

an airport available with a ridge not more than one-half mile distant, the ridge can be used for ridge soaring when thermal activity is not present.

An airport near a large body of water is usually devoid of thermal activity, as large lakes and the ocean retard thermal development as far as two to five miles inland.

(3) Will the airport operator permit your sailplane activities? Most airport operators will be glad to give you the opportunity to base your sailplane on their airport. It adds interest for their students and visitors, and gives the operator increased revenue in the sale of food, drinks, cigarettes, etc.

The operator will want you to use good judgment in your operations, and not block the runway too long, nor drop the tow rope from the tow plane near people or parked aircraft. Most of all, he will appreciate your not using to the limit the traffic priority given motorless aircraft. He will get very angry if you land downwind to avoid returning the glider by ground tow to the take-off point. He may have solo students aloft, and a down-wind landing glider, or a non-conventional traffic pattern by the glider, may confuse his student power plane pilots.

(4) How convenient is the soaring site to your home? The sailplane enthusiast is oft confronted with the choice of a nearby airport without hangar, or a more distant one with every requirement. At first an enthusiast usually assembles and disassembles his sailplane at the nearby field, but eventually he finds that the extra distance traveled to the more distant airport is less effort than repeated rigging of the glider.

(5) What about the Municipal Airport? Municipal airports, with heavy airline, military and transient traffic, are not always adaptable to soaring activity. The less traffic, the more chance there is of using municipal facilities.

Small lightplane airports, with grass landing strips are excellent, but the minimum length of the take-off area should be 1500 feet. If it is less than this, it would be wise to make your first tows from a larger, though more remote, airport.

There are many soaring sites in Europe which have been developed for sailplanes only. In this country, we have only four pure "sailplane only" soaring sites where sailplanes are permanently based: Harris Hill at Elmira, N. Y.; The Philadelphia Glider Council's Gliderport in Pennsylvania; Gus Briegleb's Soaring School at El Mirage, Calif.; and Warm Springs Airport near San Francisco, headquarters for No. Cal. Soaring Ass'n.

The Philadelphia Glider Council was unable to find a reasonably satisfactory site for soaring. They made a survey of their area, purchased an abandoned lightplane airport site, built a hangar, and began operations.

Other groups of enthusiasts and organized clubs, if their soaring location is not as good as they desire, could find an interesting activity in the survey and analysis of the practicability of acquiring and developing a superior site for their activities.

The writer has recently changed from a city slicker to a rural resident. Forty acres of the new homestead have just been fenced and put into pasture. As soon as the cows have eaten down the willows, brush, and weeds, we will smooth off the rough spots, chase said cloven-hoofed bovines into a far corner, trundle out the great yellow bird, hitch up the tow plane, and —

F A I AWARDS

By WILLIAM H. COVERDALE

The Federation Aeronautique Internationale, Paris, France, is the governing body of all sporting and civil aviation in the world. They are interested in promoting all flying sport and to that end have set up a system of awards and badges to denote the proficiency of each pilot. The awards are named A Badge, B Badge, C Badge, Silver C Badge, Golden C Badge and last, the Diamond C.

The A and B badges are for beginners and are not usually awarded in the U. S. because they apply to flights made from auto or winch tow and are simple to earn. Every pilot looks forward to his first C flight, however, because this one indicates that a flight has been made which took him above point of release of the glider for five minutes. This means that an actual soaring flight has been performed.

These badges are an indication of pilot ability so they are used also as a requirement before entering a contest. Usually Silver C proficiency or at least the distance requirement of the silver C is required before entering the National Contest. The distance requirement of this badge is a flight of 32 miles alone in your sailplane. Other Silver C requirements are a gain of height of 1000 meters and a flight of at least five hours duration. This last one is the hardest, it seems, and many pilots have tried in vain to last out the last few minutes of this requirement, only to land with a sore and weary frame. There are 133 Silver C pilots in the U. S. at the present time and the list is growing. The Gold C badge is considered quite an honor and you will see why by the stiff requirements. First you have to have your Silver C badge, then fly the long distance of 186½ miles and make an altitude of 9843 feet above your low point. The odd figure comes from the conversion of meters and kilometers to our measurements of miles and feet. There are now 27 Golden C pilots in the U. S. and every one of them is very proud of his accomplishment.

The Diamond C awards have been recently added to give a final award for greater accomplishment. The winning of a diamond gives the wearer the honor of inserting a small diamond in each of three gulls in the Gold C pin. Diamond flight requirements are Distance 310.7 miles, altitude 16,404 feet gained and an additional diamond for a flight to a goal selected in advance of the flight at least 186½ miles away. We have only one pilot, John Robinson who has completed all three requirements and he is the first one in the world that we know of who has completed the three flights required.

It should be pointed out that these are all for amateur accomplishment and are given badges because of the individual skill of the pilot. All pilots wear their badges with honor and are proud of them especially the ones that have little sparklers to go with them. There are some ten or twelve "Legs" on diamond awards in this country and we are sure that more diamond Cs will be completed this year.

To some it seems impossible that a motorless plane could soar to such great heights and for such long distances. It takes real skill and when you see a Soaring pilot wearing his pin, you'll know by the color and the glitter how much skill he has and to what heights he has risen.

you guessed it—a cow-pasture soaring site right in the back yard on the "bottom 40."