

Soaring

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Henry N. Wightman

The soaring movement has suffered a severe loss in the death of Henry Wightman, former general manager of The Soaring Society of America, and one of the nation's outstanding pilots. He died in his sleep Sunday, June 15, at his home in Berwyn, Maryland, probably from a heart attack, although he had seemingly been in the best of health.

Henry, or "Hank," as he was known to his numerous friends and associates, was graduated from the University of Michigan in 1938, with a degree in Aeronautical Engineering and was employed at the Engineering Research Corporation, Riverdale, Maryland. While a student at Michigan, Henry was one of the most active members of that university's glider club. Having learned to fly a glider prior to entering college, he was made an instructor in the U. of M. Club while still a freshman. Henry served ably in this capacity throughout his college career and in his senior year, was elected as president of the club.

It was during his college career while competing in the 1936 National Soaring Contest that he demonstrated his skill as a pilot, by flying a utility glider from Elmira to Middletown, N. Y., a distance of 135 miles. This record for distance in a utility glider still stands. In 1936 and 1937, Henry captured the New Jersey State Soaring Championship and he was very active in soaring circles in New Jersey, especially in and about his home city, Montclair.

During the year 1939, as general manager of the Soaring Society, he piloted the Society through one of its most trying times, handling its affairs and publishing its journal "Soaring" in a creditable manner. For a short time after leaving the services of the Society, he was employed by the CAA and assisted in compiling the Airworthiness Requirements for Gliders, Manual 05.

Henry's enthusiasm for flying extended beyond the soaring field. He held a private pilot license for power planes and he was a graduate of the Casey Jones School

of Aeronautics, Master Mechanic Course, and held a CAA Airplane and Engine Mechanic License.

His death will be mourned throughout the soaring fraternity for a long time to come, and to his family, we all extend our most sincere sympathies.



Another Contest

Once more the time of the Annual National Contest has rolled around—the twelfth to be held in this country. Each year has shown definite advances in the technique and art of soaring flight and we are confident that this year will be no exception.

This year's contest will be of particular interest because the great amount of publicity given to gliding in recent months has focussed the public eye on this subject as never before. The old questions over which we have argued with the non-glider-minded have again become subjects of active debate. So-called experts who scoffed at the glider pilot training program maintained over the past years in Germany and even doubted its existence, are beginning to wonder if they have been wrong. In the face of Germany's successes in the air and its accomplishment of things by use of air power which these "experts" had agreed could not be done, makes it difficult for them to give their customary retort of "So what?" to the statements about Germany's methods. These methods are undergoing the supreme test, and so far they have done pretty well. Statements by officials that "We have tried this and that, and found them to be of little or no value," are not received so passively and swallowed so gullibly by the general public, when applied to glider training and glider troop transports since the Crete campaign.

It is, of course, quite possible that glider troop transport may not fit into our own defense picture. The fact remains that it is now a proven offensive weapon and one with which our military forces should be thoroughly familiar, and that by really comprehensive and competent tests.

Thanks

For the last year and a half, the affairs of the Society, particularly the editing of "Soaring," have been carried on under somewhat difficult circumstances. When your Secretary and Editor took over his job, he appealed to the membership of the Society to bear with him and lend all possible aid in assisting to make the load easier.

The membership has responded in a most encouraging manner and it is hoped that after the annual meeting on July 5, some more satisfactory plan may be worked out for carrying on this work of the Society. Without a doubt someone else will be carrying on this work since your Secretary and Editor is now an officer in the United States Army and does not have the time to continue to serve in his present capacity.

It is hoped that regardless of what path the affairs of the Society may follow in the future that the splendid support from the membership will be continued.

Many thanks for your splendid cooperation.