

A Bid FOR RECOGNITION

An Account of the Chicagoland Glider Council's SOARING FORUM

Ideas flew thick and fast in Chicago on the evening of Saturday, February 25, 1939, as leading soaring personalities in the Middle West held an informal caucus in preparation for the Chicagoland Glider Council's *Soaring Forum* to be held the next day. Among those eager to help solve problems facing American motorless flying were Joseph Steinhauser, president; Clemens Luebker, contest manager; and R. F. Blaine, secretary, of the Chicagoland Glider Council, Inc.; Ted Bellak, Stan Corcoran, and J. J. Smiley, Jr., all of the Frankfort School of Soaring, Frankfort, Michigan. Randall Chapman, president of the Detroit Glider Council; Mr. and Mrs. L. D. Montgomery, Elmer Zook, Dallas Wise, and several other Detroiters helped to analyze the problems and to set up a course of action for helping the cause of American Soaring.

Specifically, the reasons for the retarded progress of American Gliding and Soaring were summed up by the group as follows: Everyone of us who knows the many sound and practical values of motorless flying and the supreme thrill of soaring, knows also that, progressive as America is, European countries have literally soared far ahead of us in taking advantage of these values. Fundamentally, the difference between European progress and American progress can be expressed in one word. That word is *recognition*. Recognition first by governmental and educational agencies, and second, by the public. Recognition that takes the form of actual, tangible sponsorship.

"So what?" everyone asked after the trouble was analyzed. "What are we going to do about it?"

Real action has started at the Capitol. The Soaring Society went to bat at a recent hearing in Washington before a congressional sub-committee on military affairs. American soaring was represented by three of its champions, Richard C. duPont, Earl Southree, and Walter Setz. If the cold-fact-finding congressmen listened and queried for an hour and a half instead of the allotted twenty-five minutes, we can justly surmise that when the right people tell the right story, *some* of the right people will hear it and listen well. But that story must be told again and again. How can it be told a thousand times? two thousand times? three thousand times? Here is a way.

Before telling how, let us determine to whom it should be told in order to be most effective.

Of the governmental agencies now formulating working plans to support the Civilian Pilot Training Program, the most logical one to hear our story was agreed to be the Civil Aeronautics Authority. The Authority's plans are still in the formative stages.

"We have a fundamentally sound case for motorless flying as an aid to better pilot training. The Civil Aeronautics Authority should be definitely interested in it, but it will have to be presented right now," said Ted Bellak. "I propose we draw up a resolution in the form of a petition which not only will attest the large

number of friends and supporters of soaring in America, but will make a specific recommendation to the Authority."

Such a resolution-petition was promptly drawn up. It read as follows:

We, the undersigned followers and supporters of soaring, believing that soaring offers an excellent means of preliminary training for power plane pilots as exemplified so outstandingly by Germany, respectfully request that the Civil Aeronautics Authority prove to its members and to the people of the United States the value of such training.

We suggest that an experiment be made with 15 soaring pilots, without power plane experience, allowing them to participate in the power training program recently inaugurated by our government. We believe that the value of soaring training will be proved conclusively by this experiment and that these soaring pilots will be checked out in solo flight with power in at least half the time required by those students without soaring experience.

The work of the caucus was thus completed.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: *The S.S.A. feels that, in order to make such petitions effective, we must be able to answer the question, "How much money, if any, can be saved by training prospective power plane pilots in gliders and sailplanes?" At the present time, we can only cite individual cases. There is the other angle, not mentioned, that soaring pilots make better pilots. However, in view of the action of the Chicagoland Glider Council, we are gathering the necessary data to answer this question with undisputed facts. (See letter following this article.) If the spirit of the Chicagoland Glider Council is contagious, we are sure we can count on the wholehearted support of our members in supplying this information.*]

Early the following morning, the grand ballroom of the Hotel Sherman, Chicago, looked like the "line" on Harris Hill. Stan Corcoran's *Cinema* was set up, South Bend's Franklin followed, and the new and interesting intermediate ship, designed and built by the Neenah, Wisconsin Club, assembled but uncovered, attracted the guests of the *Soaring Forum* to the first session.

Over three hundred then thrilled to the splendid photography and inspiring story of "Champion Airhoppers" by Paramount's Grantland Rice. Following this, the guests milled about the exhibits representing 15 glider clubs in Chicagoland, asking questions and receiving the story of motorless flying.

"Plane Sailing" then took hold of the guests' growing enthusiasm and its fine English scenes and good story led to a question from the floor:

"Why isn't anything like that done in this country?—Fine clubhouses, government appropriations, whole-hearted support?"

In answer to that question, the petition-resolution as drawn up the night before was read. Every guest subscribed whole-heartedly to this resolution and right here the first Western wheel was set in motion to the end