

NORTHWEST INTERNATIONAL SOARING CONTEST

By PETER M. BOWERS

The Fifth Annual Northwest International Soaring Contest was held from June 28 through July 5 at Fancher Field, Wenatchee, Washington. A variety of circumstances combined to make this meet unique in several respects. The "International" motif was preserved by the presence of a single ship from Canada. While every licensed glider in the state of Washington was present, a total of 13, not all were entered in the contest because the owners or pilots were unable to spend the full week. Altogether, nine ships were entered, seven in Class I, which was for pilots who had completed their Silver C badge, and two in Class II, which was for private or student pilots without complete Silver C.

Because of the differences in pilot proficiency, separate tasks were set for simultaneous flight by the two groups, and an option was made in the rules to allow the task committee to score altitude and duration for Class II if it should be desirable. Class I was scored only for distance, whether straight line or out and back, with speed being used to break ties.

By far the most unique feature of the contest was the successful use of "Racehorse" starts for the tasks. This was made necessary to eliminate the weather factor in launches made approximately two hours apart, since only one towplane was available. The Seattle Glider Council's 90 H.P. PA-11 Cub was on the job continuously, and rope drop and landing proce-

dures were streamlined to speed up the operation as much as possible. All the airborne pilots soared over a given spot and waited for the last, and most easily recognized, ship to be towed off. Depending on how things were going, the last man was given 15 minutes to get to altitude or was towed above regular release altitude to where the others were waiting. On the four occasions that this method was used, it worked perfectly. In an attempt to beat the towplane shortage, one contestant had applied to CAA for a waiver on his 65 H.P. home-built single seat monoplane, and while it could tow a 1-26 at slightly over 200 f.p.m., he decided not to use it in the contest.

The daily task was set by a three-man task committee composed of one pilot from Eastern Washington, one from Western Washington, and one from Canada. The committee did fine work in picking tasks that were compatible with pilot ability and the prevailing weather. Some pilots completed every task, but there were no tasks that all pilots were able to complete. There was no scramble for preferred take-off order because of the racehorse start rule, and the politeness at the flight line, "After you, my dear Alphonse," was almost unbearable compared to normal contest procedure.

June 28

No Contest Day - Rain.

June 29

120-mile out-and-back to Moses

Seven of the fourteen sailplanes flown at the Fifth Annual Northwest International Soaring Contest at Wenatchee. The high wingers are an Olympia, left, and Weihe, center rear.

Photo: Peter M. Bowers



Lake Airport for Class I. Bob Moore won it in his Schweizer 1-21, beating Bob Fisher in his L-K by a bare three minutes. Pete Bowers came in third in his Weihe and Dean Reynolds was the last pilot to complete, using the Motorless Flight Associates' L-K. Class II flew a Silver C triangle, and only Jim Hard in his 1-19 was able to complete. Among the non-contestants, Ken Hovik squeaked out the closest Silver C duration in Northwest history by holding the Cascade Soaring Society's 2-22 off for 5:01 as closely as can be determined from the barogram and averaged readings of several unsynchronized watches. Gary Connor, Seattle's first Air Scout to solo, pushed the Scouts' TG-2 the 70 miles to Wilbur for his Silver C distance and Clyde Nofsinger landed the Boeing Club TG-3 60 miles away at Coulee City for his distance leg.

June 30

The Class I task was an 80-mile out-and-back to Mansfield. Fisher was first in the L-K, closely followed by Moore in the 1-21, with Bowers and Reynolds again placing third and fourth. Class II task was a 36-mile out-and-back to Waterville, on the Class I route, and again Jim Hard was the only finisher. Al Wilson, following the Class I boys in the Boeing club 1-26 in spite of being a Class II pilot, got his Silver C altitude but came down 15 minutes short of his 5 hours.

July 1

The task was a repeat of the previous day's, with more wind to buck on the return leg. Fisher was first in Class I and Bowers was second, with Peter Van Gruen of Canada third in an L-K. Moore was called away on business and did not fly. No others completed. In Class II, Hard elected to fly the Class I task, and made it back to Waterville, 18 miles from home, where he joined an L-K and a 1-26. All had reached the turning point but couldn't make it all the way home.

July 2

The weather looked like "The" day to go cross-country, so the task committee declared a free distance day. Moore and Fisher got off early, and found lift that got them to good getaway altitudes. Bowers had to ridge soar for nearly an hour before getting away, and other pilots had difficulty in getting started. While the weather did not turn out to be as good as expected, it produced a Northwest record when Moore got to Clinton, Montana, two states away,