



9th ANNUAL U.S. NATIONAL SOARING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sanctioned by The Soaring Society of America, Inc.

by WILSON M. BARNES, JR.

Photos by GEORGE UVEGES, except as noted.

In 1962 the Nationals were held in California for the third time, and at El Mirage for the first. Thirty-three pilots and ships were on hand for the first contest day on July 24th, and 27 flew on August 2nd, the last day of competition. The interim involved eight days of rugged contest flying and two welcome rest days. Miles flown during the meet totaled over 41,000, for an average of about 170 miles/ship/day.

John D. Ryan, SSA Vice-President and the owner of the only Sisu-I entered, won the National Soaring Championship. The final outcome was in doubt right up until the final hours of the last day; second place went to Dick Johnson by a mere 17 point margin.

El Mirage Field is located in the Mojave Desert north of Los Angeles, between Palmdale and Victorville. It is separated from the Los Angeles basin by the San Gabriel Mountains to the south, which provide a barrier

against the influx of stable marine air from the basin onto the desert in the vicinity of the field. There are, however, two passes through which this air moves out into the desert every day—Mint Canyon to the west and the Cajon Pass north of San Bernardino to the east. These topographical features and the daily meteorological cycle play a significant role in the creation of El Mirage soaring conditions and in the story of the 29th Nationals.

The meet was sponsored and financed by the Victorville Chamber of Commerce, with support from the Douglas Soaring Club, the Antelope Valley Soaring Club, and the Southern California Soaring Association. Innumerable individuals contributed their time and untiring efforts under the guidance of Jack Wolfe and Vic Saudek, Contest Managers, to make the meet an outstanding success. Among other organizations which furnished considerable support were the officers and men of George AFB, and the Union and Shell Oil Companies, which contributed gasoline for the tow planes. Gasoline company interest in supporting a competition of motorless aircraft seems puzzling at first; however, if the ships flew 41,000

miles, the crews must have driven several times as far, and so. . . .

Six tow planes handled the launching chores. Two PT-23's, two Shinn 2150's, and two Super Cubs from Fred Harris' Holiday Soaring School at Tehachapi did an excellent job under Jose Tellez, Chief Tow Pilot and Alf Modahl, Director of Flight Operations. The competing ships were launched at two-minute intervals in a smooth operation which fell behind schedule only a few times—and then because pilots were not ready when their time came up.

The official SSA functions were ably handled by Oats Schwarzenberger, Competition Director; Ken Jacobs, Chief Timer; and Helen Navoy and Bertha Ryan, Scorers. Turn point observers Paul Sepulveda, Dick Deak and Harv Rechsteiner flew to their posts daily in the Douglas Flying Club's Cessna 172. Turn point photographs taken by George Uveges were available each morning at pilots' meeting in the big hangar. Most of these were taken before the meet started; an exception was the panel location north of Bishop, which was photographed on the afternoon before that particular task was announced.

A number of pilots arrived early and were able to get in some practice flying before the meet started. Those who flew on the weekend preceding the start of competition were treated to some exceptionally good soaring weather, even for El Mirage. Ross Briegleb unofficially bettered the world's 100-km. speed record on Sunday, July 22nd. He averaged 67 mph for the course, a mark which has since been bettered by George Moffat in the HP-8; see elsewhere in this issue. Dick Schreder traversed a 105-mile triangle at an average speed of 75 mph on the same day.

Following an air show on Sunday, designed to give the public an idea of what soaring is all about, the official pre-contest pilots' meeting was held at which rules and procedures were explained and clarified. Following

The Flight Line. In the foreground is Bud Mears' Prue Standard; ahead in line are Joe Robertson's Ka-6BR (74); Bill Ivans and Sterling Starr's 1-23D (7); at the head of the line is Paul Bikle's Prue Standard. In line on the far side, front to back: Harold Jensen's LO-150; A. J. Smith's LO-150 (2); Dick Johnson's Ad Astra (44); and Graham Thomson's Ka-6CR.

