

THE 1967 SSA CALENDAR



John W. Blumhagen and David H. H. and Captain Robert de Schmitt of the Air Force Academy with David H. H. are soaring in formation with Peter Pohl in the background. What pilot had added satisfaction in soaring in company when they were young.

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26	27	28	<small>WRITE SSA FOR FREE LIST OF BOOKS ON GLIDING AND SOARING WHICH INCLUDES THE AVAILABLE CHAPTERS OF SSA'S AMERICAN SOARING HANDBOOK.</small>			

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rate, but these panels were awfully small. After a week I learned how to identify them without any difficulty, but before that I lost a lot of time flying to a position vertically above the turnpoint, as I am used to doing, since I did not want to be accused of unfair shortening of distances. The awarding of points was similar to ours, slightly favoring long tasks.

It was decided to change the regulations and not award a title of champion in the Standard Class, thanks to which I found myself competing against the select society of Sisus, Libelles, HP's and so forth. Start times were chosen by the pilot. Starts were made using only 15 towplanes of different types, but this was apparently no handicap as all 65 competing sailplanes were launched to an altitude of 2000 ft. in less than 40 minutes.

The whole contest organization amounted to not quite 10 persons, all of whom were sacrificing their

vacations to help. Among these was the well-known sailplane builder and pilot, Irv Prue. In spite of the small numbers the organization was splendid, without hitches and delays. Results of long tasks were announced on the same day!

* * *

Unfortunately, everything began with a long delay and it was not until the 25th of June that I landed in the capital of Arizona, Phoenix. After an interview with the local press (how the heck did they know?) I finally, at 11:00 p.m., met my crew chief, Mr. Jan Serafin. Actually he was everything, translator, driver, mechanic, helper and, most of all, tremendous enthusiast for soaring. After only five minutes of chatting we were very good friends. It is hard for me to describe him except to say that, without his dedication, my trip to the U.S.A. would have been useless.

There was not much time, however, I had a look at the Foka, the trailer (home construction) and the car. I changed clothes, had one Polish drink, and we were on our way to Reno. These mere 850 miles took us 15 hours. The time difference now grew to nine hours in my favor, because here it was not yet as late as in Warsaw.

This trip was also a test for the Rainco trailer. The results were a revelation, for the trailer took speeds up to 105 m.p.h. without any complaints. During these 15 hours I looked for places to land and, to tell the truth, I did not see any, which fact did not make me feel any more confident. I came to the conclusion that the terrain here is ideal for flying. That landings are also a necessity seems to have been overlooked.

Time was pressing. A few hours sleep and it was already the 26th of June, only two days before the start of the competition. Thus we made haste to Stead AFB since I wanted to see from the air what I had been unable to see from the ground. Unfortunately the Foka, for some unknown reason, had changed its dimensions! The ends of their air brakes protruded about 3/16" and the centers were depressed by an equal amount. It turned out that the ends of the wing spars were too short and it was only by filing on the wing (much to the dismay of the owner) that I was able to triumphantly tighten the main bolt. This work took me about half a day. That the Foka had to be taken apart again (to adjust the cables on the drooping ailerons) I mention only with shame. However, I flew for two hours that day—holding my breath.

The wildness of this area went beyond my imaginings. It is not without cause that this section of the United States is called the Wild West. In any event I found out personally that flying below the height of the mountain peaks is made very exciting by the strong lift that does exist and by the widely spaced but heavy sink. Lift proved to be rare in the valleys and at low altitude above the desert. Lack of lift—and of landing areas—and the strong sink could make even a stone heart beat faster, not to mention mine. I assimilated the first rule, formulated by the local pilots, for flying in this area: Get High and Stay High! Well, in such a case, how do you make long cruising runs? In reality, despite the deep vertical range of lift, the cruising distances are not too long, just long enough to enable you to work between the