



JACK LAISTER REVISITED

by SYLVIA B. COLTON

Despite distracting cu's that build up regularly on the San Gabriel Mountains to tantalize Los Angeles soaring pilots, some turn away, close a garage or shop door and bring a life of flight to stacks of aluminum or wood, piles of fabric and multitudinous cartons of rivets, cables and fittings.

For some, designing and building a sailplane is seemingly a never-ending way of life. As soon as one ship is airborne, put through its paces, critically compared and flown with the flock, another configuration slowly dominates its designers attention.

This would apply to John W. Laister, designer and producer of the LK and most recently the LP-49. Although there has been a 20-year interval between the production of the LK and the LP-49, Jack has lost none of his earlier interest nor talent in sailplane design. His goals, in his most recent achievement, are a ship with relatively high performance, one that is inexpensive, easy to assemble as a kit, easy to assemble in the field and requiring low maintenance. He also wants to offer the pilot who isn't an engineer the opportunity to construct his own sailplane with a minimum of construction frustration and absence from soaring.

Newcomers to soaring may know that LK stands

for Laister-Kauffman and that the ship was a World War II trainer with the designation TG-4A. Many of the original 160 TG's survived their war-time purpose to become LK-10A's and provide soaring in the United States with a very durable and dependable trainer as well as pleasure ship. Many noteworthy flights have been made in this glider such as Hal Hutchison's two-place 248-mile-goal-record flight and more recently Doug Barritt's Mt. Rainier wave flight to 25,300 feet on January 16, 1966.

But distance and altitude attributes weren't features the Army Air Corps of 1940 needed. Monstrous cargo gliders were being produced and pilots were needed to fly them.

The Army Air Corps was impressed with Jack's gull-winged glider — the Yankee Doodle — and in mid-1940 invited him to design a two-place glider in which they could train pilots. John Kauffman, a loyal citizen of St. Louis and a broker, hearing that Jack might go to California with his military glider business, offered to become partners with him, thus keeping the production there. Designing required two weeks and the first TG-4A was delivered to Wright Field 90 days after drawing began. The initial contract called for 75 gliders and was later renewed for an additional 75.