

# Soaring

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## *Soaring for Sport . . .*

GLIDING and soaring is fast gaining ground as a present day sport. However, just as automobiles were once considered an invention of the devil for the reckless speed with which they skimmed over the earth's surface, so gliders and sailplanes have been damned as dangerous contraptions of the air. Unfortunately, the information available to the general public on this subject has been unreliable and sponsored for the most part by those who know little or nothing of the sport of soaring. Newspaper clippings, written by those interested only in the sensational magazine articles, describing the thrills but primarily the dangers of soaring, and hair raising movie "thrillers" showing the most unusual stunting, are a few lurid examples. These innocent offenders have been at work since the inception of the sport and probably will continue to do so. No newspaper reporter is particularly interested in writing an article on a safe, sane, and eventless flight, nor is a moving picture cameraman satisfied with filming this silent, graceful sport as it actually is. The resulting portrayal reveals the sailplane pilot as a daredevil, who is interested only in looping, spinning, and bouncing his plane on the tops of hangars, diving through the tops of haystacks or executing some other equally hair raising stunt. Therefore, when the public begins to realize that the whole subject, like the proverbial question, has two sides, these bits of heterogeneous information will assume the relatively unimportant position which they deserve, and will no longer be taken seriously.

SOARING, as a sport, demands the same basic training and adequate instruction which almost any other sport demands of its devotees. Unfortunately, a few beginners have not realized some of its inherent dangers. As soon as they have achieved a fair altitude and made reasonably good landings, they have secretly considered themselves veteran soaring pilots, ready to attempt anything in air. For instance, the danger of getting into the air some two hundred feet and executing a turn by pulling the nose up and kicking full rudder is obvious to the veteran pilot but too often only an antiquated idea to the novice.

A MASTER of ski jumping, who has frequently made jumps in national competitions of distances of over 100 feet, explained simply that he has accomplished this feat by instruction and practice. Admittedly, the student with two or three hours ski jumping practice, who would attempt a 40 or 50 foot jump, would be committing suicide.

SIMILARLY, to take a side glance at perhaps the most popular organized sport in America—football—we find few serious accidents occurring in games or practice periods where players are properly equipped and adequately supervised. The major football fatalities have taken place in the so-called "sand lot" games where the participants have had little or no training in tackling or resisting impacts.

JUST as new and inexperienced swimmers should not attempt to swim the English Channel and neophyte sailors should not start off to cross the Atlantic Ocean, so novice sailplane enthusiasts should proceed slowly, step by step, in a complete instruction course on ground and in air before taking undue risks. The enthusiasm, which unusual recklessness indicates, is to be encouraged only along sane and sensible lines which lead to the greatest ultimate safety. In the seven years that the National Soaring Contests have been held at Elmira, New York, with as many as 35 sailplanes and as many as 100 pilots participating, there has *never* been a fatal accident. This record, achieved by the leaders and experts of the field, strengthens the claim that the sport, like any other, is not essentially dangerous when properly supervised, and entered into in a spirit of cooperative sanity.