

# GLIDING AND SOARING HAVE MUCH TO OFFER

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In this age of tremendous power, supersonic flight, push-button missiles, global air forces, and atomic warfare, to me it is a pleasant relief to devote my so-called leisure time to a branch of aviation which uses no power plant but gravity and the restless tides of the air—a branch where speed in itself is not too important, and whose only international application and implication lie in the realm of increased scientific knowledge and competitive sport, namely, Soaring.

Here is flying reduced to its fundamentals—clean aerodynamic lines, refined structural design, and to top it off, personal knowledge, experience, and skill.

Let's pause for a moment in this breathless rush in which we live and consider an aircraft which, without a power plant, but carrying a pilot and weighing 500 pounds or more, settles through the air at a sinking speed of less than two feet per second. A full-flown thistle-down or a soap bubble drops that fast! Think of an aircraft so clean in design that the pilot may hold the end of the towline in his hand while being towed 50 miles an hour.

And these craft are by no means frail contraptions. They are designed and tested to load factors of 10 to 15 g, capable of extreme maneuvers and acrobatics, including inverted flight, slow and snap rolls, inside and outside loops. Nor are they hazardous in their performance—subject to the whims and vagaries of the wind—but, like the sailboat, under skilled control, use the forces of the elements to do their bidding.

To paraphrase a saying, "Let's look at the records."

Distance to predesignated goal, 374 miles.

Longest round-trip to a predesignated goal with return to starting point without intermediate landing, 228 miles.

Highest altitude attained above sea level, 33,200 feet.

Highest altitude above release point, 26,500 feet.

Longest straight-line distance flight, 465 miles.

Greatest duration, 50 hours.

Many of us can remember back when the records for powered aircraft were less than these.

Gliding and soaring have much to offer. Gliding is the next logical step for the teen-ager whose aeronautical appetite has been whetted by model airplane activities, and it can also furnish a valuable indication of aptitude in primary flight training. High performance soaring, on the other hand, furnishes a postgraduate study in the art and science of flying, which can improve the technique of the most experienced power-plane pilots.

In addition, it is wonderful sport, and one which is engaged in on international scale. Even the USSR is an active member of the Federation Aeronautique Internationale. Who can say that such intercourse through science and sport does not contribute, in its way, toward world peace and good will?

CAPT. RALPH S. BARNABY.

# SOARING

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