# MILITARY GLIDERS OF WORLD WAR II

By HARRY N. PERL

The number of experimental aircraft designed and built for the Army Air Forces (now the U. S. Air Force) would make a sizable if somewhat conglomerate Air Force. All manner of ideas were tried in order that no potential weapon or vehicle be overlooked. Included also in this group were a number of gliders ranging from prone pilot trainers to behemoth cargo transports. Very little has been written about many of these craft, due in part to military security regulations in effect during hostilities. It is the purpose of this article to summarize information and data on some of the more interesting and unusual types which were developed during a most absorbing chapter in the history of motorless flight.

Prior to World War II little recognition or interest was given the suggestion that the glider be considered for possible military service by our Armed Forces. It wasn't until the German invasion of the Lowlands and the island of Crete that we in this country began to formulate plans for a glider fleet.

The Army Air Forces glider program began, significantly, during the Twelfth Annual Soaring Meet at Elmira, N.Y., when at the awards banquet the late General H. H. Arnold announced that the Army was preparing to build a glider force second to none. He later called for the services of the late Major Lewin Barringer to coordinate and develop the program. Unfortunately the program received a serious set-back when Barringer was reported missing while on a military mission. The late Richard C. Dupont was then chosen to carry on, serving as a civilian consultant and coordinator. Once again the program suffered another serious blow when Dupont lost his life in the crash of an experimental cargo glider.

The primary flight training program began modestly due to a lack of equipment and instuctor personnel. As the program started to expand however, new training centers began to appear in various parts of the country and each school had its complement of well-known soaring enthusiasts serving as flight instructors, administrators and service personnel. Many who joined the Armed Forces distinguished themselves with meritorious service and served their country well.

Early training was conducted essentially in Cinema TG-1A's, Schweizer TG-2's (Fig. 1) and others. (Table I). Later Laister-Kaufman TG-4A's began to appear, followed by converted lightplanes, namely, Aeronca TG-5's, (Fig. 2) and Taylorcraft TG-6's This lightplane conversion idea was suggested by Charles Stanton, then head of the CAA. These ships soon replaced almost all other types completely for basic training and proved to be a rugged aircraft. True, by sailplane performance standards, they fared rather poorly, but the Army was interested only in producing strictly glider pilots, not soaring enthusiasts. Another big factor which favored the use of these ships was the fact that the lightplane industry was well equipped to produce these models in quantity and on short notice. Practically all of the tooling and production machinery was already in use producing lightplanes and with little modification it was able to convert to glider manufacturing. It was also proven that the transition for pilots from these types to the larger cargo gliders was smoother due to comparable performance characteristics. As can be imagined, the contrast between cargo ships and sailplanes was considerable. During the early phases of the program winch launching was used; however this method proved inadequate for large scale operations and was abandoned in favor of airplane tow. Night flight training was also included. Of passing interest is the fact that these schools were civilian owned and operated, contracting to the Army Air Forces.

Table I lists the training gliders purchased by the Army. Many of these ships were home-built and were acquired to alleviate a serious shortage of equipment at the onset of the program. As might be suspected many of these craft were soon grounded as they were never designed to withstand the rough hard usage of student flight training. Also listed are some experimental trainers which never got beyond that stage. Unfortunately, very few sailplane manu-

**Table I**
**TRAINING GLIDERS (TG)**

| Model | Name |
|---|---|
| TG-1A | Frankfort |
| TG-2 | Schweizer |
| TG-3A | Schweizer |
| TG-4A | Laister-Kaufman |
| TG-5 | Aeronca |
| TG-6 | Taylorcraft |
| XTG-7 | Orlik |
| TG-8 | Piper |
| XTG-9 | Briegleb |
| XTG-10 | Wichita Eng'g. |
| XTG-11 | Martin Schemp |
| XTG-12 | Bowlus |
| XTG-13 | Briegleb |
| TG-14 | Stieglemier |
| TG-15 | Franklin |
| TG-16 | ABC Sailplane |
| TG-17 | Stevens-Franklin |
| TG-18 | Midwest |
| TG-19 | Schweyer |
| TG-20 | Goeppingen |
| TG-21 | Notre Dame |
| TG-22 | Melhouse |
| TG-23 | Harper-Corcoran |
| TG-24 | Bowlus-Dupont |
| TG-25 | Plover |
| TG-26 | Universal |
| TG-27 | Grunau |
| TG-28 | Haller |
| TG-29 | Volmer |
| TG-30 | Smith Bluebird |
| TG-31 | Aero Industries |
| TG-32 | Pratt-Read |
| XTG-33 | Taylorcraft (TG-6) |

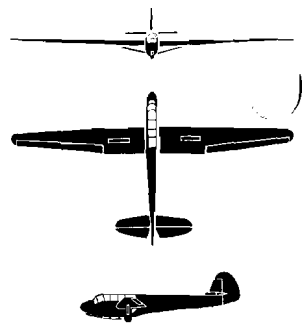

Fig. 1
Schweizer TG-2

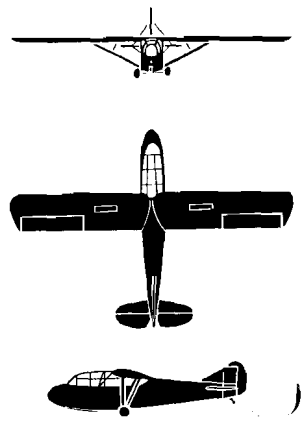

Fig. 2
TG-5