

Revival from World War One

The Versailles Treaty included a provision that Germany should be deprived of further development of "the world's most efficient air-power." Inasmuch as the German government had early recognized the "fruitfulness of systematic soaring flight observations," such a provision was far from discouraging to the Germans. Writers soon told the world that the skies over the Rhon Mountains were "filling" with gliders.

Dr. Wolfgang Klemperer, Honorary Vice President of The Soaring Society of America (now with Douglas Aircraft of California) was among the group mentioned above. For instance, in 1920 Dr. Klemperer piloted a glider named "Black Devil" and established a world record of a mile and a half for distance, with duration of two minutes and twenty-two seconds. Also Dr. Klemperer was Germany's first certified "C" soaring pilot.

Upon arrival in the United States, Dr. Klemperer continued his activity in motorless flight and the soaring



Dr. Wolfgang Klemperer

fraternity is indebted to him for his continued contributions to this sport and science. Also active in the early contests held in Germany was a high school boy of fifteen, who built and flew a paper-covered glider—Peter Riedel by name. In later years Mr. Riedel came to this country and participated in the National Contests with

a two-passenger "Kranich" high-performance sailplane.

Spurred on apparently by the activity abroad, the Aeronautical Engineering Society of Massachusetts Institute of Technology was reactivated. Professor, (student at the time) Otto Koppen of the Institute and Edmund Allen designed and built a 72-pound glider which was test-flown by Mr. Allen. Based on the success of their first glider these two enthusiasts proceeded to build a glider weighing 92 pounds.

Again Dr. Klemperer was out in front at the 1921 contests held in Germany and flying his "Blaue Maus" ("Blue Mouse") soared a distance of three miles with duration of thirteen minutes. Another of his "firsts" was made at this time by flying the first goal flight (predetermined destination) to Gersfeld.

Now for the first time a glider pilot from the United States was entered in the soaring contest held at the Wasserkuppe, in Germany. This contestant was Edmund T. Allen of M.I.T. The competition in which Mr. Allen participated is said to have been the turning point in gliding and soaring accomplishments. Heretofore glider flights had been of comparatively short duration but during this contest soaring flights were extended to periods of hours.

Soaring pilots of the late 20's will remember Gus Haller, well-known pilot of the time and author of an article in Georgetown, (Maryland) Preparatory School's "Blue and Gray" captioned "Young America Goes Up." In his article Mr. Haller urged that gliding and soaring be considered for the youth of the United States. Anthony "Tony" Fokker, from a design and with specifications said to have been secured in the United States, built two biplane gliders for the 1923 "Rhon" contest. Mr. Fokker earned at least two "firsts" in that his gliders were of two-passenger capacity; and with his American-made automobile he retrieved gliders by auto-tow, thus com-

peting against the horses and the man-power tows so long in use abroad.

Another writer, Arthur Lawrence, is heard from about this time. Mr. Lawrence prepared a thesis at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, captioned, "The Evolution of Instruction in Motorless Flight and the Technique and Procedures Necessary for Efficiently Directing such Learning." Later much of the theory contained in Mr. Lawrence's paper was applied in the training of glider students on a "mass" basis at the Rhode Island State Airport as well as at national contests.

Then came Charles A. Lindbergh's flight to Paris, France, a terrific "shot in the arm" to aviation. Now for the first time, gliders were produced in quantity. With the usual exceptions most of these primary gliders lacked the aerodynamic qualities of similar gliders produced abroad. Furthermore, much of the gliding done was by power-plane pilots who lacked the patience necessary to acquire a new technique required for gliding.

One of the departures from the aforementioned was the program at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. The glider students and the craft they flew were exceptions. Even the choice of a name for a newly-formed gliding club connoted respect for the science-sport of gliding and soaring. So was born the "Glider Section of the University of Michigan Aeronautical Society!" With such an auspicious beginning there was little room left for doubt as to the outcome of the well-organized group. Names of "U of M" glider pilots appear in every phase of today's aviation activities; their interest in the science-sport has returned to both this country, and the individuals, handsome dividends.

1927 proved to be a frenzied year, summed up in unpleasant figures and lack of tangible results. Consequently, a definite plan was worked up for the national tying together of all interests concerned with the science-sport of gliding and soaring.

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