

A SALUTE TO THE 1-26

You will note that this issue of *Soaring* is devoted primarily to the Schweizer 1-26. At our monthly editorial conference when the contents of the next issue of *Soaring* are chosen it was suddenly noticed that there was a large group of stories on hand which were about the 1-26. We decided that it would be highly appropriate to devote most of this issue to this remarkable aircraft.

It is just ten years since work started on the prototype 1-26, which had its maiden flight on January 16, 1954. Over 200 of them have now been sold, some complete, and some in kit form, making it probably the most successful sailplane design ever produced in peacetime. The soundness of the original design is evident when you compare the low serial numbers with the recent ones. Only the experienced can tell the difference.

Much of the glamour of soaring lies in the realm of high performance, high aspect ratio open class sailplanes, but the backbone of the soaring movement in this country, and any other, lies in the local club operations. These are the weekend fliers who have fun around the airport, make some cross-country flights and enter local contests. For this sort of flying, the 1-26 is unexcelled.

Don't sell the 1-26 short in performance. There are few ships that can out-climb it in light thermals, and loads of diamonds have been earned in them. The 1-26 records of 36,000 feet of altitude and 443 miles cross-country offer enough challenge for anyone not after world's records. Curiously, no one has yet obtained all three diamonds in a 1-26. This was my secret ambition and I am sure it will soon be accomplished many times. When my work got so heavy that I had to give up active soaring for a time, I sold my 1-26, serial number 43, but I still proudly wear the two diamonds it earned me, and I don't think any other ship I may own will ever fill the same place in my affections.

The 1-26 is remarkably easy to maintain, and I believe it to be one of the safest machines flying. Its handling qualities are gentle and it is very rugged. Of course, it is possible to hurt yourself in any vehicle, but I have seen a 1-26 spin in, landing on a solid rock ledge, and watched the pilot open the canopy, climb out and walk away. Not many fuselages would have furnished similar protection.

This editorial, which you may be reading in October, was actually written on the eve of the Ninth Annual Schweizer 1-26 Regatta at Harris Hill. Unfortunately, I am 2,800 miles west of it when it starts, and will be 3,000 miles east of it at the FAI Gliding Committee meeting in Paris when it closes. But I flew in the first and second ones, and don't know when I have had more fun. The one-class concept of competition which has proved so successful in boating is gradually growing in soaring, largely due to the 1-26. I hope that the 1-26 Association will be able to accelerate this pace. The OSTIV Standard Class ships have such broad limits that they have turned out to be just about the same as open class ships, so at the present, the only hope for real one-class competition is the 1-26.

It will always be possible to buy a ship for less money than the 1-26, and it will always be possible to buy higher performance, but in my opinion there is no safer or better advice that can be given to anyone either starting or continuing in soaring, than to buy and fly the 1-26. —Harner Selvidge