

# SAFETY AND SAILPLANES

**I**N this, our first postwar season, we begin a new era in American soaring. For the first time the majority of us are flying high performance sailplanes and we *hope* will be setting new standards of performance and safety. The hope for greater safety is largely just a hope, for our new sailplanes are for the most part hot ones and some are not very forgiving.

Many of the pilots flying this summer and entered in this year's contests will be entirely new to contest flying, though many will be seasoned glider pilots having been instructors in one of the Army's basic glider schools and thoroughly familiar with the characteristics of the TG series. But there are many who have been attracted by the sport and the low price of the surplus ships who have not had sufficient experience to fly safely. It has come to our attention that many of these are not requesting or permitting seasoned pilots to check them out in their ships and as a result there have been a number of unfortunate crack-ups.

All of the TG series will spin both intentionally and otherwise. No pilot can afford to remain unaware of the special characteristics of his glider. This year's crack-up record emphasizes that, and it is not all the fault of the gliders.

One of the biggest problems in gliding has been to make people appreciate the skill required in flying gliders. Much of this has been our own fault for in our enthusiasm we have often said that "anyone can fly a glider." And so they can provided they get proper instruction. What constitutes "proper instruction" is difficult to define in a few words that will cover all circumstances. Proper instruction in a Franklin would not be adequate for any of our two-place sailplanes. But the instruction in either case should be sufficient to enable the new pilot to recognize impending trouble and to either avoid it before it happens or correct it before it has developed too far. In our new twoplaces this absolutely demands a check-out in stalls and spins.

At the 18th AAFGTD in Mobile, Alabama, the Vultee BT-13A (450 Wasp Jr.) and the Laister-Kauffmann TG-4A were regarded as equally sensitive airplanes. All pilots checking out in BT-13s were given 10 hours of transition time. Of course a fair amount of this time was spent learning cockpit procedure but once this was assimilated the remaining time (about 5 hours) was consumed in stalls, a spin or two, maneuvers in which the stall is approached, lazy eights, etc., and landings and take-offs. This procedure held for all pilots no matter how much time they had or what they had flown previously. The system paid off in a uniformly high standard of BT-13 pilot and an enviable no-accident record.

If 5 hours was considered necessary to properly learn to fly the ship after cockpit procedure was mastered, then certainly 5 hours could well be considered the minimum check-out time for our faster two-place sailplanes. Of course many will transition in less and some will require more time. But the point is that just one or two hops is not enough for anyone who is unfamiliar with gliders and it is up to us to see that newcomers are properly checked out. It is equally the responsibility of the man who sells a ship and the man who buys to see that the new owner is competent to fly his new sailplane.

T. M. B.

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