johnny Robinson and MacCready. Robinson must have rued the day he took Paul up for his first sailplane ride just two years before. Their sailplanes, both gull wing and of about the same span were comparable in performance. Robinson was the three-time champion who knew everything about Elmira thermals, and a great natural pilot who could fly as fast and far as anyone. No highlights stand out to prove the value of the Optimum Speed Selector.

For the flight of 222 miles almost to Cleveland, which incidentally was the longest flight from Elmira since 1941 and the longest ever made to the west, Barney Wiggin did not have complete data. He did say that was to be "the" day for that meet and he felt what wind there was would be from the North. So everyone started hell bent to the South. Paul spent considerable time over the field analyzing the conditions before setting out. He told us he was going West and for once our radio worked so we knew what to expect. Hence this event was won on the basis of a better interpretation of the meteorological conditions present that day.

On the last day there was a speed event of 76 miles to Norwich which Paul lost by 5 seconds to Maxey who wasn't flying the Jennie Mae. You don't go after a money prize if the championship is at stake. Paul was ahead of Robinson but Robinson was always dangerous—look what he did the previous year on the last day. Paul's strategy was to dog Robinson and make just the same flight Robinson did in order to protect his score.

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