

Soaring

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Sailing and Soaring....

NEARLY all of us interested in the development of motorless flight have at some time or other been asked the question "What good is soaring?" Often this is asked in a sceptical tone of voice which the devotee finds annoying and he is apt to make a curt rejoinder such as "Well, what good is skiing?" Although it is far better to swallow one's impatience and briefly outline the good features as well as practical advantages of gliding and soaring, a more apt reply would be the question, "What good is sailing?"

SAILING can more nearly be compared to soaring than any other sport for one can truly say that soaring is the sailing of the air. In soaring we also utilize lateral winds to help us on our way, as well as vertical winds to keep us aloft. Those who follow the sea in sailing should be among the first to take to the air in soaring, as so many of the stimulating elements that make sailing attractive are found in gliding and soaring intensified to a greater degree.

AS a sport sailing ranks high and will always have many followers. It encourages healthy outdoor activity and promotes such admirable qualities as quick thinking, obedience to orders, self reliance, and a fine coordination of the mind, eye, and hand. All this, and more, can be said for soaring. In that the soaring pilot must use his skill in interpreting and using the air currents to keep him afloat as well as on his way, while the sailing skipper's worries are chiefly two-dimensional, his mental and physical coordination must be of a higher order. The successful sailor must understand the fundamentals of meteorology; the successful soaring pilot must be something of a meteorologist.

SAILING, which is a very old avocation, is taught to naval cadets entering on a maritime career in motored vessels as a proper preliminary schooling in the handling of a boat. Soaring, which is a very new pursuit, is just beginning to be taught as the preliminary stage to those whose profession is the piloting of powered aircraft. Its importance in teaching safe flying technique, as well as a thorough understanding of atmospheric changes and their effect on aircraft, can hardly be over-emphasized.

JUST as the design of early sailing ships and recent sailing yachts have determined and influenced the designs of steamships, so have the designs of early gliders and recent sailplanes determined and influenced airplane design. Robert Fulton's steamship was nothing more than a sailing vessel with a steam engine and water propellers added, and the Wright brothers' first airplane was one of their biplane gliders with an engine and air propellers. It is probable that the hull design of the new yacht "Ranger" being built to defend the America's Cup will leave its mark on future ship construction and that the latest high performance sailplanes competing at Elmira this summer will influence the design of future high speed airplanes.

IN comparing the two activities the sceptic can point out that sailing is used for transportation as well as sport, while soaring can hardly be used for anything but a sport. In reply one can say that as the sailing vessel has been almost completely displaced for commerce by the steamship, so the powered aircraft will always remain supreme in aerial transportation. But who can say that soaring may not actually develop to the point where it can be used for transportation? With numerous successful goal flights of more than two hundred miles and with the recent group soaring flight around Germany as examples of what can be done now, it is not at all improbable that in the not too distant future in certain parts of the world, large, efficient and speedy sailplanes will be used regularly for transport.

THERE are many amateur, sporting sailors who have been devotees to the sport over a period of many years and derive just as much pleasure from sailing now as they did in their younger days. They say that much of their interest and enthusiasm is due to the fact that sea and air conditions are always changing, that there is always that variety which is said to be the spice of life. Much of the appeal to the sporting soaring pilot lies in this same continual varying of the atmosphere which makes flying conditions on no two days alike. But for the soaring pilot there is that tremendous added appeal in the knowledge that he is still something of a pioneer. There remains a great deal to be learned about this ocean of air we live in before aerial travel and commerce will be as dependable as we would like them to be and much of it will be discovered through soaring flight.