

WORLD CONGRESS OF FLIGHT

The SSA was well represented at the week-long World Congress of Flight held in Las Vegas, Nevada, April 13 through April 19. At the invitation of the Air Force Association, sailplanes participated in the flight demonstrations on two of the days. There were four days of flight demonstrations in all - one being strictly military; another, large commercial aircraft; and two days were devoted to private aircraft and helicopters. The latter shows, in which sailplanes performed, were held at the Las Vegas horse race track which was located adjacent to the main exhibit area. SSA members furnished three sailplanes, a tow plane, pilots and ground crews for these shows. The AFA brought from Germany Ernst-Gunter Haase, the current World Soaring Champion. In addition to attending the meetings, he flew in the exhibitions, piloting Larry Bell's double-bubble L-K with Larry in the back seat. Dick Schreder, current U.S. National Soaring Champion, came from Toledo and flew Joe Lincoln's 1-23D, and Les Arnold brought his Hummingbird from Hayward, California. Joe Lincoln of Phoenix, SSA Vice President, brought and flew his tow plane which was used to launch the L-K and 1-23D.

No FAA waivers were permitted during the exhibition, so we were unable to put on any aerobatics, but judging from the response of the crowd, we still managed to give a good show. SSA was allocated ten minutes to put on its performance and, with the aid of continuous radio control, we were able to put on a split second timed show on both days.

About an hour before the start of each performance, Dick Schreder was released and soared over the race track within sight of the spectators until called down for his landing. Thus we were able to point out to the audience that there is more to soaring than just gliding down after release from tow. Our show started with the L-K coming over the track on tow after a take-off from nearby McCarren Field followed by the Hummingbird flying past with its engine up. Haase then cut loose from tow and after a few spirals made a low, high speed pass in front of the stands, pulled up and then made a spot landing in front of the crowd. The Hummingbird then flew by with its engine retracted day in the bad cross wind. The TV

and erected it again to climb on out, since the fences and obstructions at the race track made a Hummingbird landing there unnecessarily hazardous. Schreder then made a high speed pass and spot landing.

The original plan was to have all landings on the home stretch of the race track in front of the stands, but on the first day there was a 25 knot dead cross wind and at the last minute Haase wisely decided to make his spot landing on the infield, since the available rudder on the L-K is somewhat marginal in very strong cross winds and the fences lining the race track itself were only 75 feet apart. The crowd being unfamiliar with the way sailplanes can be stopped in a small distance held its breath as Haase came up to a stop with his

shot of Schreder crabbing down the race track in the strong cross wind then touching down and rolling to a stop with his nose against the marker was especially effective and brought a collective gasp from the crowd which was nicely picked up by the television microphones. Actually, he had about twelve feet of clearance between each wing tip and the fence, but it looked a lot closer than that with the strong cross wind. We were especially pleased at the NBC commentary while the sailplanes were on the screen. It was sensible and factual and had none of the, "Oh my Gosh!" characteristics of many narrations.

During one of our rehearsals we made a double tow with Joe Lincoln's Pacer taking off with both the L-K and 1-23D behind. It was worth the trip to Las Vegas to see Joe tugging valiantly at the straps

The champions talk over the flight plans at Las Vegas: Dick Schreder, Ernst-Gunter Haase and Larry Bell.



Photo: Les Clanton

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of his Texas style boots in an effort to get the Pacer off without knocking the ears off various Nevada Jack rabbits watching in pop-eyed amazement from the far end of the runway.

In addition to the flight demonstrations, SSA had an exhibit of photographs and promotional literature in the exhibit hall where we shared a part of the NAA booth.

Any one who has ever put on an air show or a contest knows the tremendous amount of work required behind the scenes, and we would like to make special acknowledgements of the contributions of SSA members who were there as crews. These included: Ruth Petry and John Ryan of Phoenix; Maybelle Arnold; Kirk Harris; and Mrs. Larry Bell of Temple City. Gunter Voltz, SSA State

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