

LENNIE PINS AND THE SYMONS WAVE MEMORIAL

by CARL E. BURSON, JR.

On the beautiful Saturday evening of August the 17th, high altitude soaring pilots and their guests gathered at the Antelope Valley Inn at Lancaster, California, to pay homage to the late Robert Symons, mountain pilot and wave flying pioneer.

They gathered to be present at the dedication of the Symons Wave Memorial, "awarded in recognition to those who have distinguished themselves in the science of wave flying." In the late 40's when Bob Symons was working out of the Bishop, California, airport he instigated a new and rather strange type of pin which he called a "lennie" pin and he presented this to persons who had soared in the Sierra Wave over Bishop. There were three pins to denote soaring to different altitudes; 1 lennie for 25,000 to 35,000 ft.; 2 lennies for 35,000 to 40,000 ft.; and 3 lennies for soaring over 40,000 ft. These pins continued to be presented until 1958 when Bob was killed in a glider accident. From that time till now they have been lost to the soaring world.

July of 1962 was the first encounter that the author had with the lennie pin. This pin was on the cap of Paul Bikle. In our conversation about the pin and its background, the idea was formed to re-establish the issuance of the pins. With phone calls and a flight to Bishop

to talk to Mildred Symons, Bob's widow, the idea progressed, but ran into a road block when it was learned that the dies for the pins had been lost by the manufacturer. This left the choice of abandoning the whole idea or starting from scratch, with the later being done. By June of this year letters of information were written to all known lennie pin holders asking for names and addresses of persons they knew who had received pins from Bob which were not on Bob's prepared list. With a new list of names, new pins and dies ordered and a drawing completed for an all-new memorial plaque, the time had come to present it to the soaring world.

Paul Bikle was then shown the completed pins, plaque, and list of tentative rules governing the issuance of the lennie pins and asked to present it to the SSA Directors' meeting in July. With a great deal of interest and favor the information was passed on to Floyd Sweet, Chairman of the SSA Awards Committee, for his recommendations. With approval from SSA for issuance, the final order was placed, and a date set for the presentation of the new lennie pins and memorial plaques. Invitations were then sent out to all known lennie pin holders.

The largest problem faced in this total operation was to establish the

recipients of the pins and addresses where they could be reached. Addresses are still lacking for some persons who are holders of the original lennie pins. If you were issued a pin by the late Bob Symons and were not contacted about the reformation plans would you please write to Carl E. Burson, Jr., Box 97, Tehachapi, California, 93561, so that your name and address can be placed in the new record file.

The setting for the banquet at the A.V. Inn was well-chosen, enabling guests to gather at pool-side to re-establish old friendships before going to the banquet room. Those present were Mr. & Mrs. John Mac Donald, Ray and Rose Parker (only husband-and-wife team to both receive lennie pins) Mr. & Mrs. George Deibert, Mr. & Mrs. Bob Brown, Mr. & Mrs. Paul Bikle, Miss Betsy Woodward, Mr. Harold Kleiforth, Mr. Lloyd Licher, Mr. & Mrs. John Williams, Mr. & Mrs. Howard Burr, Mr. & Mrs. Harner Selvidge, Mr. & Mrs. Carl Brinkmann, Mr. & Mrs. Carl Burson, Jr., and Mrs. Robert Symons. Following a delicious prime rib dinner a short resumé was given on the reformation of the lennie pins and establishment of the new Symons Wave Memorial. To give a background of Robert Symons, Harold Kleiforth presented to the group a dedication which he and George Deibert had prepared. (Text accompanies this article.) Mr. Paul Bikle, world altitude record holder, then presented the first Symons Wave Memorial plaque in behalf of the late Robert Symons to Mrs. Mildred Symons. Plaques were then presented to those lennie pin holders who were in attendance. The banquet was formally closed to ring down the curtain on the formal presentation of the new lennie pins and Symons Wave Memorial plaques to the soaring world.

The lennie pins and Symons Wave Memorial plaques will be issued in the following manner to those persons who have made or will make qualifying wave soaring flights. The altitude requirements of each of the three pins is as follows:

1-lennie pin issued for wave soaring between 25,000 to 35,000 ft.

2-lennie pin issued for wave soar-



The Symons Wave Memorial plaque, "awarded in recognition to those who have distinguished themselves in the science of wave soaring."