

NEWS NOTES

FASTER, FASTER, FASTER The Southern California Competition Club (see NEWS NOTES, April, 1966) wound up its first season of activity with a slam-bang week-end (Sept. 8-9) at Elsinore Airport during which some very fast task times were turned in. The weather was much better than anticipated and, because it was underestimated, the tasks were on the short side. On the first day of the week-end, when maximum thermal altitude was expected to be 6,000 ft., some pilots got twice that high. Paul Bikle, who won the two-day meet, flashed around the 45-mile course (Gilman Hot Springs and return) in his SHK at 82.5 m.p.h. Bill Ivans (Sisu) was just a shade faster with 83.7 m.p.h. But the real speedy fellows were Graham Thomson (Libelle) and Sterling Starr (modified 1-23) who tied for first with 89.0 m.p.h. These may well be the fastest closed-course times ever made anywhere by anybody.

NEW FIRE FOR AN OLD FEUD In the still *Nameless Newsletter* of the *Pacific Soaring Council* Carl Herold presents some analytical contrasts between the most recent Western and Texas Nationals. At Odessa in 1960, he finds, Dick Schreder flew an average of 208 miles a day. At Reno the figure was 277. The four speed tasks at Odessa averaged 122 miles in length, and the average speed was 52 m.p.h., whereas the average length of the speed task at Reno was 180 miles and the average speed 58 m.p.h. And, although the tasks were 50% longer at Reno than at Odessa winning speeds were still 11% higher. In assessing these results Carl wonders if it might not just be possible that, despite the newer sailplanes, conditions are not really that much better in Texas? He must be kidding, eh Red?

THERE'S FIBERGLASS IN YOUR FUTURE Although current FRP (fiberglass-reinforced plastics) are obviously adequate for airframe construction—when properly fabricated—there now seems to be a development on the horizon that could lead to even lighter and stronger structures than we have at present. The item to keep your eye on is *crystalline* fiber-reinforced plastics in which the secret ingredient is silicon carbon, the compound commonly used in grinding wheels. The *Carborundum Company* states that silicon carbon can be formed into whiskers which, being nearly perfect crystals, have enormous strength. These whiskers, by means of recently developed techniques, can be made into yarns which can be imbedded in plastics. The resultant material, while light in weight, is claimed to be half again as strong as steel and resistant to high temperatures.

The potential of crystalline FRP is so promising that its use is foreseen in the manufacture of jet transports. Airframe weight, it is calculated, could be halved and fuel consumption cut by a whopping 80%—this presumably due, in part, to great savings in drag. And of course any improvement in strength-to-weight ratio, or surface-hardness, or in heat-resistant qualities, will be frosting on the cake to the sailplane manufacturers who have already solved the major problems of using synthetic materials.

THERMAL DETECTION The use of infra-red scanning equipment, or what any glider pilot would call thermal-detection apparatus, is becoming more and more widespread these days. While many applications are of a military nature (snooperscopes, maps of blacked-out cities) there are a growing number of other uses which seem likely to create a demand for more compact and less expensive equipment.

Recently a B-25, doing studies of volcano hot spots on the island of Hawaii, produced some infra-red images of the shore line which indicated where precious fresh water (12° cooler than the surrounding water) was flowing into the sea from underground streams. At the end of the volcano project, its head, geologist William Fischer, mapped the island's entire coastline and discovered one five-mile-square area in Hilo Bay where some 100 million gallons of fresh water were flowing away daily. Fischer is now working on infra-red instruments for EROS (EARTH RESOURCES OBSERVATION SATELLITES) which, it is hoped, will make it possible to map fresh-water sources all over the globe. And hopefully it will one day be possible to find those fresh-water springs that flow vertically, the ones we call thermals.



The most recent entry in the power-sailplane field is the new Scheibe SF-27M (M for motorsegler). Estimated performance figures for the new glider, engine retracted, include an L/D of 32 and a minimum sink of 2.3 ft./sec. The power unit adds only 88 lbs. to the weight.

BATTLE OF THE GIANTS Hans Werner Grosse and Heinz Huth are expected to fly production AS-12's in the 1967 German Nationals, following which Grosse, who was high-point man at Adrian in 1965, will bring his ship to Marfa for the 34th U.S. National Contest. Rudy Mozer expects to be flying his own AS-12 at the same contest and large numbers of other fiberglass sailplanes can also be expected. It is not at all unlikely that half the competing gliders at Marfa will be of fiberglass.

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