

West Words

by BERTHA M. RYAN

Winter has come to the West with snow on the mountains and cold winds blowing over the desert. Many of the flights are up and down minimum duration but the intrepid glider pilots still fly all day and then gather in the evening at the various western soaring sites. One such is El Mirage where on the cold winter nights Gus Briegleb leads a quartet composed of a guitar, a ukelele, a recorder, and Gus himself on the gut bucket — a medieval instrument constructed of an inverted wash tub with cat gut stretched from the center up a wooden handle with adjustable tension. Such activities give an unforgettable warmth to the cold evenings and provide a comradeship that glider pilots know better than any other flyer.

But not all the winter flying consists of just "slides." The winds across the mountains often provide the waves that allow a pilot to gain height limited only by his equipment. Storms, unknown to summer California weather, give the pilots an opportunity to try their skill at frontal soaring. In many ways winter flying in the West provides more of a thrill for glider pilots because it is more of a challenge.

The main soaring event of the western winter is the annual Torrey Pines meet held near San Diego in February. Every year the possibility of having this contest becomes more doubtful because the spreading of the City of San Diego threatens to engulf the Torrey Pines site. But the pilots look forward to this meet as one providing a great deal of enjoyment for pilots and crews.

Southern Californians have adopted a pleasant practice that is especially welcome during the slower winter season. Once a month, usually on the last Friday, they meet at the home of an enthusiast in their neighborhood and hanger soar. One extra enjoyable get-together was at Don Roberts' home where Hawley Bowlus entertained the guests with movies and stories of his gliding activities some years back.

Other glider pilots use the long winter evenings for construction or remodeling of their ships for next season. In the San Fernando Valley, near Los Angeles, there are a num-

ber of pilots constructing Cherokee II's from the plans sold by Stan Hall. The ship in the accompanying picture is the result of eight months of spare time work by Ralph Thenhaus and his son. They expect to fly it around Christmas time. Laddie Klindera has his fuselage well along. He started the work in June, 1957, and expects to fly it by next June. These people will each have about \$500 invested in their completed ships. Laddie reports that the plans are not at all difficult to follow. The tools he has used so far have been hand tools with the exception of a borrowed drill press and power saw. This kind of spirit and "working-togetherness" will make the sport of soaring grow.

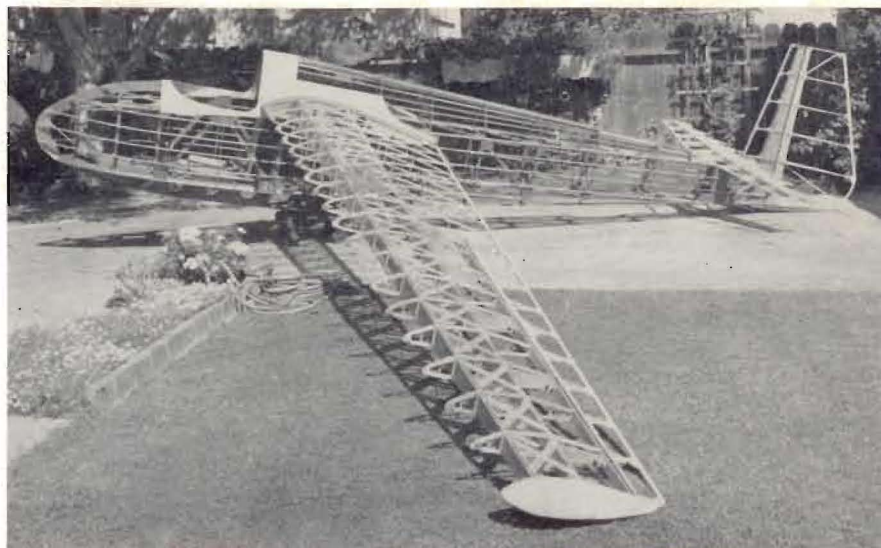


Photo: Ralph Thenhaus

Speaking of building gliders from plans, there is some good news for fans of Briegleb sailplanes. The BG-12A is available only in kit or finished form but now the Briegleb Aircraft Company is offering for sale once more plans for the BG-6 (a single-place utility) and the BG-7 (a single-place intermediate sailplane). The BG-6 has a type certificate and was the only production single-place used during World War II by the Army Air Corps.

The Elsinore soaring site in Southern California is temporarily inactive. The operator has sold his tow plane and has no immediate prospects of obtaining another in the near

future. The San Diego group is flying at Skylark Airport, near Elsinore, and regularly at Torrey Pines. They have their own tow plane and winch. This glider club has initiated a training program for its members that is working remarkably well. A report on their methods will appear in the near future.

Names in the western news this month: The position of SSA Governor for Southern California has been filled by Bob Smith of Los Angeles. Bob is the owner of a TG-3 and has been active in soaring since 1928. He has held many offices in the Southern California Soaring Association and has been elected for President in 1958. We read in a recent issue of the magazine AVIATION WEEK that Bill Ivans has become a director of Exact Engineering & Manufacturing, Inc., Oceanside, California. Bill's main occupation is as Vice President in charge of engineering for Kintel, a division of Cohu

Electronics, Inc. Jan Woods, a Californian school teacher who recently flew her Cessna 170 around the world, is becoming interested in soaring. For you who haven't already heard of the globe circling flight, Jan flew her Cessna from California to New York, had it shipped to Europe, flew all around Europe (stopping long enough in Denmark for her first glider ride), flew on down to Italy, over to Saudi Arabia, on to India (where she had her second glider flight) and finally to Singapore where she had her Cessna shipped back to California. Her third glider ride was as El Mirage just a few weeks ago.