



In March of this year I had the opportunity to fly the Sisu 1A. It was a thrilling experience because very few pilots get the chance to fly a Sisu or any other high-performance sailplane of this class.

I was going to fly the first production model at the soaring site of the Texas Soaring Association, six miles south of Grand Prairie, Texas, the sailplane that Richard H. Johnson did so well with at the World Soaring Championships in Argentina.

Dick came out to the airfield to be photographed with the Sisu. Being recently back from Argentina he talked to us enthusiastically about the superior quality of the Sisu compared to the sailplanes he saw there. After winning the Nationals at Elmira with his new Skylark 4, he still thought the Sisu was the finest of all. So did Adam

Witek of Poland; when I asked him which sailplane he would want the most he said "The Sisu, the Sisu," and his eyes lit up with admiration. I saw all of the Nationals and, among other things, the most impressive sight was sailplanes crossing the starting line. With the exception of the HP-11 and HP-8, there was no other sailplane crossing it in the arrow-like way as the Sisu's did.

At first glance one may wonder and doubt the claimed performance figures. The tiny wings, the delicate fuselage keeping doubt alive, till one moves close and runs fingers over the surfaces of wings and fuselage, realizing at once that a perfectionist was at work.

If we compare wing dimensions with those of some other high-performance sailplanes, our first impression seems to be justified.

The author in the Sisu 1A just prior to take-off at the TSA Gliderport.

	Span ft.	Area sq. ft.	Aspect Ratio
Sisu 1A	50.0	108.0	23.1
Ka-6	49.2	133.4	18.1
1-23H	50.2	160.3	15.6
Bre. 901	56.8	161.4	20.0

The cockpit has enough head and leg room to feel comfortable after a long cross-country flight. Flap and airbrake levers are situated in staggered positions on the left side of the cockpit within easy reach of the pilot. No contortionism or excessive strength is required to operate them. Visibility is superior to that of any other single-seater I have ever flown and gives distortion-free view for the pilot, where it really counts, right in front.

Leonard A. Niemi, the designer, gave me a short briefing before take-off. On the second production Sisu I had seen and heard a sound system warning device which indicates if the landing wheel is not out in a locked position. Since this model had none, I was concerned, but Len assured me there had been a landing made on the belly without damage before.

With half flaps in a 20-mph wind it took a run of only a few feet till we were airborne. The tow hook is located close to the center of gravity line of the ship and for this reason the Sisu sits perfectly on the towline. The cockpit is extremely quiet. Control movements and responses are natural. Two rubber bands fixed to the floor provided adequate trim control when manipulated over the stick. However, an aluminum rod placed over the stick with up or down movements is in all Sisu's now for trim con-

The man responsible for the Sisu 1A sailplane, designer/builder Leonard Niemi, is shown here flying the first production model, now owned by Gleb Derujinsky.

Photo by Alex Aldott (All rights reserved)

