

West Words

by BERTHA M. RYAN

Winter is coming to the West. One by one the reports of snow fall in the Sierras come in. And the desert nights are beginning to feel cold. Thermal soaring is not quite as good as last month. Glider pilots are beginning to turn their thoughts towards ridge lift and wave soaring.

Jack Lambie has received a grant from OSTIV to study the shear line soaring in the Elsinore area. He picked up a 40 HP Cub for the purpose and on the first flight lost his engine. Being a glider pilot, Jack wasn't at all bothered by this mishap and flew the Cub around the valley for an hour in lift. The next day he flew again and this time deliberately cut the engine at 700 feet and soared in smooth, steady lift of 1100 fpm to 6000 feet. That kind of research sure sounds like fun!

There are at least two and possibly three soaring meets planned for this winter in the West. Some rumors say Arizona may sponsor a contest sometime around October. The Kern County Soaring Society, Inc. is planning to back the revival of the Arvin Meets with a get-together one week-end during November. The outstanding event of the winter, of course, will be the Torrey Pines Meet this February.

The people up Washington way had a successful and pleasant get-together over Labor Day weekend at Wenatchee with both ridge and thermal soaring. Wenatchee is located on the east side of the Cascade Mountains, 600 feet above the Colorado River. Thirty years ago glider pilots came there to soar along the twenty mile ridge. In 1952 the present group came for ridge and thermal soaring and to explore the possibilities of wave soaring. The local countryside and far to the east has many wheat fields that provide plentiful landing sites. Across the Columbia River to the west are the mountains giving great natural beauty to an active soaring site. Gold C flights are possible without the necessity of crossing rugged territory but Diamond C flights will take the pilot into the mountainous country.

The Northern California Soaring Association is celebrating one year of soaring at Hummingbird Haven. Soaring by individuals was done

there during the summer of 1956 and on October 1, 1956, the NCSA officially moved in. There are now eleven sailplanes and one tow plane based at the site with four more ships expected in the very near future.

Progress on Western gliders is continuing. Stan Hall has moved from Southern California to Northern California with his Cherokee II. The number of people who have the construction of their own Cherokee's quite far along already indicates we can expect to see several flying next summer. There are rumors Stan has started thinking about a Cherokee III that would be all plywood covered.

Irv Prue is now working on the wings for his Prue II. The first flight of this ship should be sometime early in 1958. The Prue II will be one of the most comfortable sailplanes in history, especially from the viewpoint of a tall, husky man. Incidentally, Irv flew 34 miles from El Mirage to Quartz Hill on Labor Day for his Silver C distance flight in Hank Stockham's TG-3.



Photo: Rose Marie Licher

The Briegleb BG-12A sports its prototype fuselage and empennage on the day after its first flights. The all-plywood surfaces are covered with fiberglass.

The BG-12 flew with its new fuselage and empennage on August 30th during the West Coast Contest. The ship is beautiful in flight and appears to perform as nicely as it looks. The accompanying picture was taken the day following the first flights. There are still a few very minor changes to be made in the fuselage before the design is frozen.

As reported elsewhere in this issue, the desert claimed a glider pilot recently. There is one side of the story that is reassuring to all of us who fly. When it was learned that the pilot was missing, the Air Force and

CAP initiated a search. In addition there were several glider pilots who joined in to help. Gus Briegleb and his son Ross donated their two PT-23 towplanes and their Taylorcraft and flew steadily for three days. Bill Rogers took three days off from work to help observe. Bob Schnelker voluntarily flew his 170 over the search area. And Roger Ruch, an airline - helicopter - Navy research - glider pilot found an AT-6 and searched also. They couldn't have helped this particular pilot but as long as there was a chance they kept trying. It is comforting to know that fellow enthusiasts will come to your aid on the rare occasions when needed.

Incidentally, Roger Ruch, who at one time was a C pilot with one diamond, flies an airline route from Chicago to Los Angeles that takes him right near El Mirage. As he goes by, he tunes in on the glider frequency to find out how good the soaring is. Roger particularly enjoys wave flying and is planning to do more of it this winter.

The summer desert weather wasn't quite as sensational as usual this season but it was strong enough to provide days for some diamond C goal flights and some other good trips, too.

Bill Ordway and Thayer Smith each flew their TG-3 to Bishop and Larry Bell flew his L-K to Dry Lake, Nevada, both distances of about 200 miles. Early in the summer Harner Selvidge had flown his L-26 to Dry Lake for Gold C distance and Diamond C goal. He is now trying for Diamond C altitude but the closest he has come so far is 18,750 feet in a cloud over the desert. His gain in altitude was about 2000 feet short. Both he and Harold Hutchinson (Prue 215) were trying very hard this year to make Diamond C distance and complete their diamonds