

Soaring

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Progress

The rapid progress in the design and construction of gliders and sailplanes in the last several years cannot go unnoticed. It is encouraging to note that many American designed and built sailplanes have reached, and, in numerous cases surpassed, those of foreign design.

The greatest weakness in this progress has been the failure of the designers to properly stress analyze their ships. This has resulted in structural failures because of which there have been many serious injuries and in some cases fatalities among the pilots.

It is encouraging to note how many of the American designs are now being prepared for commercial production and the manufacturers are wisely obtaining type approvals on their ships. This means that a great mental hazard has been removed from the pilot. With the knowledge that his ship is strong and well built, the pilot may go further and turn in record-breaking performances.

Sometimes it is most difficult to see that the soaring movement is progressing, but when glider factories begin to produce licensable ships, it is not hard to visualize that the near future will see an even greater increase in activity. With the possibility of structural failures practically eliminated by careful calculations and static proof tests, the mortality rate among glider pilots should begin to drop.

There are at least three going concerns producing gliders which either have or will have in the very near future, their ATC on their ships. It is to the interest of all soaring pilots that these factories be encouraged and patronized. This is real progress.

The Annual Meet

Pilots arriving at Elmira for the National Contest were greeted by another big improvement in the facilities provided on Harris Hill.

For many years pilots and crews have carefully stowed their ships on their trailers or staked them down in the woods, thrown a tarpaulin over the ship and hoped that the dew and rain would cause no damage. This year, however, through the efforts of the Chemung County Board of Supervisors, there has been provided a new two-story hangar, 60 ft. by 120 ft.

On the ground level, 20 ships can be easily accommodated set up; while the basement will hold a still larger number stowed on their trailers.

There no longer will be the hustle and bustle of setting up ships prior to or following pilots' meeting. When soaring conditions are right on the ridge, the ships are quickly wheeled out to the starting line and the launching proceeds much more smoothly, since there is no delay waiting for ships and pilots to get prepared.

In addition, there has been provided a large picnic area which will amply accommodate several hundred persons, and which will undoubtedly be the scene of many a steak and hot-dog roast after the day's flying has been finished.

While Harris Hill and vicinity may not provide the best meteorological conditions for record breaking flights, it does provide for the comfort and needs of the pilots on a terrain which is highly competitive.

National Defense

Each year at the time of the National Contest, the question always arises as to where gliding fits into the picture for American aviation.

Last year there were two CAA schools established for the purpose of giving glider training to certain graduates of the College Civilian Pilot Training Program. While this phase of the program was for the most part successful, in that the pilots learned to fly gliders, it is hard to justify the money spent. This did not seem to be the correct place to inject glider training into the training program.

Perhaps one of the most beneficial uses to which a glider training program can be put is that of giving instrument training and advanced meteorology to power pilots with 50 hours or more of power flying. When flying sailplanes, the pilot is entirely dependent upon meteorological conditions for the sustaining flight of his craft. Therefore, he must study the structure of the air and the movements of the air masses. In no other phase of aviation is he so dependent upon the intimate knowledge of the medium in which he is flying.

Long distance and high altitude flights require the use of blind flying instruments, since the lift in cumulus clouds must be utilized in carrying out such flights. With the sailplane constantly circling in the updraft, the pilot not only must be able to maintain control of his craft while flying blind, but he must also do considerable navigating to stay on the course. This requires the use of blind flying instruments under most trying conditions.

It is perhaps in this category that glider training can best serve the needs of the power plane pilot.