

## Soaring SITES VII

### TORREY PINES MESA

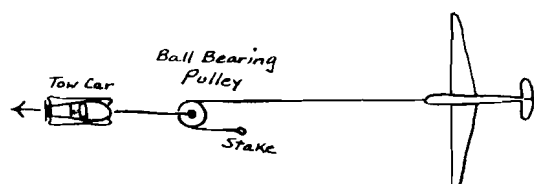
by John Robinson

Located on top of a 300 foot cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, the Torrey Pines Mesa site is just eighteen miles north of San Diego, California. It is also three miles north of La Jolla and one-quarter of a mile west of U. S. Highway No. 101. This glider airport is the center of the soaring activity of the Associated Glider Clubs of Southern California.

The field, which now has runways sufficiently long to permit safe power plane take-off and landings, is located on a plateau at the edge of a vertical cliff facing due west, varying from 300 to 50 feet in height along the edge of the Pacific for a distance of five miles. Over it many hundreds of hours of soaring have been flown in the winds from southwest to northwest. The stretch to Sorrento Creek is what we usually use, although it is possible to jump the gap and soar on to Delmar. This last stretch of 100 foot cliffs is seldom used because of the difficulty of returning by recrossing the gap from a lower altitude.

During the spring and summer the prevailing sea breeze from the west, although not very strong, is sufficient to make soaring possible most of the time. This is due to the fact that wind flowing over a vertical cliff is smooth and solid in front of the bluff—like an inverted waterfall. Thus one can soar here in less wind than he could over a rounded ridge of equal altitude.

One of the best features of the site is the safety for both ships and pilots. Besides the regular airport with



its long runways, there are many other fields near the cliff edge that can be used for landings. Also there is a very good beach nearly the full length of the cliff that can be used for landing if one is so unfortunate as to fly below the edge when the wind dies down. Even during the highest tides, there is a beach wide enough for landing almost under the take-off site. However, the latter, although safe, necessitates several hours' hard work to carry the ship over some rocks to get it out. Therefore, this part is seldom used.

For the past five years, we have accomplished soaring at this site by auto towing off the beach, or shock cord from any field that we were not denied permission to use. We were continuously bothered by high tides, unfriendly farmers, and shock cord failure. The year 1937 saw great improvements over these conditions. First, we developed to a high degree of efficiency the single pulley tow take-off method. (See diagram.) Second, we obtained a five-year renewable lease from the city of San Diego. Now we are continually improving the runways that we have cleared, and hope soon to have shelters erected for the ships.

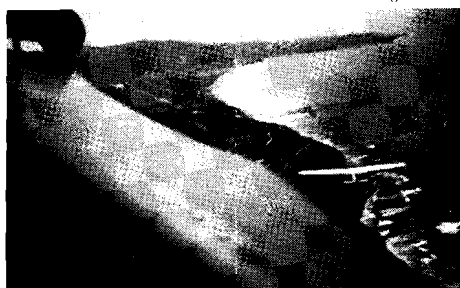
This soaring site is ideal for slope soaring, but distance soaring is quite difficult, although not impossible.

Although we have never tried to set a duration record, on several occasions, Woodie Brown and I have flown for six hours. The longest flight was nine hours, made by Brown in his "Swift" sailplane.

Torrey Pines Mesa Soaring Site, showing runways. John Robinson



From the "Swift" flying south. The author's "Robin" below. Woodbridge Brown



Soaring over the cliffs to the north. John Robinson

