

later in the day. The task is announced as a goal race to Tri-Cities Airport, 41 miles down the valley toward the southeast. Should be an easy flight if we can stay up at all! There have been many trips to Tri-Cities in past years and I know every ridge on the route like a book. (As it turned out I had a chance to do a lot of reading before I got there!) But I shouldn't need any hills. With this wind, two fair thermals would sail the venerable 1-21 and pilot to the goal without any strain.

But the barogram of this flight tells a sad story. A good rate of climb to 6000 feet asl right after release, then steep sink for ten minutes, flattening out and holding for five minutes, then steady sink to about the height of Harris Hill. That first thermal took me to the little ridge between Sullivan's Monument and Glory Hill, just north of Waverly. And there I sat for one hour and ten minutes, just hanging on! At last I got away and nursed that thermal for the last ounce of lift. A brief downward run at zero sink, then normal glide and I was still short of the airport which was just over a small hill out of sight. A few hundred feet gained in a last little thermal and the goal was made. But my time is 144 minutes and I win the Booby prize as Bill Hoverman does it in 50 minutes. I am not too gay as I find out that I would have made more points if I had landed with Bikle, Schreder, et al, back on the other side of that last hill. And the boys who didn't quite make it were not too pleased with my spectacular performance either.

But things look a little better after dinner at O'Briens and we arrive back home in early evening. We slipped badly today, 2nd place down to 7th. It will be tough to make up.

Third Day — July 4th

The task for the third day was announced as a triangular goal race from Harris Hill to Blue Swan Airport, south of Waverly, back to Ithaca and then home to Harris Hill. The weather looked marginal, with a cloud base predicted at only 1800 feet above Harris Hill by noon and perhaps a couple of thousand feet higher later in the day. Wind still strong at 20 to 30 knots from the west, shifting to southwest later. We would be timed crossing a starting line imaginatively erected across the Hill.

We postponed our take-off until well after noon, waiting for the al-



Photo: Rose Marie Licher

The National Soaring Champion-to-be prepares his Schweizer SGS 1-21 for a flight during the contest.

most complete overcast to clear. Thermals were very weak as we released from tow but we were able to hold release altitude at just under cloud base, so decided to cross the starting line and get under way. Nearly 1000 feet were lost by the time the start had been made so back to the valley we went in order to regain height safely within glide of the Chemung County Airport. Shortly we had gotten back to release height and cruised around smoothly in company with the two Pauls; Bikle and Schweizer, each waiting to see what the others would do. I had a plan to ridge soar East Ridge as far south as possible, jump to Sullivan's Monument, then to Glory Hill, and then to the first turn point but I didn't want the others to know what I was doing. Unfortunately I allowed Paul Schweizer to lure me several miles past East Ridge where I nearly got forced down in a narrow little valley. I just barely made it back over the hill and had a nice view of Hilltop Restaurant from only 100 feet above, and of Elmira's TV tower from 100 feet below. I headed south along the ridge and tried in vain to hold altitude at Sullivan's Monument where many years ago I had helped to launch Ralph Barnaby in the old Alfaro with towline biting at the base of the Monument. But it was no good and I headed out over the river to a soggy landing in a corn field. My spirits were lower than the mud which was deposited in my aft fuselage by the wheel. But I was probably happier than Graham Thomson who made 36 miles only to have the day officially declared no contest as Joe Lincoln barely missed contest distance by 3 miles.

Fourth Day — July 5th (Third Contest)

The warm moist air had now

passed us by and the forecast was for good lift in dry air with only minor Cu development. There would be rather high winds, from 260 to 270 degrees at first, shifting to 280 to 290 later in the day. Velocity would be about 30 knots at 4000 feet asl. After some discussion about contest rules the Board settled on the task. It would be a speed goal to Sidney, N. Y. with a penalty for landing off course. The flight turned out to be an easy one. I flew high, determined not to take any chances, and was never in any trouble. The result of my conservatism was that 13 pilots made better time than I. It was a real fun day with a big gang accumulated at the goal before the afternoon was over. Graham Thomson, in the RJ-5, arrived rather late; but with the best time of 62 minutes (75 mph!) and was met at the end of his landing roll with a freshly opened can of beer, courtesy of Coverdale. Joe Lincoln arrived even later (also with very good time) and responded with a sprint to the frantic gestures and shouts of the mob of pilots who made it appear that he would be timed to his arrival at the case of beer. This was one of those days when soaring is the greatest sport in the world; but it did nothing to get me out of my seventh position.

Fourth Contest Day — July 6th

This was to be the first open day, as announced in the Contest schedule. The pilot's meeting opened with the announcement of Papa Schweizer's death during the night. So it was a sobered group of pilots and crew members who heard Barney report that today would be a good soaring day with thermals to 9000 feet asl.

Thoughts of super distance temporarily erased sad thoughts as Barney spoke of 30 to 40 knot winds and cloud base at 6000 feet. He warned