

Soaring

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Impressions

That the "Power Fraternity" is taking due cognizance of the new field which soaring has opened is evidenced by the following paragraphs, written by Major Al Williams, famous racing pilot and aviation writer, after he had witnessed the sailplane exhibition given by Shelly Charles at the Miami Air Meet.

"I recently witnessed a most beautiful flight by Shelly Charles, a flight captain of Eastern Air Lines, in a motorless soaring plane. Shelly, regularly engaged in flight schedules between Atlanta and Chicago, had a day off and shipped his disassembled soaring plane down to Miami, followed on E. A. L., and put on such an excellent show that the Duke of Windsor, a spectator at the Miami air maneuvers, requested another—technically a demand—performance.

"Flying in powered planes is interesting. That's the routine method of traveling above the horizon. But gliding and soaring—motorless flying—is the last touch to aerial artistry. Tall, rangy, dark eyes and hair, Shelly Charles looks the part—a master airman.

"Words sometimes help—but then there are things beyond words. Shelly's soaring plane was towed aloft and turned loose. Silently, smoothly the slim-winged giant bird moved across the blue Miami sky. It seemed to be painted there. Lovely beyond words. Groundlings assumed the air was still, because there was little wind. But Shelly knew better. The sun's heat reflected and radiated from the earth, had set vast columns of air moving upward. Up, on up, went that silent bird lifted by these currents. In gliding and soaring parlance they are called 'thermals.'

"Had he so wished, Shelly could have stayed aloft all afternoon. But the crowd had to have action. Shelly then proceeded to play his symphony of flight. Slowly the nose of the giant bird moved downward. The silent craft gathered speed. The shallow dive was transformed into a smooth, perfectly executed loop. Another loop. Then a pause as the artist's fingers seemed to be playing with the

keys. A tailspin was the result of the pause and the playing. Then still another loop.

"Mind you, these maneuvers were performed in a plane that had no more power or engine than your dining room table. Shelly found another rising air current and he smoothly gained altitude again. A few turns around the field—while the silent bird strangely seemed to be holding its altitude. Around and around it went, silently and oh, so smoothly.

"Gently a wing would dip. This meant the beginning of another turn. Here and there upsurging currents rough as the waves on the open sea boosted the long-winged bird, which rode the wave lightly, like a bark.

"Then the landing. There is only one wheel on a soaring plane. It is half hidden in the keel, up toward the forward part of the fuselage. Down in a shallow glide came the bird. On and on it glided, ten times the distance traveled by a power plane after leveling off. Then the single landing wheel touched, kissed the ground, and the beautiful bird came to a stop, slowly dropping one wing on the grass. The flight was over.

"I sat there thinking. Thinking happy thoughts. Thoughts of flight, motorless flight, where nature's deepest secrets, hidden from man for centuries, had been probed and turned to aiding man in his exploration of the aerial ocean above us. I know the touch—the finger touch—which coaxes these secrets and uses them. No roar up forward. No throttle to correct pilot errors or heavy-handed banging of the keys.

"Shelly is one of these airmen artists. He and those who are expert in handling these silent birds remind me of the boy who started from the bottom and never had much money. When he finally earned money (power—horsepower), he knew just how to use it and obtained the greatest and most efficient results. This is the airmanship which marks the control handling of the pilot trained on gliding and soaring planes.

"Did you know that expert flying soaring pilots equip their cockpits with "blind flying" instruments? Well, they do, and when they find the rising current of air at the base of a proper cloud, they go "on the instruments" and float right up the chimney of rising air found in its center. Real airmanship this.

"Soaring is Shelly's hobby. He says that every pilot should be trained on gliding and soaring planes for two reasons. First, it teaches him the vagaries of the air and the requisite delicacy of control. Second, every end of every flight is a forced landing. Psychologically and technically such landings are good practice."

—World-Telegram.



Front Cover

The glider in the foreground is the Aero Industries Technical Institute Sailplane which won the design competition and the *Aviation* magazine trophy at last year's contest.

In the background is John Robinson, the present national soaring champion, standing beside his sailplane, "Zanonia."

This photo is the contribution of Homer Jensen.