

# 4th Annual Pacific Northwest Soaring Contest

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(From TOWLINE for August, 1958).

The Seattle Glider Council held its fourth annual contest at Fancher Field, Wenatchee, Washington, July 6 to 12. Flying conditions were fair to good and records, local and national, were established.

Attendance was about par, eleven ships with fifteen pilots. Equipment ranged from a 2-22 to a 1-21, neither of which was entered in competition; so the (4) L-K's, (2) TG-2's and (4) 1-26's had the field to themselves. An Olympia was entered but retired early on the opening day when the take-off dolly became an intolerable problem.

The international aspects were upheld by the Julian Audette and Harold Townsend team from Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, entering a 1-26, and Alan Foster, with crewman Mr. Cowan, from Calgary, Alberta, also entering a 1-26.

The contest rules were taken directly from those for previous National Contests. Competition was to have been in two performance classes, but the L-K crowd (Class I, high-performance in this area) was outnumbered and outvoted by 1-26 and TG-2 operators who voted themselves into a competition for the Class II trophy and made Class I an open competition for all ships and pilots in quest of the three Class I trophies. The 1-26 pilots must have had advance information, for the light winds and fate favored their cause. They allowed an L-K to take second place in Class I and cornered all the re-

maining hardware, including the Dumbell Trophy.

A task committee was set up composed of Bob Fisher, past champion, Heasley Entz, a non-combatant, and Julian Audette. Every day a mileage task, was their motto, until the final day's weather forced a change of plan.

Opening day dawned with early Cu and promise of great things to come. A Silver C triangular speed task was set to give the pilots a chance to ease into the action. The first pilot off, Rudy Allemann, made it around the course.

Bob Fisher, in his trusty L-K, made the Rock Island turning point and flopped into friendly Pangborn Airport, 6 miles from Fancher, when the day turned out to be so good it killed itself. Thunderstorms formed over the Cascades. Growing rapidly and shutting off the sun, they squelched soaring conditions for the day, setting numerous fires in the high timber in the process. Within five minutes time, four sailplanes landed back on Fancher just ahead of a squall line. Wilson Ribeiro, flying a 1-26, made it a 1-26 day when he completed the Badger mountain turning point, nosing Fisher out of second place by two miles.

Those storms almost cancelled the contest when the Super Cub tow plane was requisitioned by the Forest Service for three days to do fire patrol work and drop hot meals to the weary "smoke jumpers" up along the Cascade Crest. The Seattle Glider

Council's recently purchased PA-11, 90 HP towplane saved the contest, but one towplane for 11 sailplanes stretched out the towing and shortened the contest days.

The second day, Monday, dawned with beckoning lapse rates and early cumulus activity. The task was set far a "milk-run" speed flight over Badger Mountain to Mansfield and return, 80 miles of "simple flying." Bob Fisher avenged his defeat of Sunday with first place, followed by that unshakable Rudy Allemann's 1-26 and Audette in another 1-26. As on Sunday, the weather was too good. Thunderstorms again developed, setting more fires in the dry woods and prohibiting the last of the contestants getting a chance to compete. Three more fell out of the local air ahead of line squalls, having no chance to attempt the task.

Drastic measures were called for to equalize the "luck" of selecting take-off times. Joppa and Entz, discussing the problem, found the answer with a proposal for a simultaneous start for tasks. So far as is known, the 82 mile triangular speed task set for Tuesday was the second time in competition that all sailplanes were all airborne before a task started. Soaring conditions were good, the thunderstorm conditions having subsided. Three tow planes were rounded up and ten sailplanes were towed aloft to soar locally until, at a pre-stated signal, the task starting time was indicated. Then each ship had to be flown across the starting line below 1500 meters above Fancher Field to start the task. Time was counted from signal to task completion.

This proved to be the most memorable task of the Contest. Nine ships in nine thermals, then 5 ships in one thermal — Where's that starting signal? Ten minutes yet! Better get a little closer to the field, we'll lose 1500 feet crossing the line from here. Gotta make more allowance for drift, almost crossed the line that time, don't want to be disqualified before the task starts. Whup, where's that lift, 800 feet is almost landing pattern altitude, here it is at 12:45 but now I'm headed the wrong way — and thus the starting signal and me outta position! and so it went.

Robert Joppa was first across the line, followed by Entz and Fisher with Allemann, Audette, Foster, Kruse, Ribeiro and Deckman close behind. The 1500 meter altitude limit was a problem for some, forcing a vigorous struggle for survival in

Ten of the 14 sailplanes present at the 1958 Pacific Northwest Soaring Contest. The airport overlooks the Columbia River, beyond which are the Cascade Mountains.

Photo: Peter M. Bowers

