

ELSINORE FALL SOARING CONTEST

Sanctioned by The Soaring Society of America, Inc.

by DAVE McNAY

The Elsinore Fall Soaring Contest was sponsored by the Southern California Soaring Association, Inc., at Skylark Field, Elsinore, Calif., over the weekend of Nov. 4-5, 1961. Tasks were planned to utilize the "smog front" shear line that often develops in the Elsinore Valley. However, Santa Ana winds blowing from the high desert areas wiped out any possibility of a shear line on this weekend, and the contest committee was hard pressed to choose an adequate task for the first day of competition. The weather forecast was not encouraging as there was to be very limited thermal activity with little chance of anyone soaring higher than 4,000 feet above the field. A short task to Ryan Field (18 miles to the east of Skylark Field) and return was set for Saturday's competition. Although few had any difficulty staying up near the field, most sailplanes left on course with much less altitude than they would have liked. For several the Sedco Hills to the east of Elsinore were the last thermal producers and the task ended as a gliding contest to see how close they could get to the turn point. Sterling Starr and Helen Dick in their 1-23's made a formation landing just to the south of Ryan Field with only some tall eucalyptus trees between them and the turn point. The masterful Graham Thomson glided round the turn point and half way back to Skylark Field before "putting in" to a farm field along Route 395. He was soon joined in the field by George Tweed who was still on the way to the turn point.

Several sailplanes hesitated to leave the field and were still airborne high over the ridge to the west of

Elsinore as the long shadows of sunset crossed the field. All sailplanes had been retrieved by dark and the assembled soaring enthusiasts moved to a nearby restaurant for supper and the Saturday night hanger flying.

The northeast wind that had come up on the ridge Saturday afternoon intensified during the night and by 9:00 A.M. Sunday, Boyd Harford was on the ridge with only the seat of his pants between him and the elusive five hours for Silver C. Several other sailplanes soon joined Boyd and for a while it looked as if there would be only a "crew meeting" at the time set for the traditional pilot's meeting.

With 35-mph winds blowing at the field there was no alternative but to select a task along the ridge; and after the "crew meeting," the following radio transmission constituted the first pilots' meeting in the air: "The task for the day is a 90-mile flight for speed starting at 11:30 a.m. from the south of a line through the hangar and the old club house, to Glen Ivy Airport and return. The course is to be flown along the ridge three times with the final crossing of the line to be near the field." The few sailplanes remaining on the field were launched to the ridge and the contest committee proceeded to "hide" the turn point marker close enough to the ridge that it could be seen by the pilots turning for the second lap.

By the time all sailplanes were on the ridge a real sand storm had developed at the field with gusts to near 60 miles per hour! The wind in the valley was straight from the dry lake bed and this contest chairman began to wonder how anyone

would be able to land at the field. Crews were cautioned to get to the landing sailplanes as quickly as possible in order to hold them down against the high winds.

The planned 11:30 A.M. start seemed a little disorganized as several sailplanes were far up the ridge enjoying the strong up currents in "the bowl." However, within five minutes most of the sailplanes had made their turn south of the starting line and began moving along the ridge toward Glen Ivy, 15 miles to the northwest. The ridge at Elsinore is anything but smooth and the wind was at about 45 degrees to the face of the main ridge. This condition created an area of severe turbulence behind a long spur jutting out near Santiago Peak. This obstacle seems to have made the difference between those who completed the course and those who did not.

At 1:39 P.M., just two hours and nine minutes after the start, Jack Lambie in his Fauvel AV-36 flying wing sailplane came roaring across the field with the blowing sand from the dry lake bed. Jack had no more than touched down when Bud Mears in his Schweizer 1-26 crossed the line at 1:45 P.M. for second best time. In rapid succession, Sterling Starr, Graham Thomson and George Tweed crossed the finish line in that order. The ground crews should be given special commendation for their Herculean efforts in retrieving the sailplanes and taking them to safety from the treacherous gusts.

By the time the scores were computed and the awards were ready to be presented, the wind had abated somewhat and the trophies were awarded in the sheltered area downwind of the sailplane hangar. Five awards were presented. First place in the Open Class went to Graham Thomson with Sterling Starr taking second honors. Pilots of sailplanes of the 1-26 class were awarded separate trophies and Jack Lambie and Bud Mears took first and second place, respectively, in this Class II.

A beautiful plaque made by Wally Wilson was awarded to Rich Eggleston for a noble effort by a two-place sailplane carrying a passenger. He flew the Soarcers' Pratt-Read.

TABLE OF SCORES

PILOT	SHIP	SAT.	SUN.	FINAL
Open Class				
G. THOMSON	Ka-6	1000	906	1906
S. STARR	1-23D	574	923	1497
G. TWEED	GT-1	333	804	1137
HELEN DICK	1-23	574	0	574
H. BURR	1-24	333	150	483
L. MAXEY	Orlik	0	150	150
Class II				
J. LAMBIE	AV-36	315	1000	1315
C. MEARS	1-26	333	972	1305
R. EGLESTON	P-R	407	50	457

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