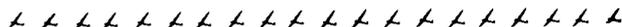


Soaring

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MUCH MORE *than a* SPORT

Recently we had the pleasure of having a visit with Hanna Reitsch, following her return from the National Air Races at Cleveland, where her wonderful aerobatic show did much to open the eyes of many Americans to the remarkable possibilities of motorless flight. During the conversation, which switched from airplanes to autogiros to helicopters to gliders, she turned to a distinguished aircraft manufacturer and said, apropos of some remark about gliding and soaring, "You know, it is very much more than a sport."

Coming from one who is not only the most versatile and outstanding woman pilot of the world but also one of the greatest soaring pilots among men or women, this remark carried real weight. We use it now as we report the slow but steady progress of American motorless aviation to show how very much more there really is to this field than at first appears to the public eye.

For the first time in our history we have just held, simultaneously, three successful gliding and soaring meets and a sailplane exhibition. With regional meets in California and New Jersey and a national contest in Michigan and the show at Cleveland, we have real evidence of healthy growth and an opportunity to analyze some of the benefits that we are now deriving and will in the future experience from this activity.

At the very successful first American Open Soaring Contest at Frankfort, which, following the most successful Elmira contest on record, definitely proved the wisdom of having two national contests, there was a real

opportunity to witness some of the by-products that make motorless flying more than a sport. First of all, there was the cooperative spirit, including a remarkable willingness for considerable physical labor on the part of many to get a few into the air, which is of undoubted value in character building. Anything that will foster such a spirit among our youth is of definite benefit to the nation.

As a result of the flying itself, there were several points to be observed. Several, who were raw amateurs last year, showed up this year like skilled veterans, and displayed qualities of good judgment and self-reliance which they can use to good advantage in all their other future activities. Then, too, the fact of their having developed as qualified pilots and so increased the ranks of American airmen is of national value. In the development of our country, aviation is playing an ever increasingly important part. Good pilots—and we know that soaring pilots make the best airplane pilots—will always be in demand in peacetime flying, as well as the flying for military purposes, which are, unfortunately, receiving so much attention these days.

New sailplane designs are appearing and, as their builders work toward ever greater performances, their efforts, often unknown to them, are having a far reaching effect in helping to develop new airplanes. Many of these designers, now working on a shoestring in their basements, will be the aeronautical engineers of the future.

Last of the recognized practical advantages is the study of meteorology, which becomes second nature to the skilled soaring pilot who, of necessity, has a more fundamental knowledge of air movements than the majority of pilots flying only airplanes will ever have. We naturally turn to the most dramatic example to date, where soaring pilots have experienced and recorded vast atmospheric disturbances as described in the account of the 19th Rhoen in this issue. We know of so much to be learned—so much to be achieved by those of us pioneering in this field, that none of us should ever have any difficulty in convincing the skeptical layman of the undoubted value of soaring, which makes it so much more than a sport.



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