

# 1959 WEST COAST SOARING COMPETITION

by PAUL J. LAFRENIER

The Antelope Valley Soaring Club had the honor of hosting the 1959 West Coast Soaring Competition at El Mirage Field over the Labor Day weekend. The meet was sanctioned by the Soaring Society of America with many top ranking West Coast soaring pilots participating.

The pilot registration list showed the following:

1. Paul Bikle of Lancaster, widely known international soaring pilot, recently appointed Director, NASA High Speed Flight Station, Edwards AFB, flying his faithful 1-23E.

2. Lyle Maxey of Downey, one of last year's contenders at the International Soaring Meet at Leszno, Poland, flying the new Prue Two which made its debut in competition.

3. John Williams of San Diego, President of the Associated Glider Clubs of Southern California, flying his newly acquired Flat-top 1-23.

4. Jack Lambie of Santa Fe Springs, well known in Southern California soaring circles, flying Bruce Carmichael's 1-26.

5. Bud Mears of Long Beach, flying his first competition in his newly acquired red and white Schweizer 1-26.

6. Herman Stiglmeier of Inglewood, flying his Super Albatross.

7. Dave McNay of Pomona, flying his modified 1-26.

8. Ted Falk of San Diego, flying 1-26 N51Y, formerly owned by Pete Bowers of Seattle.

9. Doc Selvidge, President of SSA, and his flying partner Ted Sharp, both from North Hollywood, flying their blue and white Schweizer 2-22C.

10. Jim Meckoll of Long Beach, flying the SCSA 1-26.

11. Capt. Dave Greenwood of Victorville, flying the George Air Force Base Air Scouts' entry, a TG-3A.

12. Charles Robb of San Diego, flying the AGCSQ 1-26.

13. Ronald Delp of La Mesa, flying his BG-7.

14. Lloyd Licher of Los Angeles, Executive Secretary of SSA, flying his well known Schweizer 1-7.

15. Evan Stover of San Diego, recently returned to soaring, flying the one-of-a-kind Prue 160.

Also entered were Duke Stallings and Jack Green of San Diego, flying a flattop TG-2, as a team, and Helen Dick of San Diego who was unfortunately put out of the running by damage to the canopy of her flat-top L-K on the first day. Carl Ziler entered late in the competition with his BG-12A.

For the opening day, September 5th, warm and windless weather prevailed over most of the desert area with the forecast, provided by meteorologist Tom Johnson, indicating

that soaring conditions would be marginal, at best. If the pilots did not like this forecast, they could forecast their own weather using a Magic 8-Ball provided by Tom. With Tom's forecast in mind, the Competition Director, John Graves, convened the Contest Committee and the task chosen was a triangular course from El Mirage to Apple Valley Airport, thence to Helendale Airport and return to El Mirage. The distance was 67 miles and an estimated 3½ hours would be required to complete the course.

Take-offs began at 1300, but many ships could not maintain and were forced to return for additional tows. At about 1400, conditions improved as forecast and sailplanes started to move out. As expected, conditions continued to improve and the Prue Two crossed the finish line at 1605 with Lambie, Bikle, Williams, Mears, and Meckoll shortly after. The fastest flight of the day was by John Williams at 39.51 mph, good for 1000 points. It was also the fastest flight of the meet.

At the end of the first day, the standings were as follows, in the order listed: Williams, Maxey, Bikle, Mears, Meckoll, and Lambie.

The second day dawned bright and clear. On the spot, upper air soundings were plotted and indicated more of the same type weather, though maybe slightly improved. An open day had been planned but the Contest Committee felt that the weather did not warrant sending many pilots unfamiliar with desert conditions on a free distance attempt. Therefore, an ambitious task was set, to FAA Daggett and return, a distance of 98 miles. Many entries were successful in reaching the turn point; however, forecast headwinds made the return very difficult. The people manning the finish line were pulling for the pilots but only one managed to complete the task. Paul Bikle crossed the finish line at 1651 for an elapsed time of 2 hours and 52 minutes and a speed of 33.4 mph.

One of the highlights of the second day was Lloyd Licher's call from Trinity Airport. After many hours of scanning charts and road maps, a trip to the Daggett Area Sheriff's Office, and much head scratching, the California Highway Patrol finally informed the crew that this was a new name for Riley Airport. Finally the unlost was found.

The official standings and scores at the end of the second day were: Bikle (1961), Maxey (1524), Wil-

Billie Whitesides, John Bikle, Coppy Bikle and Alan Bikle watch activities of the 1959 West Coast Soaring Competition at El Mirage.

Photo: Paul F. Bikle

