

MEMBERS!

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An Appeal to You by P. H. ENTZ
Chairman of SSA Committee on Membership

Every organization is founded on the premise that there are members, both present and potential. The existence of any organization requires that the membership losses be at least equalled by the inflow of new members. An active organization is by necessity one of expanding membership and progressive activity. Inactivity or decreasing membership—separately or combined—will eventually destroy any organization, no matter what its purpose or ideals.

In the first of these propositions, the matter of sustained or expanding membership, the Soaring Society of America is in an unenviable position. The years immediately following the war showed an increase in membership, a return to the pre-war level, but the spurt was short-lived and a decline set in. It may seem poor psychology to advertise the actual number of members on our rolls, but it becomes necessary if the gravity of the situation is to be understood by the membership. **We now have only 800 members of which several hundred are associate magazine subscribers only.**

Simple arithmetic, after a short trip to your printer to learn present printing costs, will convince you that virtually the entire revenue from the present membership is needed to publish SOARING, leaving practically nothing to conduct the annual activities of the SSA. Much of this activity is now carried on by personal funds spent by the various officers, directors and committeemen in the discharge of their duties.

It becomes apparent that the SSA is far from self-supporting, and that the continuance or expansion of past activity is impossible without further financial support. In fact, if present trends are not checked, the publication of the magazine may be threatened. Where are we going to get the needed funds? Some members talk of getting a subsidy or endowment, but our organization does not seem to command sufficient attention for efforts in this direction to get far. The practical alternatives left to us are to increase the price of membership (which has been the same since 1947) or to increase the number of members. Long discussion of this problem in the Mid-Winter Directors' meeting seemed to indicate that popular choice would be to leave the fee as is and attempt to improve our position by getting more members. If this is to be our course we must realize that an increase in membership is more than desirable—

It Is Mandatory

Next let us consider the second of the propositions above, that an organization to be alive must be one of progressive activity. What are we as members of SSA doing to maintain or improve our organization?

Are we working to interest others in the sport of soaring flight? Are we talking to youth groups and clubs to explain soaring and its many allied

interests? (Have you looked at the lists of pilots competing in each year's contests and been aware of the trend of the average age?) The least each member could do would be to enlist a youngster to replace him when he takes to the shade and a rocking chair.

Are we making an effort to help the officers and committeemen do their jobs or get assistance on many projects already outlined for the advance of the sport? One example of such a project is the ADIZ situation (SOARING Nov.-Dec. '51) which should be handled on a national scale for the benefit of those areas requiring it.

Are we making an effort to see that the SSA director in our area is aware how we are thinking on controversial matters? Are we insisting that this director really actively represent us? Are we active in our choice of directors? (See notice to SSA members from the Secretary in this issue.)

Are we contributing articles, news and information to SOARING magazine, or are we content to be the type member who says, "Boys, we honored you by election to office, now you make our organization an active one and give us SOARING magazine on schedule. I will read the magazine." Too many members appear to consider an active membership as only a subscription to the magazine and the means whereby the FAI gliding badges are made available.

What To Do?

How can you start to help immediately on working for your national society? Get more members! Where are these potential members? If every member of every local soaring group in the country were to join SSA our position would be substantially improved. There are 3,300 licensed glider pilots on the records of CAA today. How many of these in your area have never been invited or urged to join SSA? Have you asked permission to attend meetings of the power pilot groups in your community to talk soaring? Have you talked to the CAP boys, the Air Scouts? For that matter, have you offered your services to form an Air Scout troop? Several hundred names have been lost off SSA rolls in the past few years. Do you know any of these? Have you talked to them about keeping active in the society?

There is an SSA committee on membership. If you have seen no results of its efforts in your area, how about volunteering to serve your area under the guidance of the committee?

Have you acquainted yourself with the answers to the question, "What do I get out of SSA membership?" Fifteen years of SOARING magazine tell a fascinating story of projects started and accomplished on a national scale by a national organization. Benefits of this organization are available to everyone. Our problem now is to preserve and strengthen it by passing its benefits around. Get more members.