

# SCHWEIZER DEALER MEETING

by W. E. "TONY" DOHERTY, JR.

Sailplane pilots are pretty much the same the world around. Bring a group of them together—show them a completely new sailplane—and it is difficult to interest them in a formal meeting agenda covering training procedures, finance plans, advertising, national promotion, regattas, customer relations, etc.

The star attraction of the 3rd Annual Schweizer Dealers Meeting, held in Elmira, October 19-21, was the prototype of the all-metal, two-place, high-performance 2-32 sailplane. Each of the 16 dealers attending flew this new ship. They all were very enthusiastic about the place this ship will fill in the future of American soaring, particularly in advancing companion and family soaring. They also felt that the 2-32 would be ideal for competition and record flying as well as for cross-country and advanced soaring instruction.

All those attending the meeting reported increased soaring interest and activity in their prospective areas. During the past year a number of new "gliderports" have been developed by Schweizer dealers.

Northeastern Light Aircraft, headed by Jim Doyle, opened a new field at Salem, N. H. Located "off airways," it is accessible from the greater Boston area.

Early last year Jim Parrott's "Miami Soaring School" found the high-density traffic at the North Perry

Airport a bit too congested for a good soaring operation. With the help of John Randall and George Arents, Jim located a new site for the "Miami Gliderport" between South Miami and Homestead. He feels that this "Winter Soaring Capital" is ideally located to introduce soaring to many of the pilots who fly to Florida each year for a week or two of midwinter sunshine.

Chester Airport, Chester, S. C., is the home of "Bermuda High Soaring," headed by Stanley Hoke and operated by George Biggerstaff. Their equipment includes a PA-18 towplane, a 2-22, and two 1-26's. A country-club-type operation is being developed.

Ken Woodward and Bob Smith have developed "Cumulus Ridge Farm" near Milford, New Jersey. In addition to a landing strip it features a family recreation area and a lake.

Each of these new areas of activity can do much to promote interest in the sport. The new sites, however, need the backing and support of all SSA members in the respective areas.

The role the commercial operator plays in American soaring is becoming more important each year. He works both with the individual and with the clubs. His facilities are regularly available to serve all soaring enthusiasts. He offers supplies, service and repair facilities, infor-

mation to help newcomers get started, and has training and checkout facilities. Many dealers have FAA examiners available.

Dealers report a trend developing over the past few years where sailplane pilots are taking their vacations at different soaring centers. The availability of towplanes, good accommodations, tie-downs and other conveniences make this type of family recreation much more interesting and enjoyable.

From reports given at the meeting it appears that soaring schools operated by Schweizer dealers will make more than 20,000 flights in 1962. Total flying hours should exceed 7,000. This is a good indication of the number of new pilots being introduced to soaring through the efforts of members of the Schweizer organization.

A very interesting area covered at the meeting was the continual growing interest in the one-design sailplane concept. Several dealers reported very successful 1-26 regional regattas. These were held in addition to the annual 1-26 Meet at Harris Hill. With nearly 200 1-26's now flying an increasing number of owners have indicated interest in attending more of these informal get-togethers. 1-26 owners will be advised of these activities in the 1-26 Association Newsletter.

One area of particular interest was the amount of good national publicity developed in the past year. Nearly every one of the Schweizer dealers has been responsible for promoting magazine, newspaper, television and film coverage. Fred Harris' Holiday School has been the location for several television shows. Les Arnold's school was featured in a San Francisco Weekly, as was a spectacular shot of Julien Audette's 1-23G in a Canadian Weekly. John Smith's Capital Soaring School was featured in the magazine section of a Washington paper. On the cover of the Alcoa Newsletter was an outstanding color photo taken by Jim Parrott at Miami Soaring School. Writers from *Sports Illustrated* spent several days at the Schweizer Soaring School gathering material for a forthcoming article. Paramount Pictures' sports short "On the Wing" currently is being shown in the first-run theatres throughout the country. It depicts school and contest flying at Elmira.

This type of national publicity is very encouraging. It should give

Schweizer Aircraft officers, dealer and friends shown in front of the prototype 2-32. Standing, L. to R.: Larry Gehrlein, Erie, Pa.; Fred Harris, Tehachapi, Calif.; Les Arnold, Hayward, Calif.; Jim Doyle, Ballard Vale, Mass.; Ken Woodward, Milford, N.J.; Ray Jackson and John Bierens, Detroit, Mich.; Alex Dawydoff, Managing Editor of *FLYING Magazine*; Steve Bennis, Middletown, N.Y.; and Tom Cloyes, West Salem, Ohio. Front row, L. to R.: Tony Doherty; S. E. Atherton, West Lebanon, N.H.; Rod Gehrlein, Erie, Pa.; Jim Gillanders, Montreal, P.Q.; Steve and Al Parker, Odessa, Texas; Louis Rehr, Lantana, Fla.; and Paul Schweizer. Attending, but not in photograph: Doug McCormick, Montreal, P.Q.; and Ernie and Bill Schweizer.

