

The SOARING SOCIETY of AMERICA

By E. J. REEVES, Past President S.S.A.

One cannot tell of the Soaring Society of America without mentioning the names of some of those venerable men who organized it. Mr. Warren E. Eaton of Norwich, N. Y., can probably be said to be the 'daddy' of SSA. He together with others, incorporated the Society in 1932. Among the early officers, directors and supporters we find the following names that will be ever famous in American soaring; A. C. Haller, Ralph S. Barnaby, Chas. H. Gale, W. Hawley Bowlus, Emerson Melhose, Arthur L. Lawrence, Richard C. Du Pont, R. E. Franklin, Stan W. Smith, Floyd J. Sweet, Jack O'Meara, Dr. Karl O. Lange, Dr. Wolfgang Klemperer, Donald Hamilton, Lewin Barringer, Al Hastings, and others. Hastings was the first National Soaring Champion in 1930-31, followed by O'Meara in 1932 and Stan Smith in 1933. Then there were those prominent Elmira Business men, Mr. Wm. L. McGrath, Mr. Franklin K. Iszard, Youston Sekella and others who gave invaluable assistance. Two high school kids, always building gliders in their dad's barn, the Schweizer brothers, Paul and Ernie. One could go on and on naming names and each one worthy of an entire story about his romantic part in the early gliding and soaring in America. It is enough to say that SSA was conceived by a brilliant group of sportsmen, business men, scientists and educators.

The Soaring Society of America is the National governing body for motorless flight in America. The National Aeronautics Association is the official representative of the Federation Aeronautique Internationale, which is the International governing body for sporting aviation and they have by agreement given the Soaring Society of America the responsibility of all matters relating to gliding and soaring in America. Under this agreement between the NAA and SSA, our Society has the full and only authority in the matter of granting sanction for soaring contests, the compilation of soaring records, etc. The SSA membership card is the same as a sporting license, entitling the holder to participate in sanctioned contests, free admission to such contests and other rights and privileges. All of the above, plus the Official Journal SOARING comes to a Member of this Society for a fee of only \$5.00 per year. Full membership rights in almost any other similar organization, comes at a figure, generally many times higher. With a total membership of just over one thousand, the Society cannot derive sufficient funds to carry on from this source. Fortunately we receive contributions otherwise which makes possible our operation. It is hoped that a more generous amount will come into our treasury as time goes by, in order that our activities may be expanded.

The SSA is controlled entirely by its members thru a Board of Directors, 17 in number, who are elected for two-year terms. These Directors come from every part of the United States, they select from their number a President and two vice presidents to serve one year. All Officers and directors serve without any compensation whatever. The Society has several permanent committees, appointed by the president also SSA State Governors for all states having any soaring activity. The Board meets generally twice each

year, holding several sessions during the time and at the place of the National Annual Soaring Contests.

The Society publishes bi-monthly an Official Journal SOARING which is one of the few and probably the oldest publication in the world, devoted exclusively to the art, sport and science of motorless flight. There are probably fewer than a dozen people in the United States who have any interest whatever in motorless flight, who are not members of the SSA and thereby subscribers to SOARING. The major portion of the Society's income is devoted to the publication of this Journal. Efforts are continually being made to enlarge and improve the scope of this publication.

The Society through its Records and Contest Committee maintains complete records of all FAI "C" awards in the U. S. and homologates all National Records and compiles and passes on all International Records.

The SSA by most standards is not a large organization—but by any standard it is a sturdy outfit. It has seldom had what is generally termed 'adequate finance' but none the less has carried on in the best traditions and only three years hence, will have come of age—21. Time has been when it seemed all but impossible to continue, but there was always that 'hard Core' of rugged individuals who would come forward with any sacrifice what ever, and see it through to better times. Many are these un-sung heroes of SSA, most of their names are not found in the upper brackets at the finish of a national contest, some are no longer active soaring pilots, some never were, but when the 'chips are down' they can be depended upon.

The SSA is the most democratic sort of organization, it is unique in a way that defies description, one cannot understand it without being part of it and then being part of it cannot tell just what that 'something' is—but one feels it deep inside and it is a good and noble feeling. It is a sort of brotherhood that is different—we know we belong.

The organizers of SSA had sound vision eighteen years ago when they put it in motion, they planned well. Many of them are still active with us, I often wonder if they then envisioned the enduring success this Society was to have.

These men who originally conceived the Society were unselfish to the utmost. They could not possibly have known or foreseen the manner in which they would be venerated and their names revered by the members in years to come.

Successful as they have been in the fields of their chosen profession, in business, finance, industry, the sciences, etc., they will be best and longest remembered and their most lasting impressions on the world in which they lived, will have been their contributions to this Society. It was not the privilege of many of us who are newer members, to have had the acquaintance of those of this group who have gone on, but today we find the memory of these men fresh in our minds. It is as if they were still among us or if gone, only lately so and that we have known them personally.