

1959 ODESSA SOARING CAMP

by E. J. REEVES

The Odessa Camp '59 was in many respects a completely new innovation. Not heretofore, to my knowledge, has an effort just like this been made in this country. This I am sure, from the standpoint of the number and variety of sailplanes involved, and also as regards the span of days continuously devoted to a soaring effort.

Including the pilot-crew contingent, officials and operating personnel, more than a hundred persons were engaged in the operation. Coming and going, of course, were hundreds of visitors. Except for our National contests this was as far as I know, the largest soaring aggregation ever.

These fifteen days at the front of August were, we think, well spent in Odessa, Texas. I cannot imagine a finer vacation for soaring people. In the more than a dozen years of my participation in soaring contests and such, I never found one more enjoyable.

It was distinctly different - a complete change of pace as it were. While there was much of the flavor of a National tournament it was yet altogether different. Completely absent was that feeling of urgency, and the stresses that seem to go with tournament competition. It had an easier and somehow nicer way of going. At times it seemed like a great and extended soaring picnic. But, at other times and at the proper times - all was serious and strict devotion to the duties at hand. We saw many pilots and crewmen strive fully as hard as they would have in a major tournament. Not only was this true of such great men as Dick Schreder and Harland Ross who were going 'hell for leather' at the records - but equally so the chaps flying the lesser machines for badge attainments. There was immediate indication that the fellows really came here to play - and they played it out to the fullest.

A great array of 'in flight' stories should come out of this meeting. We shall hope the various pilots will put these in print. We have particularly in mind the experiences of Harland Ross on his 365 mile flight on a certain day over the mountains of

Eastern New Mexico which completed his Diamond C. Joe Lincoln might tell of his flight to the Rio Grande to complete his Diamond Badge, also. Dick Schreder, Les Benis and others had amazingly interesting flights. The midnight ride of one Harold Jensen, the Great Dane, would be really the one. Some of these and more especially this one of Jensen's would at first blush seem incredulous, but all would be true as many can witness.

As advertised the camp was strictly informal - no rigid requirements, no-one felt any obligation to be anywhere or to do anything at any time. It was strictly catch as catch can, every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. Truly it was free and easy.

But, none of this is to be taken as to say the operation was loosely or carelessly conducted. Those charged with the responsibilities of the camp's operations were at all times on duty. I would want especially to commend my young contemporaries in TSA for their unflinching devotion to duty. At the same time we would fully acknowledge the invaluable assistance of two of SSA's top officials, Dr. Harner Selvidge and Lloyd Licher.

The Odessa Camp '59 gave us many lessons and proved many things. Perhaps the one to be most

greatly cherished and to be the longest remembered would be the good fellowship. The sheer joy of being with people we like. But all the same there were other considerations and for a moment we will speak of them.

LAUNCHING SITE AND OPERATIONS HEADQUARTERS

The launching (all aero tow via a 650 HP Vultee and a Piper Super Cub) site and headquarters was Al Parker's Air Park on the north end of the Ector County Airport. Operations offices were in a large air-conditioned house trailer. A well equipped map room with planning tables, etc., was set up in one of the T-hangers. Two batteries of 50 new T-hangers were available for our use. A large sun-shade complete with easy chairs, refreshment stand, etc., was provided. A 'Jeep' tow car was at our disposal at all times. Great quantities of freshly iced water was kept available. All of these superb facilities were provided through the generosity of Mr. Alvin Parker of Odessa. Al Parker is a renowned power flyer, sportsman pilot, soaring enthusiast, rancher, oilman and true gentleman of the old west. He and Beaumont Cooley, of neighboring Midland, were the real champions of the Odessa Camp.

WEATHER

We had some of a kind at all times. All days were soarable with some part of each day at good to super. Some said it was 'tricky' or 'a fooler' etc., some said of it in a way slightly unprintable.

The performances bears out the fact rather well that within the Permian Basin area - perhaps a radius

Opposite: 28 photos by E. J. Reeves of over 100 people, 26 sailplanes and airplanes, 27 vehicles, West Texas, the sky and other stuff. 1. E. J. Reeves of Dallas, Tex., Camp Director; 2. Dr. Bill DeGinder of Austin, Tex., LK-10A; 3. Othmar "Oats" Schwarzenberger of Dallas, Tex., Camp Starter and Observer; 4. The Odessa Chuck Wagon Gang serves Campers the three B's—Beer, Beans and Barbecue; 5. Pat Mulloy of Laurel, Mississippi; 6. Dick and Angie Schreder of Toledo, Ohio; 7. Starting line—Pat Sherman's LK-10A in foreground (from Ft. Worth, Tex.); 8. Alvin Parker of Odessa, Tex., in his 650 H.P. Vultee tow ship; 9. Art Milam of Houston, Tex., in his super "hot rod" crew car (note Radio, TV, etc.); 10. Harold Jensen, "The Great Dane," of Elmhurst, Ill., in his LO-150; 11. David Johnson of Colorado Springs, Colo., LK-10A "Flat Top"; 12. Dick Schreder of Toledo, Ohio, relaxing in the V of his HP-8; 13. Earl Menefee of Palo Alto, Calif., in his "Musger" sailplane imported from Austria; 14. "Pop" and "Mom", Mr. and Mrs. Walter J. Krohne, Sr. of Maitland, Fla., "Seventy and still Soaring"; 15. Harland Ross describes his Diamond flight at a pilots' meeting; 16. Monty Montgomery of Irving, Tex., Shirley (Mrs. Dr. J. F.) Emons of Alton, Ill., and Al Backstrom of Irving, Tex. House trailer in background was Camp Office; 17. "Camp" man, just as advertised. Beau Cooley of Midland, Tex., watches "Oats" Schwarzenberger make with the egos; 18. Camp Headquarters, Al Parker's Air Park; 19. Harland Ross and crew return from flight which completed Harland's Dia. C; 20. Plotters disturb EJ's privacy in his room at the Lincoln—L. to R.—Frank Kerns of Bellflower, Calif., Lloyd Licher, SSA Exec Secty., of Los Angeles, Calif., Dr. Bill DeGinder of Austin, Tex., Dr. Harner Selvidge, SSA President, of N. Hollywood, Calif., and Terry White of Cedar Hill, Tex., Official Camp Clerk; 21. Sven Anderson, Swedish Gold C with two Diamonds, of Long Beach, Calif.; 22. Geo. Coder of Arlington, Tex., KA-6; 23. Karl Baur of Arlington, Tex., Mary (Mrs. Dr. Bill) DeGinder and Isolda (Mrs. Karl) Baur; 24. Starting Line—Monty Montgomery and Schweizer 1-23 in foreground; 25. L. to R.—Art Milam, Dave Johnson, Al Parker, Jim Sands, Al Wyrick, Mrs. Al Parker and son Steve; 26. Schreder's HP-8; 27. Make-ready line—Art Hoffman of Hobbs, N. M., in foreground; 28. Harland Ross and his Ross R-6 ready for take-off.