Formula for Getting Ahead

THOSE who missed the last meeting missed a lot. They missed hearing Dr. Klemperer tell how the Germans had soared to the astounding altitude of 40,000 feet. According to Dr. Klemperer the Germans had reason to believe they could, in pressurized cockpits, go to 80,000 feet!

This bit of news is staggering, and one wonders why we can't do it here, too.

Has Germany the best soaring conditions in the world? Of course not. The weather is everywhere. Are German pilots any more learned of the mechanics of glider flying than we? No again. Our gliders have sticks and rudder pedals in them just like theirs. Are their sailplanes any better than ours? Probably not; they look just like ours.

There must be a reason why they can go to 40,000 feet and we can't—or don't. The reason is—and we learned this one as a bitter lesson in the war—that they adhere to the principle that if you lay a brick on the ground and put another brick on top of it, and then place another one on top of that one, pretty soon you have a house. It's not how many bricks you have it's the way you stack them up that counts.

The reason we don't get to 40,000 feet, or to 100,000 for that matter, is that we pile our bricks in a big heap.

For example, here's a case in point. How do you find a thermal?—You just blunder along and smack into it. Then you start spiralling. Which direction to turn?—Oh, well, I like left turns since my neck has, since birth, had a kink in the other side. What angle of bank?—Just push 'er over until you get scared. What airspeed? Oh, 50 miles an hour in a nice, round number. It's just exactly half of a hundred, too. That's how I remember.

What a terrific way to fly! No wonder we don't get to 40,000 feet.

Where we miss the boat—and we will probably go on missing the boat—is that we don't put our heads together and figure out just exactly the best way to find a thermal, just which way that first turn should be made, just what angle of bank to assume and just where to peg the airspeed—just exactly which brick should be placed on top of what brick.

What *is* the best way to find a thermal? Don't ask me. But if you ask, a month from now, ten pilots who have pooled their knowledge and interests, I'll bet they can tell you. Things like that can be figured out. Other things, too, can be figured out—like the best angle of bank and airspeed to fly. But this depends on the velocity gradient across the thermal—and who knows what that is? Nobody. Maybe we can find out what the velocity gradient of thermals is by experimenting a little. Maybe it equals the ratio of something to something else. Who knows? This information, and all information really important to advancement of soaring, can be acquired by going out and *looking* for it.

All it takes is a little thinking—and a little elbow grease. As a starter, why don't we *record* the exact nature of our flights, then compare our notes. We're going to learn something if the same thing happens over and over again—and we *know* it. But our trouble is that we let these little gold nuggets of information slip through our fingers, and for that our would-be house turns out to be but a pile of bricks.

Who wants to go to 80,000 feet? Who wants to fly across the whole United States in one hop? Well, come on, let's get at it!

STAN HALL.

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