

# 14th NATIONAL SOARING CONTEST!

BY ALEXIS DAWYDOFF

THE season for the 14th National Soaring Contest being in full bloom, five of us die-hards decided to pay a silent tribute to this hibernating though memorable event with a pilgrimage to the hallowed grounds of Harris Hill, Elmira, N. Y.

And so on July 3rd, with Ben Shupack at the wheel of his long suffering Plymouth, which by virtue of dragging around glider trailers and glider enthusiasts earned a life membership in the S.S.A., Gus Rasket, Hans Groenhoff, Mal Schenot and myself embarked on the weavy trail to the capital of motorless flight.

I will not describe here in detail our trip, suffice to say that we encountered the minions of O.P.A., who, after scrutinizing our credentials, gave us their blessings to proceed adding a few cutting remarks when the Plymouth refused to start due to vapor lock. Said one OPA inspector: "I would not have bothered youse guys if I knew that you intend to push that there tin can clear to Elmira." Arriving at Elmira late in the night we rested our weary bones, which began to assume the shape of the automobile seat, at Langwell Hotel.

The next morning a 'phone call from Vic Saudek informed us that he too was in Elmira for ostensibly the same reason, but when we saw him and Ann a suspicion as to the "ostensible reason" slowly crept into our minds.

The sight of Harris Hill on July 4th filled us with black gloom, gray skies copiously shedding rain only added to the general feeling of sadness. Two years ago the air above was filled with swishing sound of graceful wings. We almost could see, over the South East

corner of the field, Emil Lehecka bending the two-place Schweizer in a tight spiral, to the left and above him, Chet Decker in his Minimoa lazily gliding towards cumulus clouds and directly over the hill, Bob Stanley putting the beautiful Yankee-Doodle through its paces. These reminiscences were too much for us, we sat on the bench in front of the administration building and wept bitter tears.

The hangar usually filled with gliders, sailplanes and results of fertile imagination now held two Franklins, an automobile wheel and some dust. Wes Hammond, instructor of the York Central School, Retsof, N. Y., who was spending the summer in Elmira teaching some of the senior boys of Elmira Ground School to fly and Don Chambers in charge of the Elmira Ground School, spent the morning with us. Theirs was the only group doing any flying during the days when the Contest should be going full blast. Noon time found us religiously adhering to the usual custom of having lunch at Mrs. Rhodes', where more tears were spilled over the glories of bygone days. The evening of the 4th, as some of the readers may remember, was always celebrated at the McGrath Lawn Party. Passing the McGrath residence on our way back to town, the Plymouth automatically slowed to a stop in front of it. Like thieves in the night crawling on our "fours" we peered through the sumptuous McGrath hedge at that famous lawn, recalling with watering mouths the hospitable tables which once held a variety of Lucullan dishes.

It was resolved that night that on the morrow the six



Gloom! It must be this article.



The Elmira group: man with glasses, Wes Hammond; man with hat, Don Chambers.