

1957 SNOWBIRD MEET

by JOE PERRUCCI, Contest Director

This was the seventh consecutive Snowbird Contest that I have attended. It seems that each year the contest gets better and better. This year we were blessed with mild winter weather that permitted safe driving conditions for most of those who made the annual trip to Harris Hill.

Approximately fifty persons gathered at the Hill on Thanksgiving Day to enjoy a turkey dinner. This traditional dinner was prepared and served by the wives of the EASC pilots under the guidance of Mrs. Harry Wilkins. EASC is very fortunate to have these women volunteer their time to make our glider contests more enjoyable. They also perform many of the thankless tasks that are necessary to a well-organized contest.

Friday, November 29, was the first day of the contest. A brief pilots' meeting was held and the usual pre-contest information was presented. The weather forecast indicated poor flying conditions, although there was a fair wind on the ridge. The winch was set up and operated by Fred Lawrence while the pilots were assembling and moving their ships to the flight line. Little did we realize that this would be the best flying day in the history of the Snowbird Contests. Kai Gertsen was the first off at 11:08 AM in a 1-26. He was immediately followed by Howie Burr, Dave Webb, Brad Strauss, and Bill Hoverman. It is interesting to note that these first pilots logged a total of 25 hours with Howie Burr on top with a flight of 5:10. Dave Webb was next with a

flight of 5:09 that qualified him for the duration leg of the Silver C Award. By the end of the day, 28 winch tows were made for a total flying time of 67:31 hours.

In the evening, the Schweizer cafeteria was opened and a courtesy dinner was served. A tour of the Schweizer plant followed and was enjoyed by everyone. There was a 1-26 on display which had several accessories that drew favorable comments from the pilots. A display of interesting books on gliding also attracted the attention of the visitors.

The Friday evening gathering on Harris Hill proved to be amusing as well as interesting. Each soaring club gave a report of its activities during the past year. Albie Pow gave a report for the Southern Ontario Soaring Association that is worth noting. At Brantford, Ontario, the group has 90 members, 17 gliders and 3 Tiger Moth towplanes. Albie reported close to 3000 flights and over 1000 hours for the past year. EASC has been very fortunate to be the hosts of our Canadian friends at the Snowbird Meets the past several years. Their enthusiasm for soaring is something to envy. As part of the evening program, each club was invited to present a skit and our Canadian friends used this to their advantage. They presented a satire on the American soaring scene and climaxed it with the reading of a proclamation, stating that Brantford, Ontario, is the new "Soaring Capitol of America. Facts and figures were given in support of this claim and posters on their automobiles adver-

tised it. Their enthusiasm is a good thing for the soaring movement and we at Elmira are fortunate because some of this enthusiasm is always left behind after they visit with us.

Another skit worth mentioning was a movie by Ed Seymour of Rochester, N. Y. Ed took a movie while Stan Smith was assembling and then disassembling his 1-21 sailplane all by himself. The movie was made with one exposure taken every three seconds. This resulted in a movie that showed Stan moving at a very rapid rate and it was humorous to see him move so quickly in his task. I think that every glider club in the country should show this movie at their club meetings because it provides many good laughs.

The remainder of the evening was devoted to slides and movies of the 1957 Nationals, 1-26 Regatta, etc. A movie and narration by Larry Gehrlin showed the progress on his Thermal C Flying Ranch. The movie was a history of the hard work the Gehrlin family has performed to realize their dream. The humorous comments by Larry added to his excellent color film.

Saturday morning found a mild rain falling and the weather forecast again indicated no flying so a poor day was expected. When the rain stopped several checkout flights were made by winch. The L-5 towplane began to make some tows. At 1:30 the wind shifted and a weak ridge wind developed. Immediately the field buzzed with activity as the winch and towplane both operated at the same time to launch the eager pilots. The longest flight of the day was made by Jim Reilly with 2:46 hours in his 1-26. Dave Webb was next with 2:36 and Bill Hoverman followed with 2:25 hours. Other flights of over two hours were made by Walter Tanner (2:21), Budd Briggs (2:15), and Kai Gertsen (2:09). The totals for this day were 34 flights and 33:37 hours.

Jack Codere of Sherbrooke, Quebec, brought his Fauvel tailless glider to the contest. This was the first Fauvel to be seen at Harris Hill and it attracted the interest of many pilots. Another seldom seen ship was Steve Bennis' powered Dragonfly sailplane which made several flights.

The Awards Banquet was attended by approximately 175 persons and the dining room was completely occupied. Howie Burr, President of EASC, was in charge of this program. The following prizes were awarded:



Joe Perrucci, Contest director, awards the Snowbird Trophy to the Individual Champion, Dave Webb, of Montreal, Canada.