

Soaring

Published Monthly as the Official Organ
of

THE SOARING SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

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Subscription Rate—\$2.00 per Year

Our Affiliation

To many of our members, the mere mention of the fact that we now have a new working agreement with the National Aeronautic Association, seemingly carries little of importance. However, it is one of the most important steps that the SSA has taken since its inception.

We now have a very definite obligation to the soaring movement. Our society represents the Federation Aeronautique Internationale, the international governing body, and as such, is responsible for the proper handling of all official records pertaining to glider performances in the United States. We are also charged with seeing that all glider contests are carried out in strict conformance to the FAI rules for glider competition and with the responsibility of issuing credentials to official glider observers, timers, and those who qualify for FAI certificates.

To this end, it has been necessary that we establish new rates of membership fees and sanction fees to defray the added expense of carrying out these responsibilities. This, however, does not work a hardship on either the members of the society or those groups which sponsor glider competitions, since all receive a mutual benefit either in receiving free gliding certificates or the assurance that all records established are given proper cognizance nationally and internationally. Requirement of sanction also assures the pilot that all previously announced cash and trophy awards are in escrow prior to the contest and that these monies and prizes will be duly awarded at the close of the contest. It also assures them that meets will be conducted in the best interests of pilots.

It, therefore, behooves every member of the society to lend his support to the cause by keeping his own membership paid up and by soliciting the membership of any person who is interested in or participating in the soaring movement and who does not at present belong to the society.

Our active membership no longer includes membership in the NAA since through our agreement we have taken over the duties previously performed by that organization. However, under the terms of the agreement, all SSA members are considered affiliate members of the NAA and as such, are privileged to participate in their activities to the extent that affiliated members are permitted.

President Barnaby

Once again your directors have seen fit to bestow upon me the presidency of The Soaring Society of America. I am deeply appreciative of the honor and I promise that I will do my best to see that the high traditions and aims of the Society are maintained. My only regret is that my present duties make it impossible for me to devote to this office the time and effort it should have.

Another National Contest has come and gone, leaving behind some notable achievements, a few minor (I'm glad to say) accidents, and the lessons learned from them all.

One thing that impressed itself upon me was that while successful soaring depends to a large extent on equipment, the major secret of success goes right back to the skill, experience, good judgment and planning of the pilot. And this, I believe, is a fine thing. It fosters in each pilot the urge to improve his technique, to learn the possibilities of his particular equipment, and to strive toward making himself able to use them to the utmost.

We had our one crash, without serious consequence, fortunately, resulting from a stall during a low altitude turn into the landing field. Apparently this has to happen every so often to keep fresh in our minds the inescapable fact that heavier-than-air craft derive their support and control from their speed through the air, and when that is insufficient, both are lost, and disaster is almost sure to follow.

There was also a startling demonstration of the fact that under certain conditions, the good old hills of Elmira, which have served us so well for years, can prove a deterrent or at least a mental hazard to thermal soaring. In spite of assurances from the meteorologist that thermal conditions were favorable, ridge soaring was poor, due to lack of wind, and one had faith enough to push out away from the ridge in search of the predicted thermals over the valley, until one by one, utility gliders, winch-launched from the airport below, began drifting by, circling high above the ridge and hundreds of feet above their valley launching point. Truly, it appears that the old adage, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained," might have been written with soaring in mind.

I have left until last what I consider the most important lesson, forcefully brought to our attention by the nearest approach to tragedy during the contest. I refer to the breaking up of a glider in a cloud. I do not know what the official investigation will show as to the details of the failure. In any case, to my mind, that is of secondary importance. The important points are: first, that because of their clean aerodynamic design, soaring planes can be dived to dangerous velocities in very short periods of time; and second, the danger of venturing into clouds where "blind flying" is necessary, without proper instruments, or without the ability to use them.

Since cloud flying seems to be a requisite for maximum performance in soaring, all pilots should prepare for it: (a) by having his soaring plane equipped with adequate blind flying instruments; (b) by learning to use them; (c) by having the soaring plane equipped with some device to limit its diving speed; (d) by wearing a parachute for use when all else fails.