

WHO CAN TELL US

About Motorless Flight Training?

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For the second time in America real smoke begins to curl up from the tiny pile of coals which have given warmth to a few shivering motorless fliers in this land of 130 million progressive souls.

Someone is fanning those sparks of enthusiasm. Slowly the commendable work of one or two far-seeing writers finds its way to print and here and there the question arises, "What true value has motorless aircraft?" A newspaper headline screams of military uses of the glider—some most successful—and there are more questions, "How can gliders best be used in a program to make America the 'flyingest' nation in the world?" The questions get specific: "What flight instruction procedure or methods in detail give best results for young students of 14 to 17? What is best for older students—18 to 20? What system gives best results for power-trained students? What are the comparative values of initial dual instruction as against the older solo-from-start methods? What is the safety record or value of each system? What have histories of subsequent power pilot abilities proven as to the value of an initial training in gliders?"

We hear plenty of answers, but on what are they based? Who among us can step forward and answer those who have the desire, the power and the facilities to DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT? Who can answer the agencies established to train and guide youth? Who can tell the Boy Scouts of America how gliding and soaring can fit safely into their fine program? Air Youth of America also wants to know. NYA is looking for an answer. National and international service clubs, eager to follow their avowed purpose of building capable young citizens toward a better, safer America, need to know about gliding. The American Legion tells the nation it stands to encourage youth toward aviation, to make America the world's leader in the air. And now the many state governments look for help in establishing programs in motorless flight training, and the *Congress of the United States wants facts* on American gliding and soaring.

We want each and every man and organization to have uncolored facts regarding the true effectiveness of motorless flying in accomplishing certain ends. We want them to get true logical conclusions, properly presented and evaluated records of the safety or hazards of motorless flight. Who can present them today? Right now, when they are being asked for?

There are always "experts." Unfortunately, many of these will spring up with the "cold dope" and send many fine efforts straight for the ditch. The fact is that America does not know the answers to these questions! How could we possibly know—we've never tried to find out! That bears repeating! *We've never tried to find out!*

Methods, long used by man to reach logical conclusions, involve study and review of historical records, the establishment of a tentative thesis, and then the experi-

ment, the trials, the research, the efforts to prove or disprove by actual experience. America has never followed such a procedure. How can there be any sound conclusions? Does someone say, "How about the Navy experiments with gliders?" or, "The CAA tried gliders in the CPT Program." Wait a minute!

Twelve youngsters plunged into a plan-less course where not even enough certified sailplanes existed. Blindly they were jammed through some flights toward airmen's ratings which themselves were not even properly set up. Could any thinking American justify a conclusion based on such a puny effort? Not much if any more logically conducted was the Navy's little try about six years ago. A few hops, a handful of men, no real plan, no follow-thru, and then a conclusion—"glider training is no good!"

Now look across the water. At Europe's many leading soaring schools as long as eleven years ago those of us who visited found seldom less than fifty to seventy sailplanes—twenty to forty instructors, students by the hundreds during a single season. Those activities really proved something. That kind of an effort really lead to conclusions. We can read simple recorded facts as to what those conclusions were. And we, eleven years later, send a couple of dozen air corps officers through two or three weeks of training on five or six sailplanes under four or five instructors and the "experts" will pop up with the "final answer." It is interesting to consider how deeply into the study of gliding's value the Germans went during their experiments. A doctor of psychology and of philosophy (Dr. Gotthard Gunther, now in United States) was assigned to make a comprehensive study of glider flight training—its value, its potentialities, its effects on subsequent pilot ability, response of students by age groups to glider training, different methods of teaching, different types of equipment, different sites and accommodations—in fact a study which was comprehensive, scholarly, and which produced results worth having. Gunther studied gliding from the inside out as an instructor at the Hornberg as well as from the objective standpoint of an investigator. This assignment lasted over a year! Accurate records of his students were kept as they went on through power training. Then they knew what they were talking about.

In America, a few glider-trained boys have flown on and up through commercial and military aviation but never has an attempt been made to study their progress and find out if their gliding and soaring did them any good—or harm.

The Soaring Society of America has seen the pitiful efforts of an endless number of glider clubs rise on enthusiasm and dwindle away for some reason. Small soaring school efforts have come up, but most have sunk away for want of something.

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