

SEE "BREAK-OFF" ON TV

by ROBERT PAUL GREENBAUM

"NOTE: At press time it was learned that the date of this TV program was changed to June 4th: sorry."

On Saturday, June 11th, the man, Dr. Glenn Barton, of NBC's "The Man and the Challenge" accepts the challenge of soaring to fifty-thousand feet in the Sierra Wave with a pretty girl co-pilot. The synopsis of the script reads as follows: "Glenn Barton is investigating the effects of the *Break-Off Phenomenon*. This is a psychological experience that manifests itself in various forms of euphoria or anxiety to pilots flying at very high altitudes. When a famous sailplane pilot is killed during a stratosphere research flight there are indications that the phenomenon was operating just before the fatal crash. Barton investigates and finds that in order to best understand the phenomenon, he must undergo it himself. By flying a sailplane into the strong updrafts of the Sierra Wave Barton discovers that the phenomenon does exist but is not incapacitating. In order to determine the actual cause of the accident Barton duplicates the conditions by making another flight, this time into a much more powerful wave. By narrowly missing death himself Barton discovers the true cause of the crash as well as the nature of forces in the atmosphere that were formerly unknown."

When hard-core meteorologists and soaring pilots sit in front of their TV sets on this particular Saturday evening their voices will undoubtedly rise in a single cry of "baloney!" Vic Saudek's shriek is bound to be the loudest.

About all that can be offered in

P-R over the Sierras. Left wing is a cardboard prop. Sierra background is rear-projected on a translucent process screen to be re-photographed by studio camera.

Photo: Bob Greenbaum



defense of this particular episode is that this seems to be the stuff that TV producers feel their half hour dramatic shows should be made of and that in spite of the occasional stretches of dramatic license the general public, soaring pilots included, will surely be entertained. We shall see.

The "Break-Off," as the show is called, was conceived while I was shooting aerial and sky-diving sequences for previous shows in the series. Why not get soaring into the act? A script was laboriously ground out with the aid of OSTIV reports, old copies of *Soaring* and other "research" material. "Too documentary" said producer Ivan Tors . . . "We need strong fictional dramatic elements involving human factors and phenomenon . . . the premise of our show." The Break-Off* Phenomenon was then incorporated. What sounds

*CLARK, B. and GRAYBIEL, A: The break-off phenomenon. A feeling of separation from the earth experienced by pilots at high altitude. *Journal of Aviation Medicine*, 28:121, 1957.

Director Bundy Marton gives final instructions to George Nader who plays Dr. Glenn Barton in the *Man and the Challenge* series. Nader flies with co-pilot Miranda Jones to 50,000 feet inside the studio sound stage.

Photo: Bob Greenbaum



Len Canfield's P-R takes a terrific drubbing as it flies through the special effects man's snow squall. Ship is on trailer which was oscillated to simulate flight motions.

Photo: Bob Greenbaum



Photo: Fred Hefty

At Bishop: Jack Lambie, right, did the flying; Bob Greenbaum, left, took the movies.

suspiciously like some typical space-age TV show hokum actually does exist in the annals of aviation medicine. Once this was added and wave soaring underwent still further prostituting, the show was then ready to