The SHK, flown by Kuntz, placed third in the Open Class at South Gerney.

In reading these conclusions one should keep in mind that the Austria SH is a completely different ship from the old fixed-wheel S model. The latter shows distinctly poor climb although identical high-speed qualities. The change has been achieved with the use of an Eppler 266 airfoil on the SH instead of the old 64-415. Judging from prolonged flying during the Nationals against Wally Scott and Rudy Mozer, two of the best K-6 pushers around, the Austria SH can climb evenly with the best of the K-6's in any weather, although I would guess that the latter's slightly greater maneuverability might pay off if one waited around to milk the last few inches from the top of a thermal. In level flight, at equal sink rates, the Austria seems to have about 12-15-mph advantage over the K-6CR and perhaps half that over the new E model. These observations were made when the Austria was indicating about 80 mph.

The Austria's clearcut superiority in performance is matched by its construction. I have seen no factory made ship which approaches the standard of construction or finish of the Schempp-Hirth Austria. Gauge tests showed a maximum waviness over the standard two inches of .010" with an average of .006. (For comparison, most of the Sisus go around .005-6, a Skylark IV around .050 and a Dart about the same. The fabled RJ-5 was down to .002 in its best configuration.) One of the most impressive things about the Austria is its ability to hold its excellent contours year after year, even in the extreme temperatures of West Texas.

Handling qualities of the Austria are good but not up to the level of the K-6 or Dart. The rate of roll is an acceptable 4.2 seconds (3.9 for the Dart and about the same for the K-6) but it is achieved with considerable control pressure. Many pilots will object to the feedback from the ailerons which can make for a tired wrist in rough air. Longitudinal stability is good, directional stability fair. As in most V-tail ships, keeping the string centered needs a bit of practice. Surprisingly, the ship is very easy to thermal, the speed having a tendency to stabilize right around the optimum 48 to 52 mph. This characteristic makes for painless cloud flying, more so than in the K-6. Stalls and spins are straightforward and non-dramatic although, like most high-performance ships, the Austria spins with the nose well down and takes its time recovering. The dive brakes are large but not especially effective due to being so far back on the wing. Rate of descent is like a 1-26. Skidding can almost double this rate, however. All in all, the new Austria is a most pleasant ship to fly. My wife had no difficulty transitioning from a 1-23 and flew a successful Diamond goal out-and-return on one of her first flights.

The cockpit of the Austria is extremely comfortable, with a semi-reclining position and adjustable-in-flight rudder pedals. There is ample room for radio, plenty of instruments, barograph, etc. I am six feet two and find the height plentiful although I find the comfort of the ship can be much improved by removing the seat. Rigging requires one main pin and two drag pins, all permanently attached to the structure. All controls are self connecting. I wish I could say the ship falls together with a satisfying *thunk*, but I'm afraid mine generally dosn't. Some Austrias do. Wing alignment is rather critical and can be slow unless the crew is experienced. Still, the total rigging time rarely exceeds that of a K-6 since, while the wings take longer, there are no controls to connect and safety, root fairing to attach, etc.

In the spring of 1965 Martin Schempp came out with a long-wing model of the Austria, the SHK. It proceeded to place third in the Internationals, right after the team-flown Foka and the super-ship, the D-36. The SHK is essentially a 17-meter Austria although with longer tail and various other slight changes. When I flew the first one in the country a couple of weeks ago, courtesy of U.S. distributor Bill Foley of Glastonbury, Conn., it seemed very impressive. Rate of roll is exceptionally good for a 17-meter ship—just over four seconds—and controls in general have a light and pleasant feel. Other aspects are much like the SH. Performance tests against my SH were a little inconclusive since my ship has been extensively sealed and the K was as-is, straight out of the box. At minimum sink the SH seemed to lose about five feet per minute to the SHK, rather less than the specs would lead one to expect. The high-speed runs were too short to be conclusive but seemed to bear out the curve which show the SHK about 3-5 mph slower for the same sink at speeds over 80 mph.

The only real drawback to the SHK seems to be the considerably lower placard speed (124 mph) which would make me think twice about really fast flying in rough air. On the other hand I believe that the K will beat the SH whenever the lift averages under 400 fpm, and that's most days except in the Southwest. Cost of the long-wing model is only a couple of hundred dollars more than the SH.