

# STARTING A CLUB

by T. E. Dadson

Although we have done little flying and no soaring at all, we have come up against several problems in getting under way and the solutions may be of interest to other clubs just getting under way.

The only activity in our vicinity (Muskegon, Michigan) up to November of this year was the operation a few years ago of two or three primaries. The meet at Frankfort this year was visited by the four original members of our group and brought us to realize that we had better get going.

Our first problem was to find a ship. Letters were sent to the Detroit and Chicago glider councils, to the S. S. A. and to everybody in the vicinity who was engaged in soaring, including Mr. Ted Bellak, Mr. Stan Corcoran, Mr. R. E. Franklin. Advertisements were run in *SOARING* and *Popular Aviation*. Primaries were available by the dozen at prices ranging from \$25 to \$250. Utilities were indeed scarce. Finally a B-M Cadet II was found and purchased. It appears that there is a distinct need for a lower priced utility. Greenhorns, like ourselves are not in a position to build up kit ships ordinarily and the thought of having to work on a ship for some time before being able to fly is most discouraging and not at all conducive to getting a club started. We don't know the answer to this problem, but it must be solved before gliding and soaring can progress rapidly.

Our second problem was to find a field for training. We snooped around wherever there was flying activity and found a farmer's field from which an unlicensed plane was operating, a small rundown field once used as an airport, an unsued airport owned by Continental Motors. Finally we inquired at the place we least expected to be welcome, at the local county airport. This is a licensed airport used by several privately owned planes, instructors and Pennsylvania Central Airlines and used also for passenger hops by private operators. We were welcomed with open arms. Our activity would attract the crowds and increase the income of the local operators and instructors. It has done just that. On Sundays the cars line up to watch us, although we are doing nothing but simple gliding and ground tow by auto for training. Instead of going home when the last P. C. A. airliner takes off, they stick around until we pack up. The crowds are about twice as large as formerly and the local operators are benefiting. The final surprise came when the P. C. A. traffic manager, whom we believed would consider us only as a nuisance, told us that he wanted to give us some publicity. Here, then is the answer for those clubs having difficulty in getting onto commercial airports. By our example it has been shown that even simple gliding activity, only one glider, will draw the crowds and boost the business of those to whom the airport is their living.

Our third problem was to find an instructor. We contacted the school at Frankfort and would have made arrangements for instruction in our own ship. However, Frankfort was 100 miles away. We finally called the local newspaper and found that they were only too glad

to publish any announcements we had to make. Our first announcement brought a call from a young man who had had a year of glider flying at the University of Michigan. He has proven himself to be entirely capable of completing our gliding instruction, and has been made our Vice-President with full charge of all flights.

Our fourth problem was to find more members to help with the initial expense and to provide enough members so that there would always be at least three people on hand. We simply talked gliding to everyone we met. Prospects were plentiful and we finally arrived at our present group of nine: Four had never flown either glider or plane; one had a year of glider experience; one was a power plane pilot without a ship; another power plane pilot in similar circumstances, with limited commercial license and instrument rating, was thinking of building a glider when we found him; a flying student, after 40 total hours, found airplane flying monotonous; another member had occasionally had the opportunity to "take over the controls" while in the army.

Well, we are not satisfactorily under way. Total outlay per member \$30, monthly dues \$2. We have instigated home projects among the members and now have a very satisfactory release which may be clamped to any car, wing tip skids to really take the hard bumps, our instrument panel has been rebuilt and we are tackling an air-speed indicator and a (mechanical) variometer to be made from speedometer and oil gauge parts. A reel has just been finished to clamp to the bumper of a second car so that the long tow ropes may be handled easily and may be readily cleared off the field.

In one month since acquiring our glider we have one member flying well, another getting along very nicely and the rest just about ready to go from ground tows to their first hop. We have learned to use a motorcycle belonging to one of the members to hold the wing tip when the glider is being returned downwind between ground tows. We are getting a second group under way with a \$25 primary which is to be used for *ground tows only*. It appears very certain that there will be at least one more group organizing next Spring when the Christmas bills are paid up. Two of our own group are getting ready to build their own utility and a third is contemplating building an intermediate sailplane next summer. Our own group is looking forward to building an intermediate sailplane next year. A local operator has offered to airplane tow us any time that we are ready for it. We are all applying for student permits. Our ship is licensed and will be kept licensed. We are organizing a glider "council" to keep glider operations here on a cooperative basis for promotion, safety, and to share in the expense of a combination "winch-tow-and-retrieving" car.

Our location is ideal: the airport has three paved runways of about 2400, 3200, and 4400 feet, the sand dunes along the lake should permit even a beginner at ridge-soaring to fly back and forth over a ten mile stretch, and the flat country back of the dunes is spotted with sand-patches that produce thermals that make this area the "bumpiest" flying spot in Michigan.

At the time of the Frankfort Open Meet we had only an idea and an inspiration, one month ago we had just acquired our Cadet—we now have one group active, a second forming and we certainly do have plans for an active and exciting future. It really can be done, easily, quickly, and financially, quite painlessly.