

SEVEN LADS AND A LASS IN TEXAS SOARING ASSOCIATION'S FIRST YOUTH TRAINING CLASS

by E. J. REEVES

Early this year TSA undertook its first formalized pilot training of an entire class of eight youngsters. Heretofore over a period of several years we had given pilot training to a number of youngsters, mixing them in more or less with the instruction we were giving adult members of our association. It was something of a hit or miss programme in that no certain schedule of training periods were established. But the youngsters involved were the eager kind who had informally attached themselves to our operation and were willing to do any sort of work and for endless hours, just for the possible chance of a bit of pilot instruction.

This kind of enthusiasm is, of course, not to be denied, and it goes without saying that these fellows and girls were, without exception, soloed. Most of them still fly with us and are some of our finest young pilots.

We recognized, of course, that this was doing it the hard way—especially for the kids. Our ambition was, and still is for that matter, to get with it in an orderly, consistent and production-line manner.

Jock Forbes, former British Soaring Champion and former CFI at the Royal Air Force Gliding Instructors School in England, had taken up residence in our community. He, therefore, was ideally suited to the job of leading this flight training group. As with all great soaring men as far as we know, Forbes was ready, willing, and able, to contribute his best efforts to teach a youngster how to fly.

Ably assisting Forbes has been a group of our top pilots, some with experience in instruction in gliders nearly as extensive as Forbes, and all certainly with that same willingness to assist a boy or girl in their desire to know something of the science of flying. Along with the flight instructor group other TSA'ers came forward just as willingly to contribute their efforts in record keeping, launching and other hard but necessary work in connection with a smooth running and efficient pilot training operation.

Our first problem was the procurement of interested trainees. Certainly there was no shortage of this raw ma-

terial, for in our community, as we presume in any community in America, we found, not several, but hundreds of fine youngsters who are more than eager for such an opportunity to gain even a little knowledge of aviation.

Our problem then was the selection of a limited group of youngsters who would, in our opinion, best fit our situation at this time and during this semi-experimental stage of our pilot training programme.

We were most fortunate in this respect. We were of the definite conviction that flight training should, if possible, be carried out in conjunction with a well rounded ground school

were obtained and we were in business.

Because of the sailplanes available, two Schweizer TG-3s and one TG-2, we undertook training by the two-place method. For reasons of economy we did all launchings by power winch, a German built Pfeiffer, operated exclusively by Jock Powell and Phil Easley. Fortunately Forbes in Britain and Europe, and Schwarzenberger in Switzerland, had had extensive experience with this type of launching in student training operations. Our other flight instructors, Wally Wilberg and Del Reed, fell in with the operation with no difficulty whatever.

Standing behind their instructors are six of the young students.



course. Proper ground schooling in basic aviation would be most difficult for us to bring off, this for reasons so obvious they will not be mentioned here. Then it was that we learned of at least one public high school in our midst conducting a class in aviation.

Mr. Charles A. Beckham, a Navy veteran, and instructor in Dallas' Woodrow Wilson High School, had more or less on his own initiative organized a small class (for lack of a larger class room) in basic aeronautical subjects. It was to him we went in quest of trainees. This intelligent young teacher embraced the idea immediately, but subject to the consent of his superiors and the parents of his students, and provided, of course, that his young students were interested. Presented to the students, the proposition carried by exactly 100 per cent. Also, the other permissions

Only two of our beginners had received previous flight instruction, one with an hour and a half and the other with a bit more. None had ever flown in a glider and several had never been up. After thorough instruction in ground handling and cockpit procedures, they were launched on first flights occupying the rear compartment. These launches sent them to heights of 1,000 to 1,500 feet, depending on wind force and direction.

The training schedules were set for the hours 10:00 to 13:00 on each Sunday, that being the only day when the entire training contingent, both student and instructors, could conveniently be on hand. Each student was to fly three consecutive times each Sunday and then no more till the following Sunday. Selection had been based on grades attained in Mr. Beckham's ground school classes, the num-