

INTERESTING GLIDERS

by PETER M. BOWERS



The year 1920 saw the rebirth of gliding after nearly a decade of eclipse by the rapid development of the airplane, which largely robbed the glider of its original role of research craft, and the requirements of World War I. The rebirth was really that; in that it was an entirely new start and not merely a picking things up where they had been dropped years before.

This time, the glider was purely a sporting vehicle, constructed for the most part by enthusiastic amateurs who had little if any knowledge of aerodynamics or aircraft structures. Some of the designs, of course, were the products of people trained in the aviation industry and followed conventional structure and configuration. Others, however, can only be described as wierd and wonderful.

A top contender in this second category is the Nesemann-Zeise "Bird" illustrated by photos from Dr. W. B. Klemperer's collection. In some respects, such as streamlining, it was far ahead of most of the box-kite types that appeared at the first Rhon contest on the Wasserkuppe in

August of 1920, and showed heavy influence of the prewar German "Taube" powered airplanes in wing and horizontal tail shape. The single strut wing bracing anticipated what was to become the standard glider configuration by several years. In other respects, it was an out-and-out radical.

It was similar to a hang glider in that the take-off gear was the pilot's legs. Skids, however, were provided for landing, a most sensible precaution. It flouted normal aerodynamic convention in that no vertical tail surface was provided. The most radical feature was the "auxiliary" power that was supposed to be provided after take-off by the pilot through his legs. A set of flippers was installed on the fuselage just aft of the wing. The purpose of these was to beat up and down like the wings of a bird to propel the machine forward. Take-off was to be made with the pilot's legs serving as the "running" gear, assisted by a towrope, and after the ship was airborne, the pilot was supposed to pull his legs up, place his feet on pedals

connected to the flippers, and pedal like mad to keep the ship airborne.

Needless to say, this system didn't work. The bird made some very short hops, being flown more like a kite than a glider, and then crashed.

The upper photo shows builder Zeise on the ground and the second shows Lt. Suchla airborne. Note that the glider has been pulled into the air by two ground helpers by means of ropes attached to the wings. The well-known method of shock-cord launching had not been introduced at this time, and with no method of releasing the ropes, they were left trailing from the wings after the ship was in free flight.

NEW SOARING RECORDS

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Harland Ross in the R-6 sailplane at Odessa, Texas.

The feminine single-place goal and return record was increased to 228.7 miles (368 km) on June 20, 1959, by Pelagia Majewska of Poland flying a Jaskolka sailplane from Leszno to Fordon and return. The old record was 212.4 miles set in 1956 by Barbara Dankowska of Poland in a Jaskolka sailplane. The U. S. record is 120.452 miles (193.848 km) set in 1952 by Betsy Woodward in a Briegleb BG-7 sailplane at Grand Prairie, Texas.

The last record is in a category for which no previous U. S. or World record had been established, feminine multi-place speed over a 300 km. triangular course. On May 9, 1959, Lucyna Bajewska of Poland piloted a Bocian sailplane around a course between Warsaw, Deblin and Glennik at a speed of 38.351 mph (61.717 kmph).

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