

EDWARD MAKULA TALKS...



Photo by George Uveges

7N—such was the competition number which appeared on the brand new Foka Four in which I was to take part, as the only foreigner, in the 33rd U.S. National Soaring Championships. The owner of this Foka, a Mr. Barlow from Utah, had agreed to put the ship at my disposal between June 20th and July 8th, 1966, on the basis of an understanding with Motoimport and Rainco.

The site of the Nationals this time was Reno, Nevada. I say this time because it is a tradition to hold the U.S. Nationals in a different state every year. This is not always convenient for the pilots in consideration of the tremendous distances that have to be negotiated before an appearance on the start line can be made. In order to appear in Reno Schreder drove from the State of Ohio for three and a half days (1860 miles in a straight line). If we add to this that each one of the contestants pays his own expenses it is easy to understand why the participation of 65 pilots leads to some serious reflection.

There were the stories of the simply supernatural flight conditions. How is it possible not to be im-

pressed by lift approaching 36 f.p.s. and continuing all the way up to 20,000 ft.? And strong wave lift to an average of 33,000 ft., and turbulent, but surprisingly strong ridge lift. The only disadvantage was the chronic lack of airfields.

The "manufacturers" of these wonderful conditions are the wild mountains which surround Reno, and the desert. One could only dream about getting to the plains 600 miles away. The heights of the mountain ranges vary from 10,000 to 16,000 ft. Between these ranges spread stone or sandstone deserts, sometimes covered with clusters of hardy bushes or tough grasses. I had occasion to admire the scenery of this desert—and from a low altitude. But lift is there. The only safe landing places, of course, were the airfields. These were an average of 30 miles from each other. The other choices were seldom-seen meadows with undetermined surfaces, dried-out lakes, hard or muddy, and, last, the highway.

Further, landings are made difficult by the strong winds blowing regularly in the afternoon and reaching velocities as high as 60 m.p.h. One could get used to the turbulence, but there was always the problem of securing the glider to prevent it from turning over. Several pilots did not make it and got out of planes which could no longer fly. In fact, gusts turned over gliders that were anchored down at Reno. There was even a broken arm during one of the preventative action. In spite of all this the rest of the pilots kept on flying, ignoring, as I did, the unpleasant consequences of off-field landings.

The altitude above turnpoints was not limited. In fact, this particular paragraph of the regulations did not sound very convincing to me. Identified were not the gliders, but the panels laid out behind hangars which were changed very often. They could be identified from the side and from a distance that increased with altitude, however. I would not want to exaggerate.

LILIENTHAL AWARD TO MAKULA

Just prior to press time word was received from FAI Headquarters in Paris that Edward Makula has been chosen as the recipient of the Lilienthal Medal for 1966. The very first award of the medal, in 1938, was to the Polish pilot Tadeusz Gora (for a goal flight of 557 kilometers). In 1960 the medal was again presented to a Polish pilot (and the only woman ever to win it), Mrs. Palagia Majewska. Makula is being given the medal in recognition of his all-but unparalleled record of championship soaring which includes a fifth, a fourth, a third and a first (at Junin, 1963) in world competition. The official presentation will be made at the FAI General Conference in Chili (Nov. 26-Dec. 3).