

... the chicken or the egg?

By "Moe"

SEE that fellow over there? He looks as if he just had a losing encounter with a revolving door. Actually, he has just finished a friendly discussion on the topic "Should glider flying precede powered flight or vice versa?" Many a heated argument has been started whenever an adherent of one school of thought propounded his thesis in the presence of someone from the opposite school. So far, the question has not been resolved. This has been due mainly to the fact that there has not been sufficient experience with large enough groups to arrive at something approaching a scientific analysis. Hence, all discussion has been based on personal conviction and individual experiences which cannot be considered controlled tests. The nearest approach to a large-scale examination of the question can be had from the late army glider pilot training program.

Before proceeding further it would be best to define certain aims and principles so that both sides in the discussion would not be talking at cross purposes. As pointed out by the editor in a recent issue there are two main groups which are interested in motorless flight. One, the large body of youth who are interested in aviation generally, and two, that group of adults who can or cannot already fly, but who would like to soar for sport. Obviously, each of these groups has a different background, outlook, and resources and a common denominator cannot be found which will apply equally well to both groups.

There are three criteria by which we should judge the value and efficacy of glider training vs power training. These are:

- 1—Cost
- 2—Demand on time
- 3—Proficiency levels

The first yardstick is most important to youth with limited resources, and of comparatively no interest to older people with some portion of income to devote to recreation. On this basis gliding will have a definite appeal to youth as the sport lends itself to group participation by which operational costs are kept low. In fact, power flight is practically precluded on this basis. Older

people will not use the cost criterion in making their decision. Perhaps a footnote is needed here. In discussing comparative costs it is important to realize that 10 hours of gliding and 10 hours of power flight are not equal values. For equal time in the air, the glider pilot has vastly greater experience.

The second yardstick of demand on time is one by which glider instruction runs a poor second to power. It is improbable that any large number of adults can or will take time from family, social, and business obligations to devote to the slow process of learning to glide. However, youth has none of these responsibilities and the slowness of method is no handicap. In fact, it is a welcome means of employing spare time.

The third yardstick I have already begun to use in the footnote to the cost criterion. Flights in glider instruction are short and the student receives a maximum amount of approach and landing practice. Every approach demands a different use of judgment due to the tow altitudes and release points. Moreover, a better appreciation of feel and air speed control is attained because of the absence of motor noise and the psychological effect of dependence upon the student's own ability and judgment. Let me offer some evidence to substantiate this position. The recent army glider pilot training program enlisted the aid as instructors of almost everyone with glider experience. Many of these pilots had ridiculously low flying time, yet were capable pilots comparable in proficiency to power pilots with many times their hourly experience. In the school at which I instructed, our instructors acted both as glider instructors and as tow-plane pilots. It was necessary to check out our glider instructors in heavy horsepower army planes. A good number of these men had no power time at all or only a nominal amount. Notwithstanding this, they were checked out as tow-plane pilots (a fairly exacting job) with an average of three hours dual. They never so much as ground-looped a tow-plane in ten months' operation! Our check pilots (both army-trained and no glider enthusiasts) stated categorically that it was easier to check out in heavy horsepower ships glider pilots

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