

# 25th ANNUAL U. S. NATIONAL SOARING COMPETITIONS

by LLOYD M. LICHER

This contest was held at the world famous wave soaring site of Bishop, California, some 275 miles north of Los Angeles, from July 29th through August 7th, 1958. Sanctioned by The Soaring Society of America, Inc., it was sponsored by the Northern California Soaring Association, Inc., and the Inyo-Mono Soaring Association, under the auspices of the Bishop Chamber of Commerce.

The site was a new one for the Nationals, with a different kind of terrain and soaring weather than most competitors had heretofore experienced. Although mountain soaring is generally thought of as connected with winter season wave soaring, the mountain ranges in the vicinity of Bishop provided an entirely different type of soaring in the summer. Upcurrents are of the convection and ridge lift variety, independent or combined, as only barren mountains which rise 10,000 feet above the valley floor can generate when heated by a desert sun. There were no wave conditions in the vicinity during the period of the contest.

Practice flying in the area gave an encouraging forecast of things to come. H. W. Jensen arrived at Bishop by soaring the 194 miles from El Mirage, accompanied as far as Lone Pine by Sven Anderson in the Glide-

Aero L-K. Many other pilots flying locally at Bishop (elevation 4,121 feet) easily made Gold C altitude climbs under cumulus cloud bases of 17,000 feet.

## First Contest Day

The contest began on Tuesday, July 29th, with a pilots' meeting in the CAP building on the Bishop airport. Contest Director Stan Hall officiated and led off by dedicating this Silver Anniversary Nationals to the memory of the late Bob Symons, who had been so instrumental in bringing the contest to Bishop. Mayor Deston Cleland of Bishop then bid the contestants welcome and wished them well.

There followed the usual items of initial contest business; selection of the Contest Board, discussion of rules, turn point ID panels, contestants' kits, towing, phone numbers, field operations, etc. Take-off order was announced as alphabetical by name, starting at a fixed time. Dr. Sawyer gave a briefing on the use of oxygen, since use of it was mandatory.

John Aldrich, chief aviation forecaster at the Los Angeles Weather Bureau, gave the met. information. Small cumulus had already begun to form over the mountains and could be expected to build up with some cumulus nimbus and bases at 15,000 feet. Winds aloft were to be 15 knots from the

SSW. Lift over the valley would be poor because of the abnormal amount of green foliage caused by still melting snows in the Sierras. Best sources of lift would be over the mountain faces and alluvial fans, the dirt and rock at the base of every canyon washed down by ages of flash floods and melting snows.

Task for the day was announced as a 112 mile goal and return race, with the Lone Pine airport, 56 miles south, as the turning point. Timing was to be from take-off to across the south end of the N-S runway at 1000 feet. Five minutes would be subtracted for each tow made by other than a BT.

Tows were to 2,000 feet with all releases in the vicinity of the big fan near Laws. Getting away was not too easy so many pilots returned for second and third tows. Cloud activity over part of the course built up before everyone could get away, creating a dead area which many could not negotiate. The wind picked up from the south, too, holding back the lighter ships.

Bob Moore in his 1-21 was the first to finish, at 1627, with a speed of 30.3 mph. He was followed by only three others, all within the next 30 minutes; Graham Thomson in the RJ-5 at 33.7 mph to earn the 1000 points for the day, Harold Hutchinson in his Prue 215 at 33.0 mph and

An aerial view of the Bishop airport looking south toward the Sierra Nevada mountains. The sailplane tiedown area can be seen in the triangle to the right. All take-offs were on runway 15.

Photo: Tom Henderson



Graham Thomson is taped up in the RJ-5 sailplane by his wife, Helen. Graham led the standings for the first three days. Note the large tires on the droppable dolly.

Photo: Tom Henderson

