

31st ANNUAL U.S. NATIONAL SOARING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sanctioned by The Soaring Society of America, Inc.
Photos by GEORGE UVEGES, SAA's Official Photographer for the Nationals.

A group of six McCook, Nebr. soaring enthusiasts took on the task to organize and run the 31st U.S. National Soaring Championships held from June 30th to July 10th at the old Army Air Base located 8 miles northwest of the town of McCook.

To Dr. Donald Morgan, Contest Manager; Leonard Boyd, Registrar; Milton Johnson, Flight Operations Director; John Herrmann, Chief Starter; John Althberg and Dr. Bruce Snyder, Publicity Director, this was a first experience in running a contest. They started at the top, as the 31st Nationals fielded one of the greatest number of entries (48) since the 1947 contest held in Wichita Fall, Tex. Though short of experience, they were long on enthusiasm, determination and hard work and deserve praise for bringing off a successful event. They were also fortunate in having whole hearted cooperation of the Chamber of Commerce and other McCook civic organizations.

Official host and sponsor of the contest was the Nebraska Soaring Association organized two years ago with four members and now totaling the six mentioned above.

The job of selecting daily tasks lay on the broad shoulders of Major Ed Butts who was the SSA Competition Director. Bertha Ryan acted as Chief Scorer. Weather was watched by Ted Lange, chief meteorologist and a familiar figure at the National contests, he was assisted by Charles Chappell of Kansas City, Kan.

The 48 sailplanes assembled at McCook represented the cream of the country's motorless aircraft, there were eight Ka-6s, seven 1-23s, six Sissus, three Skylark 4s, three Standard Austrias, two HP-10s, two HP-11s, two Schweizer 2-32s making their first debut in the competition world, two BG-12s and one Zugvogel III. Cockpit equipment ranged from good, excellent to extravagant instrument and electronic wise. Forty sailplanes were equipped with radios, more than 50



Dick Johnson's Skylark 4.

percent of which were the 90 channel Baysides.

Unpredictable, was the term used by contestants in describing the weather during the Nationals. As Gus Briegleb put it: "You could rarely depend on the same conditions for more than half an hour, one moment you may shoot up at 1,000 fpm and the next you are "scratching" in a weak broken lift." Storms and squall lines lay occasionally in the paths of the participants, and had to be detoured or waited out. Overall, the weather was not "strong," neither were the winds, which worked to the benefit of such sailplanes as the Skylarks and the Ka-6s. Note in the final score table a Skylark in the first place, though it is an unfair comparison when one considers who its pilot was, and five of the Ka-6s in the first ten positions, with Wally Scott occupying second place. Were the winds stronger, the penetration ability of the more sophisticated sailplanes would have undoubtedly changed the picture.

The Contest

First to arrive at McCook was Paul Bikle who spent four days flying 120-mile triangles, returning to the base three times. Looking for Indians, someone remarked.

The day before the contest, Ed Butts assigned a practice goal and return task of 40 miles in which most of the contestants partici-

pated. The day started out as a "boomer" with several pilots reaching 14,000 feet. Eight pilots completed the task but others were caught short due to a considerable cloud cover developing over the turn point.

June 30 — First Contest Day

A Goal and Return speed task of 98 miles from McCook to Jones Airport near Benkleman, Neb., and back to McCook was the first contest event. The take off line moved smoothly and the 48 contestants were on their way. Jim and Gerry Rhine of Tulsa, Okla. with their assistants manned the start gate as the sailplanes flew through under 3,000 feet. Later in the afternoon 22 of the pilots dove through the finish line to complete the task. Best time was flown by Ben Greene of North Carolina in a Standard Austria averaging 38.34 mph. A. J. Smith of Michigan was second in his Sisu at 37.67 mph. Dick Johnson averaged 35.96 mph in his Skylark 4. Rudy Mozer of Michigan in a Ka-6 was 4th with a speed of 35.74 mph. Two newcomers to National Competition, Bruce Beebe of California and Wally Scott of Texas, both flying Ka-6's came in 5th and 6th respectively.

Among those who did not finish the day's task were: John Ryan, Sisu (11 mi.), George Moffat HP-8 (63 mi.), Stan Smith, HP-10 (35 mi.), Dick Schreder, HP-11A, (62.5