

Soaring

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Have We TURNED the CORNER?

This issue contains articles about two outstanding American flights made within the past six weeks. By substantial margins, our national distance and altitude records have been broken for the first time in four years. As we go to press, word has just reached us that the American distance record is official, and stands at 212.45 miles, as computed by the Geological Survey. Unfortunately, we cannot say the same for the remarkable altitude flight to over 10,000 ft. made in California with an American sailplane, as the pilot flew without benefit of official witnesses or barographs. However, there is little reason to doubt that this performance can be duplicated under proper auspices and that we can then proudly boast a new altitude record, a new "Silver C" pilot, and the meeting of the altitude requirement toward the new highest award of the ISTUS, which, for the time being, we shall call the "Golden C".

Does this mean that we are really going to get somewhere with soaring in this country? We believe that such is the case and that American soaring pilots of several years' experience are beginning to realize, as demonstrated by these two records, that they cannot hope to make outstanding flights by continuing to fly

low performance utilities or secondaries. To do a worthwhile job of scientific research or record breaking, you must have a sailplane capable of altitude and long distance soaring. To those who agree to this statement, but sadly shake their heads at the prohibitive cost of such equipment, we would like to point out the possibilities of the so-called intermediate sailplane, the cost of which averages less than half that of a high performance ship.

For example, the well-known "Wolf" is a type now universally popular all over the world as a training ship. This rugged craft, noted for its simplicity of construction and ease of assembly, is capable of performances far exceeding the Silver C standard. If it could be produced in any quantity in this country, the cost should not be over eight hundred dollars, which is not excessive for an active club of fifteen to twenty members. Home construction, which is the solution until an industry is built up, will reduce this cost considerably.

We confidently expect that the 9th Annual National Soaring Contest, starting the latter part of this month, will bring forth a surprising number of new designs capable of real soaring performances. Past experience abroad indicates the wisdom of our Contest Committee in raising the minimum contest performance requirements to the Silver C standard. It is a real inducement for designers and pilots to raise their individual standards to a point where they will be able to have the satisfaction of doing real thermal soaring.

Now we have the most encouraging side of the whole picture. When those pilots who have had a sufficient background of soaring experience, as well as airplane time, in steep turns, stalls, and spins, come home from two weeks of competitive soaring in their sailplanes at Elmira, they can, with few exceptions, look forward to continuing thermal soaring in their home localities the rest of the summer. This month we have evidence of real flights made in California, Texas, and Long Island—all from auto or winch tows on level ground, starting up on thermals caught at five hundred feet or less. Read the statistics in this issue and see if you can help but arrive at the exciting conclusion that the time is at hand when we can soar on the majority of days almost anywhere in the United States.

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