

THE EXPLORER

There is a somewhat nebulous limit of altitude to which man can go above the Earth, by whatever means he chooses, without the benefits of pressurization. When Paul Bickle established the current world altitude record of 46,267 ft. on February 25, 1961, he did so with a degree of preparation that permitted him to go to the outside borders of that limit. There has been much talk since, as there was before, of pressurized sailplanes in which even higher altitudes could be achieved, and even reports (from Germany and France) that such aircraft were flying. No really serious attempts at stratospheric flight in sailplanes, however, seem to have been made. And now . . .

Something new in the way of a completely instrumented sailplane was unveiled recently in Elmira, New York, when Kim Schribner took delivery of a new Schweizer 2-32 named *The Explorer*.



Kim Schribner in the Explorer over Chemung County Airport, Elmira, New York. The ship is outfitted for high-altitude research.

The Explorers Club of New York City, which numbers among its members many outstanding personalities who have been associated with exploration in various fields, has created a separate organization, the Explorers Research Corporation. This group will use the new sailplane for investigation of CAT (Clear Air Turbulence) and other high-altitude meteorological phenomena. NASA and a number of other research organizations will cooperate on the project. George Wallace, of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, is president of the Research Corporation.

The 2-32 is the most completely equipped sailplane ever assembled at Schweizer Aircraft Corp. and possibly the most thoroughly outfitted in the world. It contains, in addition to the usual soaring instruments, a direction gyro and electric turn and bank. The elec-

tronics equipment includes the latest 360-channel communication and navigation radio, DME (distance measuring equipment), ILS, glide slope, transponder and a standby Bayside 90-channel radio. Two banks of ni-cad batteries supply the necessary power. A high-altitude, Air Force-type oxygen system, with 15-hours' supply, is backed up with an alternate four-hour-supply system. At a later date provisions will be made for a pressurized suit to be used in flights above 40,000 feet.

Kim Schribner is in charge of the project. He will be assisted by Lawrence "Bud" Holloway. Both are veteran Pan Am Captains. Schribner was very active in soaring just after WW II. He was particularly noted for his aerobatic displays, first in an LK, then in his special, beefed-up 1-23. This ship had water tanks with valves to jettison the water, and water dumping was a part of the aerial display. Kim won the National Aerobatic Championship at Elmira in 1948 and 1949 and retained it in Texas in 1950.



The Explorer has what may well be the most heavily instrumented cockpit of any sailplane ever built. See text for details.