

UNITED WE FLY

D. C. RYON

President, Rochester Soaring Club, Inc.

A young lad named Jack counted over again his handful of coins that totaled 65 cents and wondered if his old car could make it. So typical for his sixteen years, his only worry was how to get there. Four hours and two flat tires later he arrived at the 1932 National Glider Contest at Elmira, New York.

Fourteen years passed by. During that time Jack made models, read every piece of literature published about his dreams "SOARING" and attended as an avid spectator eleven more National Contests. Only then was he asked if he'd like a ride in a glider. Would he? What had been a fire in his heart all these years became a burning inferno and he returned home determined that he must learn to soar—but how?

The nearest facilities were at Elmira, 106 miles away. His pockets that once jingled with 65 cents were now empty. Jack was married and had two children to consider. Even if a way were found to go to Elmira periodically and enroll in a Commercial School, the cost was prohibitive.

Then he read about the Glider Clubs in England. There, by pooling their resources, a small group of enthusiastic men and women flew for practically nothing by simply forming a cooperative club and sharing expenses. Many can do together what one cannot do alone. Here at last was an answer.

Jack immediately began talking gliding to anyone who would listen. On the way to and from work by bus, day by day, he deliberately picked a seat next to some young person and soon had a conversation about gliders underway. The names and addresses of everyone showing even the slightest interest were carefully recorded.

One of these contacts mentioned a man, let us call him "Bill," who was commuting to Elmira every weekend to take glider lessons. That very night he met Bill and the two men talked practically until daylight. Bill agreed to accelerate his lessons, earn his Private Glider License that fall, and be prepared to instruct by spring. Thus, with an instructor available, all possible effort was put forth making plans for forming a club.

The essence of all the work done was to prepare answers for all possible questions that might arise once the program was publicly announced. Four meetings were planned with painstaking detail including such factors as a method of analyzing the audience, purpose, program and entertainment. A sample constitution was composed based on suggestions supplied by the Soaring Society of America and several copies were made.

Permissions to operate from three local airports was arranged with the managers of each and a complete survey made of all available used gliders, including price and condition.

Local pilots and airplanes were canvassed and tentative agreements made for airplane towing for launching. A local insurance agent furnished information regarding insuring a club for public liability and ground damage for gliders. Banking contracts were investigated with a home bank. Civil Aeronautics regulations were carefully discussed with the C.A.A. Inspector at the Rochester Municipal Airport. A

lawyer friend furnished an outline regarding the procedure involved in incorporating under the Membership Corporation Law of the State of New York. All this data was filed for immediate reference.

In March 1949 a room was reserved in the Rochester Museum for a public meeting—a room that was planned to hold 75 people. The two daily newspapers, the factory house-organs where both men were employed, and the local Sunday paper were furnished pictures and information that was printed.

Post card notices were sent to all the addresses on file. The big night arrived along with rain, sleet and foul weather. After packing in 142 people, the doors were closed. This was a result of thorough advanced planning and a good publicity program.

In order to get a record of the names, addresses, ages, interests, etc. of those attending, each person was asked to fill in a questionnaire. Eighty-two were returned. This alone proved the most valuable single element in the whole program!

In addition to questions of identity, such questions as (1) What C.A.A. Ratings held, (2) What initial investment can you afford, (3) How much can you spend per week, (4) What monthly dues would you consider fair, (5) How far can you travel to fly, and (6) What night do you prefer for meetings? Each question had a choice of three answers, where possible. For example, question No. 2 regarding initial investment had a choice of \$100, \$200, and \$300 of which the person was asked to encircle the one most fitting. Incidentally, the middle answer was the one hoped for in each case. The answers proved even more valuable than anticipated.

April and May practically flew by with meetings held every other week for invited guests only—the names having been picked from the questionnaires. During these meetings a club name was chosen, a place to operate agreed upon, a constitution approved ready to submit to a lawyer for incorporation, costs decided, and most important of all—the purchase of a Schweizer TG-3A glider arranged for \$600. On May 18, 1949, \$800 in cold hard cash was collected and the Rochester Soaring Club became a reality with eight active members.

The cost structure warrants further discussion. It was decided to organize the club in units of ten members per unit in order to simplify financial matters. Each member's initial investment was \$100 and plans were made to provide one glider for each unit, if possible. Current expenses were determined by adding up the estimated cost of insurance, hanger rent, maintenance, depreciation of gliders, and miscellaneous incidentals and the sum divided by 120—the answer being the monthly assessment per member. Since the first year the club was starting from scratch, the monthly dues were doubled and amounted to \$4 per month. It proved very successful.

Another decision was made that might be overlooked by a new club, especially one pressed for money as the R.S.C. was at the beginning. That was to affiliate with the Soaring Society of America. This costs \$5 per member annually and for it each member receives SOARING every other month and all official

(Continued on Page 13)