

Soaring

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OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
SOARING SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

EDITORIAL OFFICES: 1909 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE CHICAGOLAND *Glider Port*

On August 19 and 20 the Chicagoland Glider Council will formally dedicate their new glider port. This port, located in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, a few miles south of Chicago and obtained chiefly through the efforts of the Glen Ellyn glider club is the most recent of the group of glider ports established in the country by regional associations. The first was Triangle Field, operated by the Detroit Glider Council. The ports already in operation have been most successful, and there is every reason to believe that the new one in the middle West will be equally so. The plans for the opening ceremonies indicate the intense energy and enthusiasm behind the project, and if even half of it remains after operations commence, Chicago will soon have one of the finest fields in the country.

The significance of this move is far reaching. One of the reasons why the glider boom of 1928 to 1930 died so quickly was that it was too difficult to fly. Of course part of this was caused by the lack of high performance equipment, but it was also due, in part, to the hard labor involved in transporting the ship to the soaring site, setting it up, launching it, going down to the valley, taking it apart, and either going home or repeating the cycle. One by one we have solved these problems. We built good sailplanes, we developed winch and auto-tow launching, and finally we learned the technique of soaring from flat country. All that was left was the problem of finding a convenient place to fly. We could not use airports extensively because there was not room for airplanes and gliders together. Private fields cost too much.

The solution lay in combined action of all pilots and clubs. Where one group could not afford its own field,

six or seven could raise sufficient funds to finance such a project, and do it on a scale that caused no individual or club to be taxed beyond his means. Naturally such an organization cannot be set up over night. There must be a good deal of interest and a fairly large number of active clubs and individuals in any particular locality to make the plan pay its way. However, once a glider port can be established, the soaring pilot's goal is close at hand. He can leave his home or his place of business at a reasonable hour of the day, instead of at dawn, or maybe the night before, and find his ship set up, waiting for him. He can roll it right out onto the line, step in, and take off. On week days he can leave after work and make a few airport flights before dark. When he is through, he can merely push the plane into the hangar and go home.

A short time ago this was a fond dream which seemed a long way from being realized. Maybe a few rich sportsmen could afford their own fields and their own hangars, but not the average working man. He would have to go out among the by-ways and hedges, miles from home, and put in hours of hard labor for every flight. Then came the experiment in Detroit. These same pilots kept and flew their equipment within 20 miles of their homes for less than the average city dweller pays to operate his automobile. Now comes the field at Glen Ellyn as the most recent link in the chain of events which is bringing gliding and soaring within reach of the average person. It goes far towards proving our contention that, once interest has been aroused, and activity has started, private initiative can and will continue the work. It shows that what the government has had to do to support gliding and soaring in foreign countries, we can do for ourselves.

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