

THE PERILS OF JEAN-LINDA

by VERNON OLDERSHAW

This is a short story of the stop and start, stop and start construction of a good sailplane designed and begun by Ray Parker.

The proficiency of an expert was clearly displayed in the workmanship of the wings and tail surfaces. To the best of my knowledge, the plane was designed and the wings started by Ray in the early 40's.

The monocoque-type fuselage of formed rings for bulkheads with 1/8 inch mahogany plywood skin, was assembled by Harley Porter. The quality of materials and workmanship again was of the highest type.

In 1953 it was my good fortune to acquire the partially built sailplane. In July, 1957, the Jean-Linda was assigned a number by the C.A.A.

After numerous discussions with the C.A.A. officials, the Jean-Linda was to be allowed one test hop before an official test flight which was to be witnessed by these same officials.



Photo: Vernon Oldershaw

August 17, 1957, was the big day. With a lot of help from the eager and willing members of the Kern County Soaring Society, she was assembled at Minter Field, near Bakersfield, California. About 5:30 PM she was checked and re-checked.

The weight and balance indicated she would be slightly nose heavy with me plus a parachute in the front seat. There were no blueprints of the ship, so pictures had to be taken for the C.A.A. records.

At seven in the evening we pushed her to the starting line on the runway and faced her into a slight wind. Three hundred feet of towline was al-

ready in place, so I slipped into my chute and climbed in. After a brief check of towing procedure with my son, Paul, we were ready to go.

I instructed Paul to accelerate the car as quickly as possible to about 35 miles per hour, then to hold that speed until I had released from tow. After release he was to pull away fast to clear the runway.

We faced the setting sun with a dusty windshield, having forgotten to bring the glass cleaner, and began to move forward. As Stan Hall said of his test flight in the Cherokee II, "Few experiences in life can match the thrill of flying a new sailplane." With only about 75 hours in the Kern County Soaring Society's Pratt-Read and about 60 hours of power flying in T-crafts and Aeroncas, several years previous, I must admit the thrill was partly apprehension. However, I had logged 35 hours of glider time during the five weeks prior to

the testing of the Jean-Linda.

The attitude of the Jean-Linda ready for take-off is on the nose skid, which is the reverse of the P-R. Holding back on the stick as we accelerated forward, the nose came up at about 20 mph. I pushed it down with a thump, back on the skid, then off again. Down again, this time she barely touched. It seemed we must be going faster than the 20 mph the air speed indicated, but Paul knew the speed I wanted. I held the nose even now, slightly down. Just the way it was when I sat in my garage checking everything as I finished every new part in the cockpit.

The wheel made a grating noise as the thorns from the "puncture vines" were rubbed off the tire by the friction brake. All at once the grating noise stopped. Due to the poor visibility caused by the setting sun on the dusty windshield, the lack of noise was the only sign I had of being airborne. I glanced out the side, sure enough, there was about five feet of air between the Jean-Linda and the runway. Again, I dropped the nose, not wanting to get any higher.

The response was much faster than in the Pratt-Read. We bumped, not hard but firmly. Into the air again. I tried to steady her; we were about fifteen feet high now and had used about half of the mile and a quarter runway. Time to get off the hook! I dropped the nose and released. Glancing out the side to keep the glide angle even (the air speed still only indicated 20 mph) we settled down again just a little firmly, and grated to a stop on the skid.

I disconnected the static line from the air speed indicator and we made a tow back. The air speed worked now, so we hopped up and down a couple of times because it was too late in the evening to go up any higher.

The next day we made a flight test for the C.A.A. to 800 feet on auto tow, made a couple of 90 degree turns to the right and to the left and made an easy landing, which was all the C.A.A. required.

The Jean-Linda now has over 60 hours, but final and complete tests have not been made. Thermal conditions at Minter Field from September until spring are not too good and C.A.A. says no airplane tows as yet.

The glide seems to be a little better than the P-R, but the speed is much less. She stalls at 32 mph. The flight characteristics as far as the tests have gone are very good. Visibility and comfort are also very good. She is designed to carry two persons in tandem, but C.A.A. has not OK'd the ship for passengers yet.

Vital statistics:

Wing span	47 feet
Chord root	48 inches
Chord tip	17 inches
Aspect ratio	17.67
Length	21 feet
Height	4 feet
Wt. Empty	475 lbs.
Airfoil	Eiffel 400