

SSA INVITED BY GOVERNOR TO ESTABLISH A PERMANENT SITE IN FLORIDA

FOLLOWING an invitation from Gov. Millard Caldwell and State Aviation Director W. C. Lazarus, suggesting Central Florida as national headquarters cite for the Soaring Society of America, Sanford Municipal Airport returned to municipal ownership by the U. S. Navy, yesterday offered its \$5 million facilities to the SSA.

The offer was made by R. H. Browning and Harry Robinson who manage and operate the Sanford field under lease from the city.

In a letter to Capt. Ralph S. Barnaby, USN, President of the SSA, of which a copy was sent to Ben Shupack, Vice-President of the organization, who is in charge of glider activities at the Pine Castle Thunderstorm project, Caldwell stated:

"Recently a new world's record for two-place sailplanes was established in the State of Florida when Paul Tuntland reached a height of 22,700 feet above sea level near Orlando, Florida. I present this fact as evidence of the excellent soaring conditions which prevail in our State.

"An invitation is hereby extended to the Soaring Society of America to establish a permanent soaring site in the State of Florida for the purpose of further exploring and enjoying our superior soaring conditions.

"With over 200 airports in the State of Florida, many of which are surplus military fields, I feel sure that excellent facilities can be provided for a permanent soaring base. I have instructed our State Aviation Supervisor, William C. Lazarus, whom many of your members know through his association with the Army Air Forces glider program, to lend every possible assistance to this project if your organization considers this invitation with favor."

Lauding Florida as a national site for glider activities,

Lazarus said many of the early leaders in soaring were Floridians, and the traditions were upheld at the recent Soaring Society annual meet in Elmira when Francis Compton, Eastern Air Lines Captain from Miami, was awarded second place in the national contest.

Following Sanford's offer, Tuntland, Melville Swartzberg and Wally Wiberg, all of the Pine Castle project, visited the Sanford base and pronounced the setup "perfect."

Constructed at an original cost of \$5 million, the field is one of the largest in Florida—1,500 acres with 650 acres of runway and one of the State's largest and safest hangars. Also situated on the field are several large modern buildings, providing housing for visiting pilots.

Robinson suggested that a large auxiliary field, 13 miles from the main base, could be used in the event a national or international meet were scheduled there.

At the Board of Directors meeting on September 13, the offer of the Governor of Florida was presented to the directors by Captain Barnaby. The consensus of opinion was that the offer should most certainly be accepted. Further steps are being taken to complete the arrangements with Gov. Caldwell and Mr. Lazarus.

If this generous offer is accepted by the Soaring Society, as it undoubtedly will, it will be the scene of at least one regional meet each year and possibly a national or international contest in the future. While Florida is somewhat limited as a place for distance flights, this disadvantage is offset by the possibilities of gaining record breaking altitude.

A three-day meet from September 13 to 15 was staged this year by Paul Tuntland, the results of which will be announced in the following issue.



Photos by Emil Lebecka

The Sanford Municipal Airport Offered to the SSA
by the State of Florida