

1958 NORTHEASTERN SOARING CONTEST

by JIM GRAY

Thursday evening, July third, ushered in the unofficial beginning of the Northeastern States Soaring Contest at Harris Hill, New York. Sailplanes and pilots began to arrive on the hill early in the evening and there was a beehive of activity as ships were unloaded from trailers, greetings were exchanged and worried glances cast at the unfavorable looking skies.

Officially, the contest began with the pilots' meeting at 0930, Friday morning, July fourth, 1958. John Slaughter, Contest Director, welcomed the assembled pilots, crew members and friends, and introduced the various members of the EASC who were to perform the necessary functions of weather, statistics, line crew, signals, etc. Elsewhere in this article are listed the people who performed these various tasks.

The grim business of meteorology and weather was ably interpreted by Bob Walker, Contest Meteorologist. Bob's words were not encouraging, nor was the weather, because even at 0930, Harris Hill was enshrouded in a wet, gray, clinging fog. A Bermuda High to the south had apparently met with a mass of colder Canadian air, and the line of demarcation extended through Elmira in an east-west direction. The center of a low pressure system was located in the Mid-West and moving at a snail's pace toward the east-southeast. Harris Hill was caught in the squeeze, but good. Light easterly winds did

nothing to improve pilot's spirits as Bob declared that temperatures would have to reach at least 80 degrees before the thermal pump could begin. These ground temperatures were expected to be reached in the Elmira area by noon or one o'clock EDST.

Because of conditions, it was decided by the contest committee to elect two non-contestant pilots as additional members of the task committee. Bill Frutchy and Hal Bovenkirk were duly installed and began deliberations on a suitable task for the incredibly foul soaring weather. The committee decided to postpone announcement of tasks until later developments in the weather. Meanwhile, to amuse and entertain pilots and spectators alike, a spot landing contest developed which was won by Cid Carvalho, flying the Rochester Soaring Club's TG-3, with a distance of one-half inch from the spot. Hal Bovenkirk of Schenectady and the Mohawk club cinched second place with a distance of two and one-half inches, flying the 1-23D. Ed Seymour of RSC claimed third place with a distance of 4 inches from the spot, flying Don Ryon's 1-26. There were other also-rans who perhaps would prefer to remain anonymous since the number of disqualifications for failing to touch down within the allotted space were numerous, the author among them.

At last, the long awaited pilots' meeting was held in the main hangar for the purpose of announcing the task for the day. Amid bated breaths and sweaty palms, the fateful words

"triangle flight" were heard. A triangle from Harris Hill to Martin Airport at Montour Falls, thence to the Costa Airport at Painted Post, and finally, the return leg to Harris Hill, was declared. Anxious glances at the leaden sky revealed no promise of good soaring conditions—potential conditions for completion of one leg perhaps, but no more. Pilots immediately flocked to the flight line and had their names and appointed take-off times chalked on the "ops" board. Betty Clemmons and Betty Placek were the official time keepers who had the nearly insurmountable job of keeping the data straight.

On hand for towing purposes were the "Harris Hill Tug" flown by Dick Kurzenberger, and a Super Cub from Elaerco at the Chemung County Airport, flown by Bill Frutchy. There was also a beautifully preserved 1932 Waco cabin biplane available for towing, but unfortunately not fully licensed for towing at the start of operations.

The EASC Junior Members ably assisted Line Chief Jack Wilkins and his assistant, Stew Clemmons. Operations were conducted smoothly and with dispatch; there being little wasted movement or time. During the festivities and flying, peppy patter and lucid explanations of the meet were cheerfully presented by Carolyn Burr. The PA system and communications links between "Ad" building, flight line, announcer's post, and tower were installed and maintained by Ed Thomas, that untiring and true friend of the soaring movement who provides us with his services at every meet. The tower activities and "green light-red light" services were provided by Fran Toby, an old power plane pilot and long time friend of soaring, who was as-

George Sterling adds glasses to this rear view of Meet Champion Otto Zauner as Mrs. Sterling looks on. Ship is Otto's 1-26.

Photo: Ernest Schweizer



A group of "glider types" at the Northeastern — Bernie Carris, Paul Schweizer, Jack Curtis, Hal Bovenkirk and Stuart Schweizer.

Photo: Ernest Schweizer

