

## TEAM FLYING

What is wrong with soaring in this country? This question is heard quite often. The question cannot reflect on the quality or position of the sport here because the U.S.A. has been collecting records like gold. Such progress reflects not only the skill of our pilots but the quality of our sailplanes and the natural conditions so favorable to good flying. No, not *quality* but *quantity*. There are not enough soaring pilots in this country. The problem of getting young new members into our sport has been the topic of numerous editorials in *Soaring* magazine. In the editorial in the September-October issue it was suggested that the basic need is *stimulation*.

The chief stimulus that young people respond to in their recreational activities seems to be that of accomplishment and competition. The popularity of athletics is an illustration of this point. The size of the model industry is evidence of an interest that young people have in aviation and this interest is stimulated in no small part by the nationwide schedule of contests.

Soaring too has its stimuli. The solo is a real achievement and the license a worthwhile goal to be reached. Then there are the soaring badges and contests. Are these sufficient, adequate stimuli? Let us look at the record of our national contests since the war.

The evidence shows that our National meet is getting to be a smaller affair each year. Three pilots flying four high-performance sailplanes have won seven contests. It appears that the contests are not en-

couraging new young pilots to an appreciable extent, but is an annual gathering of the same old group of expert pilots!

For younger people the lack of money is, I believe, the reason they do not compete. Even if a fellow can afford a surplus ship the cost of going way across the USA and back is too much. But the days when a surplus can compete with high-performance ships appears to be ending as our better ships are improved. In the 1953 contest only one surplus ship appeared among the first 10 in the contest. The initial cost of a high-performance ship is usually too high for a young man. Second the transportation costs are high. The retrieves of a flight run in the neighborhood of three times the length of the flight.

Then there is the problem of finding a good crew. Even if you able to pay a crew's expenses, it is not always easy to find a good man to chase you across the countryside during his vacation.

These cost and crew problems can be solved by *team flying*. The scheme I have in mind is this. The contest is set up on the basis of competing ships rather than competing pilots. This will permit 2 or 3 men to compete using one sailplane. The general idea is similar to sailing competitions where the boat, not the captain, competes. The advantages are many. Under such a setup the fellows alternate flying the same ship and serving as crew

when not flying. In place of a financial burden on one, the expenses are shared. Such a system would encourage joint ownership of the more expensive ships capable of winning contests. The same advantages that many fellows now enjoy in joint ownership of surplus ships are even more apparent. This scheme might encourage building of small efficient ships by a few owners thus cutting down the discouragingly long time required for construction when done by one. Also it might permit the active use of high-performance 2-place ships now out of the price range of almost all pilots.

Naturally the crew problem not only ceases to exist but fellow pilots well acquainted with the equipment should make as good a crew as could be found. Further husband-wife combination entries would be encouraged.

Some questions will undoubtedly come up under such a scheme. One question might be as to how a champion could be chosen. I feel that it could be determined as "the pilot of the winning ship making the best flight." The question of "luck" might be raised but as an example of how contest winners compare with those making the best singular performances the comparison in the table of the national champions with those making the longest flight shows that in six of the last seven contests the champion made the longest flight! Another question might be that such a scheme might work to the disadvantage to the individual pilot who has to fly each day. Here I feel that the travelling type of contest recently tried in Texas or any system which makes contesting less exhausting will remedy this inequality and make flying safer.

Outside the U.S.A. few pilots fly sailplanes of their own. The preponderance of government or club-owned craft has naturally led to competitions between clubs or gliders at meets. The success of contests in countries having poor soaring conditions attests to the merits of this form of competition.

Let us give flying a chance . . . Let us give the younger pilots a chance . . . Let us give our sport a chance for more good, safe, high-performance gliders and better *teamwork* amongst soaring enthusiasts.

Year	Place	Number of Contestants	Maximum Distance and Pilot	Champion	Glider
1947	Wichita Falls, Texas	80	325 Robinson	Comey	1-21
1948	Elmira, N.Y.	71	222 MacCready	MacCready	Orlik
1949	Elmira, N.Y.	29	205 MacCready	MacCready	Orlik
1950	Grand Prairie, Texas	59	317 Johnson	Johnson	RJ-5
1951	Elmira, N.Y.	35	360 Johnson	Johnson	RJ-5
1952	Grand Prairie, Texas	28	369 Johnson	Johnson	RJ-5
1953	Elmira, N.Y.	25	228 MacCready	MacCready	1-23D