

Soaring

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A REVIEW OF 1937

Now that winter weather has slowed up flying activities and many gliders are in the shop being put in shape for next year's soaring, we find ourselves with a breathing spell in which we can look back and see what has been accomplished this year before turning our attention to plans for the coming months. It has been gratifying to see that we have made very real progress on all fronts.

Early in the year, during the severest part of the winter, we had conclusive evidence that the sport of gliding and soaring is not necessarily confined to the warm weather months. Of course, our California friends who have been blessed with such a wonderful climate cannot get the same credit for initiative for January flying as the Toledo and North Jersey groups. These fellows found that gliding and soaring from take-offs on frozen lakes and rivers was even more sporting than summer activity. They proved that motorless flying can be a year-round sport.

This flying in all seasons of the year has resulted in many more able soaring pilots and helped encourage the regional meets which have done much to spread interest and activity. In the spring, summer and fall we have had meets and contests in such widely scattered localities as Wenatchee, Washington; Empire, Michigan; Bakersfield, California and Elmira, New York. These have varied from informal get-togethers of a few gliders and pilots to our Eighth Annual National Soaring Contest.

This year, our big annual event far exceeded everyone's expectations in the number of pilots and soaring craft entered. It also established a new high in soaring performances despite the worst weather conditions on record. A large contributing factor to the success of the contest was the Harris Hill site with its wonderful facilities, which are soon to be improved even further.

An outstanding feature of the national contest was the

competition between various groups. These showed a healthy sign in the progress of the movement, namely, the consolidation of clubs under organizations of glider councils and associations. Such associations, all affiliated with the Soaring Society of America, help direct the motorless flight activities in the principal centers of activity in the country. On the west coast they are now located at Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle; in the midwest, at Chicago, Detroit and Akron; in the east, at Newark and New York City. In this issue we are listing the active glider clubs in the United States and Canada, many of which are affiliated with one of these central organizations.

For some years, the majority of our pilots have had to content themselves with a few standard makes of utility gliders which, although they are ideal for training, are incapable of record performances. This year we have had not only the importation of the best German sailplanes, but also the introduction of new American designed and built sailplanes. These latter include such fine examples of American ingenuity as the Ross-Stephens high performance sailplane, and the Schweizer all-metal, intermediate sailplane. Several active clubs which have been in existence for several years are either planning to buy ships of this type or are building sailplanes of proven make or their own designs.

As an inducement to owning sailplanes of good performance, we have had this year the establishment of several new soaring sites. As activity has continued to grow at Ellenville, Sleeping Bear, Bakersfield, and Livermore, these sites have begun to take on an air of permanence. They are all sites where slope soaring can be done and as such will always have an important place in the development of the art of soaring flight. Next month we will inaugurate a series of articles describing these soaring sites so that a newcomer may be informed what to expect before flying at one of them.

In the Bureau of Air Commerce statistics in this issue, we see only a small increase in number of licensed gliders, but a really substantial gain in licensed pilots. This is an indication of the cooperation shown us by the Bureau in stationing an Inspector on Harris Hill during the National Contest. A further indication that they have begun to think that motorless flight is growing large enough to deserve attention was their invitation to us to

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