

West Words

by BERTHA M. RYAN

Summer brings news of more western soaring activity in the form of new ships, new tow planes and soaring contests. The big contest in the West this year, of course, is the National Competition at Bishop. But Memorial Day weekend brought one of the finest meets the Northern California Soaring Association and the Sacramento Soaring Club have sponsored thus far (to be reported on separately). In the South, the San Diego group (AGCSC) is again sponsoring the end of the month weekend soaring meets at Skylark Airport in Elsinore. These get-togethers, plus the permanent basing of a commercial towplane (Callair) at Skylark promise a soaring filled summer at that site.

The fourth of July weekend will bring two more meets: The annual Pacific Northwest International Soaring Contest at Fancher Field, Wenatchee, Washington, and a Southern California Soaring Association Soaring Meet at El Mirage, California. The SCSA meet will use a new type of scoring system designed by Ted Sharp to encourage the inexperienced and still provide good competition for the experienced pilots. The system consists of giving points for altitude, duration, earning a C badge, setting state, National, or World Class soaring, records, and even the number of flights. Everyone gets lots of points but the best accomplishments gets lots and lots of points! It will be interesting to observe how this experiment works.

State soaring records in California are dominated by National and World Class Records. In the open category, nine of the possible 16 classes are filled with FAI records. However, only one is in the Senior category (pilots with less than Gold C). The first state record to be established since their official inception was a 170 mile distance flight by Paul Bikle, from El Mirage to Las Vegas.

There is good news for Southern California pilots with the announcement that a tow plane will soon again be based at San Bernardino. Jack Gretta, Dick Egleston and Dave Lester of the San Gabriel Valley Soaring Group are putting together a J-3 Cub towplane using a 115 H.P. Franklin engine belonging to Franklin Boosman. Some good ridge soar-

ing along the San Bernardino Mountains will soon be enjoyed by many Southern California pilots. Charlie Weber and his Super Club have already given a taste of this soaring to some pilots in that area this year.

In a recent issue we showed you a picture of an unfinished Cherokee II belonging to Rulph Thenhaus and son John. Now we have a picture of the completed ship for you, taken on the day of its first flight at El Mirage in April with the proud owners standing beside it. The designer, Stan Hall, flew down from Northern California to give the ship its first test flight.



Photo: Carolyn Thenhaus

Among the most interesting sailplanes being built in the West is an all metal one by Irv Prue, an outstanding craftsman with his particular choice of construction. The Prue II will have a three piece wing with a span of 64 feet and an aspect ratio of 18. The L/D is eventually expected to be around 36 to 37 with a sinking speed of less than 2 ft. per sec. About 130 hours more work will put the Prue II in the air.

There are two especially interesting features about the Prue II. Present day contests seem to be tending more and more towards the task type of competition. The emphasis is on speed with the flying done during the best part of the day. For this reason Irv has made provision for

200 lbs. of water ballast in each wing tip for a gross weight of 1600 lbs. With this configuration an L/D of 20 is possible at 115 mph. For distance flying with take-off before the best thermals begin, the water may be left out for a gross weight of 1200 lbs. and an L/D of 20 at 100 mph. The stalling speed is expected to be around 40 mph.

The Prue II will have spoilers and dive brakes designed to give a glide ratio of 6 to 1 at 50 mph. At 80 mph, the brakes will be self-opening (unless locked closed by the pilot) and they will limit the speed of the sailplane to 125 mph. The ship is redlined at 150 mph.

Your first impression of this sailplane is its enormous size. Both seats of the tandem cockpit arrangement were designed to give maximum comfort to a large size pilot. Throughout

its construction, great attention has been given to strength so that the sailplane will be able to meet with safety any atmospheric conditions it may encounter. A trailer is being built with a system of cranes to facilitate assembly. We would like to show you a picture of this remarkable sailplane under construction but the designer wants to wait until it flies.

Next issue we'll have the details on Ray Parker's new ship. We are sure you'll want to hear about this all-wood design with a tee tail and fibreglas over the wood.

PS: We hear the RJ-5 is for sale again. What an outstanding opportunity for some fortunate soaring pilot!