

up in the Standard Class World Championships in 1963 and winner in 1965. Needless to say I had been looking forward to a chance to fly this obviously potent ship.



The Edelweiss, France's top-placing Standard Class sailplane.

The Edelweiss is an extraordinarily good looking 15-meter ship. Its long, low fuselage puts the pilot in full reclining position and demands considerable dihedral to get good wing clearance. Construction is plywood sandwich for the most part with excellent finish. The general level of workmanship does not quite match the Austria's but is well ahead of the K-6. Rigging is fundamentally simple although rather slow because of the tight fittings on this brand new ship. With an experienced crew rigging times should about match the K-6. Perhaps I should say an experienced and strong crew since the 565-pound empty weight (one pays in weight for these smooth surfaces) makes holding the tips a bit of a chore.

The cockpit feels a little cramped for my height on first entry, nor does the visibility seem remarkable when the long, rather wavy moulded canopy closes over you. Both these impressions change in the air, where the visibility seems excellent, especially to the rear, and the cockpit very comfortable. Controls are all in easy reach. Like most of the reclining jobs the panel suffers in size and would be hard put to take more than five instruments.

In the air the ship feels light and solid. Ailerons are the best I've seen on such a heavy ship with a rate of roll clearly under four seconds. Yaw stability is outstanding. In fact the whole ship feels a lot like the excellent Foka 4. Stick forces are light and easily trimmed with an ultra-effective trimmer convenient to the left hand; in fact I found myself flying with the trimmer much of the time. Stalls are normal, usually accompanied by a slight drop of one wing. Spin recovery is prompt. In a thermal the ship has a wonder-

ful grooved feeling, commented on by all the experienced pilots who have flown it. It wants to stay coordinated and in the thermal, even in steep turns. On leaving the thermal the ship picks up speed with that same slippery powerful feeling one notes in the Sisu. Dive brakes bring you down in K-6 style—right now.

After a couple of hours flying in order to feel the Edelweiss out, Ed Byers kindly let me fly his Austria SH while he flew the Edelweiss so we could check comparative performance. Climb rates seemed about the same although the French ship is definitely easier to handle and quicker in roll. On the glide we made several runs of about five miles at 60 (best L/D) and 100 mph. To my surprise the Austria proved somewhat superior at both speeds on all runs, probably to the extent of two to three points on the L/D scale. There seems little doubt that the 36 advertised by the French contains some Gallic optimism. The results on the high speed end confirmed a recent German study made of several late model sailplanes.

One attractive feature of the C-30S is its ability to carry up to 170 pounds of lead ballast for strong conditions. I am told that the French usually use about 50 pounds even for moderate weather. This would of course improve the penetration. Another very attractive feature is the strength. The Edelweiss has a *rough air* placard speed of 140 mph and certainly feels nice and solid at that speed. This would make the ship a very attractive bet for the West or Southwest for record attempts and general fast flying. In general I think the Edelweiss an excellent compromise between the performance of the Austria and the handling of the Dart. Unfortunately one pays rather heavily for such excellence—about \$7900 delivered, duty paid, in the States. An instrument package is available at \$600, but I suspect that one can do better through Rainco. A trailer may be had for \$2500, at which price you would expect something miraculous. Instead one finds a rather ordinary plywood affair which weaves badly in a wind. If I were buying an Edelweiss I would try a Dart trailer or build my own. (My covered plywood Austria trailer cost under \$300 to build.)

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The new crop makes for an interesting group of ships. All, except the Edelweiss, are of almost identical price, each outstanding in its own way. You pays your money and you takes your choice. If I were after handling and comfort I would take the Dart or Edelweiss; if after very high performance with the familiar K-6 feel, I would take the E; if after superlative construction an absolutely top performance, I would get the SH or the SHK.

MURPHY'S THIRD LAW

Due to some unknown law of nature the best soaring weather occurs usually on the rest days of every contest. This is exactly what happened on the second day of the Memorial Day weekend in 1965. Since I had flown only 165 miles the day before and I was just as anxious as ever to try for Diamond Distance, it took me only a few minutes to gather some maps, turn on the barograph, and follow the line of Class II sailplanes scattered in the blue sky between El Mirage and Daggett.

The first part of the flight was almost routine. The L-Spatz quickly climbed to 10,000 feet above the Shadow Mountains, and after a quick glide to Hendale I picked up the next thermal as I did many times before just north of the airport.

Decision Number One came after I left Barstow. The chicken farm-like chatter of the flock of 1-26s radios indicated that they were heading towards Amboy and Ludlow. There were beautiful cumulus clouds toward the direction of Amboy-Essex and also toward Las Vegas. The situation became quite similar to that of the mythological donkey which starved to death be-