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WHY SOARING CONTESTS?

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A pilot flying on his home grounds is all too frequently restricted to one type of soaring and thus settles down to a monotonous routine. He soon learns just when to expect the greatest lift with a given wind direction and becomes an expert only at home. If transferred to another type of terrain, he begins his flight training over again so far as flying efficiently under the new condition is concerned. At the home port, other pilots are flying under the same conditions so there is little opportunity for the exchange of ideas and experience of pilots familiar with all conditions of soaring. The equipment and facilities of the home port are often very limited.

At Elmira, N. Y., where the eleven national contests have been held, the equipment and facilities are the best in America. Here free of any fee or red tape, contestants have hangars for their ships and cabins for self and crew members. It is in these quarters that groups gather to hash over the activities of the day and yesterdays. In these small groups, details of operations and flying technique are discussed in the confidence of friendship and are free from the embarrassment of official meetings in the assembly room of the administration building. Much very valuable information is thus gained from widespread sources and varying conditions of flights.

Contest officials go to great expense to provide complete and up to the minute weather reports. For just flying around at home, these are not a necessity. Long cross country flights or attempts for high altitude are more often successful with a word picture of atmospheric conditions expected to be encountered along the way. Blind flying in thunderstorms is a thrill experienced by few pilots and, of course, desired by all. The pilot with a

report from the contest meteorologist attempts these flights with more confidence and chances of success than one without. The launching equipment provided at contests is always the best available, so individuals or clubs by watching the operation and inspecting details of construction are able to avoid "first one" mistakes when building their own equipment.

Likewise, close observance of flight characteristics and construction details is a great help to designer and pilot. Many home built ships have gadgets and pet ideas that are not at first practical for manufacturers to use. While many of these fancy trimmings prove of no practical value, it is only at a contest that they are proven so by comparison of successful ships without them. It is obvious one cannot become familiar with the art of soaring when only primaries or utilities are available for observation. Design contests sponsored by the larger regional and the national contests not only encourage the building of improved ships, but by flight tests and comparison, demonstrate the value of refinements.

Very often a good soaring site is far removed from centers of population and even highways, so that it is only with some detective work that gliding and soaring can be observed locally. A contest on the other hand, is advertised so anyone interested may attend or even idle spectators be amused.

The consistency with which pilots and designers cross the continent to attend the regional and national contests shows that they appreciate the value of these sporting competitions. The national publicity in newspapers and magazines given contests naturally advertises the area in which they are held.