

ASSOCIATED GLIDER CLUBS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

ARTICLE IN CONSOLIDATOR GIVES INTERESTING HISTORY OF CLUB

by Jerry Litell

About ten years ago when gliding first had its heyday, one could see gliders at one time or another on every hilltop around San Diego, always surrounded by interested spectators. They were being assembled, adjusted or taken apart and once in a while one of them could be seen in the air. Catapulted off the hilltop they would skim along the canyon sides, closely following the contours to get some lift from the deflected wind but it was usually a losing battle. The flights lasted from a few seconds to a minute or two and ended with a jar, sometimes a rough one.

Then Bowlus introduced the sailplane to San Diego. These ultra-light, highly refined gliders didn't skim along the canyon sides. They soared all day, high over Point Loma and Mount Soledad.

Gliding now became merely a step toward the sailplane. The schools and clubs formed an association: "Associated Glider Clubs of Southern California, Inc." for the purpose of organizing activities and acquiring sailplanes. Things were humming.

Then came the depression. The sailplane factory closed. The glider clubs slept for seven years. Only one loosely organized group kept gliding alive. Led by Dave Robertson who later joined *Consolidated*, they designed and built gliders of their own at school and at home. They had learned that even a primary glider can soar if the ridge is high enough and the wind is right. They also found that at Torrey Pines you could auto-tow the glider up into the up-draft which you could find near the top of the 200-foot cliff. This method required only a car, a driver and a towline, and was infinitely safer than depending upon the perfect teamwork of 6 to 10 men to catapult you over the edge of a 300-foot precipice.

Gradually gliding was revived. When *Consolidated* came to San Diego in 1935 there were three home-made sailplanes flying. Two years ago there were six of these sailplanes flying on windy days at Torrey Pines, on calm days at Camp Kearny, either beaching their partners and ground crew or chasing that elusive will-o'-the-wisp, the "Thermal."

You may have watched their efforts at Camp Kearny and thought that they went to a lot of trouble for their short hops. But if you have seen them at Torrey Pines, soaring on a brisk west wind, floating lightly back and forth, sometimes three, even four at a time you must agree that this kind of flying comes close to natural bird flight. There is no roar of the engine, no propeller blast, no smell of

gas and oil, nor vibration. In fact, more than once the boys have joined a formation of soaring seabirds without breaking it up. What a thrill to be accepted among nature's soarers as one of their own!

A short time ago we had this experience on landing on the beach:

"What's that Officer — we can't fly from this beach? But we have permission, look, here it is."

"Listen, fellows: The law prohibits all driving on the city beaches. If you want to argue, tell it to the judge."

It appeared that some unsympathetic anglers had invoked a city ordinance which had never before been applied to this beach. It looked bad for soaring in San Diego. But a good cause is not killed that easily. We had a real friend in the president of the old "Associated Glider Clubs of Southern California, Inc." He revived the association, and handed it over to our group, lock, stock and barrel. As an incorporated club we could now bargain with the city. A high-minded citizen helped us obtain a lease to a field located about a half-mile back from the highest point of the cliff.

Soaring prevails at Torrey Pines! In the next issue of the *Consolidator* we will take off from our own private airport! Get ready for a thrill, folks! (See page 6 of this issue of SOARING).

FLORIDA SOARING

BOB STANLEY ANSWERS REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Whether or not any information I might give concerning the soarability of Florida weather could be called authoritative, or not, is highly problematical. The Nomad was only soared on two test flights here at Pensacola. However, I have done a lot of powered flying during the last year, and on the basis of what I have observed, I would give the following summary.

"About 90% of the time, thermal soaring is entirely possible and practicable in the state of Florida. The prevailing winds are from the Gulf of Mexico, and are laden with an abundance of moist, tropical air. Winds are variable, mostly the product of convection, and generally not any higher than may be found elsewhere. Almost any day, the familiar cumulus cloud formations so essential to easy thermal soaring make their appearance about nine o'clock. During the summer months, these clouds continue during the night, so that soaring day or night might be possible; the clouds may remain in action for days, forming, dissipating, and reforming over the bayous and marshes.

"The terrain is entirely flat, and forested, in places, with scrub pine. Swamps are fairly numerous, and terribly hazardous if a forced landing were made in the swamp

AGCSC ACTIVITY

Scott Royce, formerly of the University of Michigan Glider Club, and now with Consolidated, has become one of our instructors. He takes the place of Frank Graham, who has received an appointment and expects to leave shortly for Pensacola. Frank, who learned gliding in the "primary days," soared in his rebuilt Bowlus, then rebuilt a "Cub" in which he took his Commercial Pilot's license, is an example of what the knowledge of soaring will add to a pilot's ability and enjoyment of flying. Much of the time he needed for his license he got by thermal-soaring his Cub, sometimes landing at some small ranch where he got out, turned the old prop over and was off again, to hunt more thermals. He got his appointment the hardest way, by taking the flight tests at Long Beach. We all wish him a successful career.

Lieutenant Tennes has also left us for a while. He took his "Baby Albatross" with him on the aircraft carrier "Enterprise" to Hawaii.

Woody Brown isn't a bit discouraged that his record was beaten before it got recognized. He just flies here and there in his R. S.-1, "the sweetest soarer ever flown," preparing to regain it next year. Robinson is conducting experiments with new wing profiles, testing them in flight, and Essery is building a two-place, side by side. My own ship, formerly Woody Brown's "Swift," now a mid-wing with 50 more square feet and spoilers, was just tested by Woody and pronounced o. k.

itself. It is impossible for a person on foot to make headway through the tangled undergrowth, ooze, and slime which form some of the swamp country, and it might take several days for a rescue party to find the person. Yet, if anyone steers clear of the swampy and forested areas, there are ample farms and clearings on which safe landings may be made. No ridges exist for slope soaring, but thermals are vigorous during daylight hours.

"Line squalls are prevalent, and generally quite vigorous, accompanied by high surface velocity. Distances of two hundred miles following the path of a line squall would probably be possible under good conditions. Cumulus clouds frequently build up to thirty thousand feet, though the thunderstorms we have down here are much larger and probably more violent than those around Elmira, and frequently cover an area of thirty miles.

"Cloud streets are the order of the day during spring and summer months, and occasionally during winter months. The warm, moist gulf air is blown over the continental coastline, is heated by the swamps and forests, gives rise of cumulus clouds, and cloud streets extending at least a hundred miles inland, where they lose their identity in the general mass of scattered clouds. It is possible to predict cloud locations for a given wind direction and velocity.

(Continued on page 13)