

EUROPEAN ADVENTURES

by H. L. KIRKPATRICK

My earliest gliding was in 1934 when, as an already mature power pilot, I met with the M.I.T. Glider Club. By means of short auto tows I piled up an aggregate of 20 minutes of solo flight while surviving some 20 miles of running at the wing tips of the M.I.T. Franklin. That tired me until 1958 when, encouraged by reading SOARING, I tried the much more tractable Schweizer 2-22C at Schweizer's Elmira base of operations where the capable Bernie Carris soon had me soloed and licensed to push the well-behaved 1-26 around. Thereafter, an American Bar Association meeting placed me on the West Coast which led (of course) to Gus Briegleb's El Mi-

staffed and well-equipped gliding schools where Americans are welcomed and can fly in clean, well-maintained equipment at reasonable rates for ships and tows, aero or winch, as desired. However, since U.S. and Austria have not concluded inter-country arrangements, each other's licenses are not completely accepted, etc., and one must get a medical, issued at Vienna, before soloing. This is not the case at the German and French schools. As a result, due to an intervening weekend and time conflicts, I could only fly dual at Zell-Am-See, Austria, 40 miles south of Salzburg. This, in a way was actually fortunate, for with limited time I thus learned much

more about the terrain and certain localized thermals. Some knowledge of the German language is helpful, though not essential, as long as one knows the German equivalent of "speed," the principal and most important word in flying in any country or equipment.

My instructor, Hungarian refugee and ex-Hungarian soaring champion, Kalmar, exhibited no hesitation in taking us behind a ridge (from which there was no gliding escape-route) to catch a thermal he "knew" was there on a sun-facing slope. It was, to my relief, and we thus avoided a forced landing in a tight field (and the only available one) no larger than a school playground, naturally surrounded by trees. This thermal was good for nearly five minutes at five meters per second, even with my unskilled centering, which put us level with the snow-line of the still (mid-June) snow-topped mountains. This was in the gull-winged Austrian Musger Mg-19a, which with two people up, performs as well or better than a 1-26, particularly in penetration, although being slower in roll. The joy of flying at Zell-Am-See is much enhanced by the scenery as the photos show. The closely adjacent mountains are also very practical indeed, for they provide adequate slope currents with only a little wind from any direction, and are quite near to the flat valley landing field. With 1500 feet in hand, one can easily return to the field from the furthest slope. From the nearest slope a mere 500 feet is adequate. Moreover, with a 1200 to 1500 foot winch tow one can go down-wind to any of these slopes, "climb" it in long figure eights, and thus pick up a minimum of from



Photo: Harry L. Kirkpatrick

Zell-Am-See (Austria) field looking north towards lake and hangars. LO-150 in foreground has Austrian registration marks. Sailplanes just behind were visiting from Germany.

rage field and its phenomenal thermals. There, with the help of Harner Selvidge's article indicating just where the cold air through the pass produces a shear lift, my Silver C duration and altitude were acquired. This, in turn with a business trip to Europe which was in prospect, preceded by a re-reading of Betsy Woodward's "European Ventures" I and II (1955 SOARING), found a ready and willing pupil at various gliding schools in Austria, Germany and France, in that order.

An informative leaflet written in English, entitled "Gliding in Austria," may be had through the Austrian State Tourist Department, 444 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N.Y. It describes Austria's three well-

Zell-Am-See (Austria) field looking southwest. Austrian Musger Mg-19a two-place tandem sailplane in foreground. Over 30 of this model have been built. It has a maximum L/D of 27.8 to 1.

Photo: Harry L. Kirkpatrick

