

# WHY TWO-PLACE?

By EUGART YERIAN

The past three summers I have flown ol' "13," my TG3-A, at the Texas contest. (We drew the lucky number at Wichita Falls in '47 and have kept it ever since.) More properly I should have said "we" have flown because every flight has been with a passenger. Last summer at Grand Prairie I overheard some of the boys mumbling, "Why does that guy always fly dual? Why does he come to contests and do THAT?"

The answer is that, to me, two-place glider flying seems the only logical kind, any time, anywhere. Soaring, I think, should be for fun. And how many sports are there you enjoy by yourself? Many years ago Gus Briegleb turned me into an active soaring enthusiast by talking me into joining his two-place club. I've been grateful to him ever since. Last summer I logged about 80 hours of soaring in Memphis. How? By having a carload of friends go with me every time I went to the airport to help roll the ship out of the hangar, dust it off, tow it out to the end of the runway, roll out the towplane, and crank it up, and fly the tow. And why was there always a gang willing to go along? Because on every flight there was a passenger. (A passenger who paid the tow fee, incidentally. We were fortunate in having an operator who furnished a Stearman for tows at \$12 an hour; hangar storage at \$15 per month.) Maybe it was a little inconvenient limiting all flights to one hour in order to accommodate more passengers, but it was fun! Just as a side observation, we kept down the boredom of all-work-and-no-play by picking our days at eight in the morning and thus cut to a minimum the trips with no soaring. We stayed up at will on four out of five expeditions.

How the boys with their single seaters manage to mesmerize a crew into trailing them all over the country, help them set up and tear down, is beyond me. I have a single seater that was brand spankin' new two years ago, and I put the grand total of four hours on it before I gave up the struggle of wheeling watchers into working. This year I didn't even renew the license. Crews to set up and tear down a two-place are available anywhere with flight-time pay-off. Contrary to what some skeptics think, it takes no larger crew to set up a two-place than any of the single seaters I've seen around. Three people are plenty; more is just company.

Many pilots complain there is no fun in taking passengers up only to have them get sick and messy. My answer is that by staying within easy range of the airport I have eliminated this problem entirely. Maybe I have had to open the spoilers in a downdraft a time or two when someone suddenly remembered a promise to be home early, but the only time I've had to furnish a "barf basket" was to a commercial glider pilot graduated by the Army.

Glider pilots can get sick, too, and that brings me to some of the reasons for flying dual in contests. If the passenger is a pilot eager for his chance at the stick he can be a real help when you get to the giving-up point and just have to have a few seconds respite. He can at least hold her straight and level on course and give you a chance to stretch. There is no reason why the passenger has to be the urping, sleepy, dead lead he so often is. If he is a real eager

beaver he will be right in there trying to help you fly. He will argue with you on your approach to every thermal, he will help you pick the next cloud, he will watch every flicker of every instrument on his panel and give you running reports to compare with your own gauges up front (certainly I leave the instruments in the rear cockpit!), he will argue, yell, stamp his feet, beat on the canopy and raise hell generally just to keep things going. The most mild mannered boy in the world is Bill Ordway who flew with me at Wichita Falls, but you should have heard him tear things up and make the air blue when the weather started to flatten out. He was always "heads up" and was plenty sharp at spotting buzzards (another prime duty of the passenger) and made our record-breaking 206 mile goal flight possible by spotting a buzzard as we were approaching to land 40 miles short of Amarillo. Bill was plenty sharp with his flying, too, but like any other pilot, needed an occasional check-up by his passenger. Once after spiraling up through a cloud he became so confused he set off on the wrong course and stuck with it a full two minutes until I took over and hauled him around 90 degrees.

There is nothing like a good passenger for checking on other gliders in a crowded thermal. It is also possible to go on instruments at 500 feet to try to stick with a small thermal if you have a passenger watching for drift from the possible landing spot—I have been saved an ignominious landing several times in this manner. I must repeat, however, that the passenger must be a good one—I remember one two-place pilot having to take two fence posts through the leading edge because he had been relying on help from a sleeper who let him drift. I have had no trouble finding plenty of the right type passengers among my students at Memphis State College. The last two Texas crews were from this group. In every town there is bound to be a college group eager to be good muscle and brain men in a flying team.

Above everything else the job of the passenger on a cross-country is doing all the map fumbling—constantly checking the distance covered, ground speed, distance from airports, proper course, probable duration of flight, distance to goal, drift, possible landing spots as well as checking for birds and other aircraft. Otis Imboden who flew with me last summer was a whiz at keeping up with all these things and it was downright reassuring to hear him say, "That's enough of this one, straighten out on 30." He was reassuring with an assurance that could be disconcerting—such as the time he sat with his belt unbuckled, drinking coffee, while we went up through a cumulus on needle-ball. Needless to say, he learned better quickly. A hole through the canopy bears testimony of his education.

Not the least comfort of the passenger is that nice feeling of having someone to guard the ship and keep the curious and cows at a safe distance, or wrestle the kite around in the wind while you hike off to a telephone. And believe me, in Texas that is a real consideration. I found out the hard way that down there even a paved 5,000 foot runway can be five miles from a living soul, much less a telephone.

There are many factors contributing to the disappearance of glider pilots, but nothing contributes to the mortality rate like romance. If you are getting ready to get serious with that gal you better trade off that single seater for a two-place; and if you have

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