

SOARING IN CENTRAL KANSAS

by H. MARSHALL CLAYBOURN

The soaring enthusiasts in central Kansas are blessed with the usual number of eager reporters all fighting for the privilege of informing the world of their activities. By virtue of this happy state herewith is presented the red hot news of their soaring activity. Only a brief period of six months has transpired since they had a contest and already, here's a report on it. How's that for spot news coverage?

The soaring group formed in the Wichita area during the latter part of 1956. Prior to that time there were no suitable sailplanes or any organization to get the ball rolling but there were a number of pilots with a previous connection with soaring. Only one of these could have been considered a truly experienced sailplane pilot—Harland C. Ross. However, the others made up for their lack of experience by their eagerness and efforts.

There is no central, formal organization to soaring in Wichita as yet. The existing clubs in the area are the Wichita Soaring Club, the Wichita Soaring Association and the Cherokee Club (you guessed it) owns a self-built Cherokee II. The Wichita Soaring Association owns a TG-2 and an L-K. They have regular meetings and, in general, serve as the hub of activities. Tentative plans have been discussed to bring all these groups under a common heading, mostly because of the other sailplanes in the area. Privately owned in the area are the following: (1) L-K, (2) I-26, (3) Cinema (being reconstructed in a nearby town (4) I-26 (partly owned by a local resident and based here at present), and (5) *The pride of all local members, the Ross R-6.* Their pride is well justified since this sailplane earned three world soaring records in the multi-place category as well as earning the final two legs of the diamond badge for its designer, builder and pilot.

Operations are conducted at Strother Field, about 40 miles south of Wichita. Even in the "Air Capital of the World" soaring is relegated to an outlying field. However, there is compensation in that the operator welcomes us and supplies auto and aerial tows. The latter are accom-

plished with NEW Cessna 175's, 182's and Skylanes. Pretty fancy, huh? He also provides hangar space at a reasonable rate. All concerned are very proud of Mr. Norman Smyer's treatment of the group. Incidentally, Strother Field, located between Winfield and Arkansas City ("R-Kansas" City, not R-kan-SAW), has three 5800 foot hard surface runways and a concrete ramp big enough for any sailplane operation. Needless to say, the country adjacent to it (that it, about 300 miles in any direction) is comparatively flat and excellent for soaring. In the three years of operation over 5000 launches have been accomplished.

Although soaring had started in '56 it was confined to local flights

except for inadvertant landings across the fence and for Ross' expeditions to Odessa, Texas. As a consequence, a contest was planned to get the fledgling pilots out of the nest. The 1959 4th of July week-end was selected for the first contest. Immediately prior to the contest two of the local pilots did make a cross-country flight. Other than that only Claybourn and Ross had done any cross-country flying in sailplanes. Because of the limited amount of experience of the pilots it was decided that Commander Sharp's rules would provide the most equitable method of scoring the contest. The rules were slightly modified. Forty points were given for each auto-tow flight and the number of points allowed for a C Badge was reduced to 500. The rules committee felt that 5000 points for a C badge was excessively generous since that would be equivalent to establishment of a new National record, in points. Otherwise the rules were the same as suggested in the May-June '59 Issue of SOARING. A summary of the contest is as follows:

KANSAS CONTEST RECORD

Pilot — Sailplane	7 - 3	7 - 4	7 - 5	Total
Dave Blanton — L-K	56	121	602	779
Marshall Claybourn — I-26	4601	4384	3771	12756
Faye Edwards — TG-2	147	74	73	294
Harry Higgins — TG-3A	404	4157	760	5321
Mickey Jensen — Cherokee II	51	233	—	284
V. E. Jones (Tulsa) — TG-2	—	308	69	377
H. Kennedy (Dodge City) TG-3A	153	2619	210	2982
Jim LeSueur — L-K	—	2980	—	2980
Web Moore — Cherokee II	77	828	—	905
Bob Nichols — R-100	136	—	—	136
Bert Overfield — Cherokee II	41	—	—	41
James Rhine (Tulsa) — TG-2	—	45	51	96
Harland Ross — R-6	145	829	—	974
Bill Thompson — L-K	309	886	3704	4899
Charley Walker — TG-2	55	55	168	278

KANSAS STATE SOARING RECORDS

	OPEN CLASS	SENIOR CLASS
DISTANCE: Single-Place:	Claybourn - 192.5 Mi.	LeSueur - 38 Mi.
Two-Place:	Higgins - 49.5 Mi.	Higgins - 49.5 Mi.
GOAL: Single-Place:	Claybourn - 42.5 Mi.	None
Two-Place:	None	None
ALTITUDE Single-Place:	4360 Ft. - Claybourn	4100 Ft. - LeSueur
GAINED: Two-Place:	5000 Ft. - LeSueur	5000 Ft. - LeSueur

Note: All of the above records were established during the contest except the 5000 foot altitude gained flight by LeSueur.

F.A.I. BADGES EARNED DURING CONTEST AND OTHER RECORDS & STATISTICS

2 C Badges - Blanton and Moore
2 Silver C Legs - Thompson (Dist.), Kennedy (Alt.)
5 Kansas State Soaring Records

Total flights: 51 - All airplane tows
Kansas State Championship - Claybourn (I-26)

FINAL CONTEST STANDINGS

Kansas Open Division
1st - Claybourn
2nd - Ross