

## Soaring Expeditions And Sites

The first expeditions to locate gliding and soaring sites in the U.S. are credited to Octave Chanute who established a camp on the shores of Lake Michigan in the vicinity of Benton Harbor; and the Wright Brothers who traveled to Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, on the shore of the Atlantic Ocean. Since those pioneers established the practice of seeking out desirable terrain the science-sport has developed to such a high plane of efficiency that almost any place where space is available for launching gliders may be said to be a "site."

However, the Dr. Wolfgang Klemperer Expedition to Uniontown, Pennsylvania, was the first of the many later-day endeavors to locate a desirable launching site and took place in 1929. Then Dr. Klemperer surveyed the terrain in the vicinity of Norwich, New York, and finally sought a site in the vicinity of Elmira, New York; with the resultant success of the first national contest that was conducted on the chosen site in 1930. Participants in the 1930 and 1931 national contests, both held at Elmira, left with the firm resolution that "back home" must be a site that also could be used.

One of these groups, the Haller-Hawk Sailplane Company, consisting of A. C. Haller, Martin Schempp, Fritz Ackerman and Wolf Hirth were building gliders at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Here an expedition was organized and Martin Schempp made the first thermal soaring flight in the vicinity of Pittsburgh late in 1931. Then in 1932 the "ABC" Gliding Club of Detroit, Michigan, conducted a contest at the Wayne County Airport at Romulus, Michigan.

In September of 1933 the du Pont Soaring Expedition, sponsored by Richard C. du Pont and directed by Arthur L. Lawrence, traveled to Shenandoah National Park to investi-

gate a site, discovered by Colonel Donald Hamilton (U.S. Air Force) at the Big Meadows section of the park over which area Colonel Hamilton and Captain Ralph Barnaby (U.S. Navy Retired) had soared previously in a Franklin glider. After several successful soaring flights, again in a Franklin glider, the du Pont group was convinced that here was not only one soaring site but several. So on to Waynesboro, Virginia, where headquarters were set up. After several days of test soaring flights du Pont finally soared in the Bowlus "Albatross" from Waynesboro to Frederick, Maryland, with an official distance of 121.6 miles. A second expedition was sponsored by the Soaring Society of America in 1934 to Big Meadows, Virginia and the results predicted by Lawrence, in an excellently prepared report which makes instructive reading even today, were more than satisfactory.

Then came the Lewin Barringer Expedition to Mt. Mongola near Ellenville, New York, and a soaring flight of 154.54 miles. In rapid succession expeditions, similar to those above, were organized by individuals and groups in many states; both on level terrain as well as on hills or

mountain tops. An indication of accomplishment from level, or airport, terrain is the soaring flight of Richard Johnson from Odessa, Texas airport to Salina, Kansas, an official distance of 535.169 miles which is the world's record—another "first" for Texas Soaring Association! Thus gliding and soaring has arrived at a point where all that is needed is an airworthy glider with a competent pilot at the controls, who is backed by thorough instruction in soaring techniques and meteorology plus moderate finances in order that his, the pilot's mind may be completely at ease while in free flight.

Experience has proven that most airports devoted to commercial power-plane flying are not suitable for the operation of extensive gliding activities. Of course, for the more advanced soaring pilot such an airport may be used occasionally provided the flow of commercial aircraft is not interfered with. In the case where a group has an established airport devoted exclusively to glider flying, everything else being equal, such a site could be made available

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