

I Learned to Fly a Glider

by Frederick W. Ruble, Jr.

ONE cool April evening in 1943 my father told me of a glider flight and construction course the University of Denver was offering. He had heard about it through a luncheon-club discussion.

I was interested at once, for I have been very air-minded for at least thirteen of my seventeen years.

I knew nothing of gliding and soaring. I had always thought of flying in terms of fighter planes doing all sorts of maneuvers—not motorless, man made birds, doing slow, silent, spiralling movements through the air!

My father, also being an aviation enthusiast, said that this glider school might lead to the aviation career I desired, and that I might be wise to look into it. The very next day after school I went down to the Glider School shop and talked with Mr. Ardelt, the director. Mr. Ardelt advised me to take a construction course first, as it would familiarize me with the equipment I would fly, and would help me later on if I were to purchase or construct a glider of my own. I enrolled in one of the construction classes soon to start, and began anticipating just what sort of a pilot I would make.

My construction class met every Friday evening and Saturday morning. On Friday nights there were three or four men besides our instructor, who helped. They got us started on projects so that we could finish them by ourselves on Saturday morning. At first I did very little work, but just wandered about the shop examining the ships that were under construction.

There were about fifteen in my class. Like myself, they were mostly high school students, a few being slightly younger. First we studied the plans. Next we were all assigned two or three ribs to make. After this

we all worked together on the assembly of the wings. Then we worked on the fuselage, nacell, etc.

Before long I began to understand the internal structure of gliders, as well as power planes, as there is little difference except in materials used. I next began to wonder just how it would feel to fly. I got in the ships and operated the controls, and imagined that I was flying. I began figuring that it would take a lot of nerve to fly, but I thought maybe I could master it.

We were given one flight for every ten hours we put in on construction. It was after I had earned my sixth flight that Mr. Ardelt told me I could soon begin my long anticipated flying.

In late August Mr. Ardelt made arrangements for me to begin my flying under Mr. Kunz, the flight instructor. There were four of us from my class that met at the glider shop on a particular August morning. We were all enthusiastic and anxious to get started toward the field, which is a two square-mile pasture. We were soon under way, and before long arrived at the field where we were to see glider flying for the first time in our lives. All of the ships were single place, which necessitated all solo instruction with ground tows.

Mr. Kunz made one flight to test the ship and to show us what we were hoping to accomplish eventually. Next we "flipped" to see who would take the first ground tow, and so on down the line. I came out next to last, which suited me fine, as it would give me a chance to watch the procedure of the tows. First, we were told to keep firm pressure on both rudder pedals, and not to use them, but only use the stick to keep our wings level. Our instructor showed us how to maneuver the stick in order

The "Denver Pioneer" Utility with a group of students. Instructor Kunz in the center.

