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The Soaring Society of America, Inc.

Box 71, Elmira, New York



Spiraling

with E. J.

THE CLASSES ARE COMING!!! From the top of my thermal it seems plain indeed that "Coming events cast their shadows before." Class competition in tournament soaring may be just around the corner. And already we hear posed the question "What will be its impact upon the sport—if and when it comes?" A more modest man would probably feel reluctant to theorize in this connection, but not so I.

It is written that "Young men dream dreams and old men see visions" and so it is with the "classes." All around me I see young men going a bit beyond the dream stage—making actually, these dreams come true. Here is Al Backstrom a young engineer joining with two other young fellows, Powell and Easley, in the design and fabrication of their most interesting tailless "Flying Plank"; Art Schultz with something new, interesting and easily built; the Fauvel Bros., with their all-wing AV-36, Slingsby's "Sky-lark" etc., etc. And then, probably the most promising of all, the new Schweizer 1-26. All of these, in my opinion, casting the "class" shadow more prominently than ever before in soaring's history.

For the time being at least, the Schweizer 1-26 seems to be the one ship most closely at hand and the one most likely to lead the class parade. The young men at Schweizer have striven mightily to bring forth an instrument of reasonable price, size and performance. They would seem to have arrived with the 1-26 design. A half-a-hundred may be completed by next soaring season. One might safely guess that a couple dozen of this type might appear in next year's National. If and when this comes about we will then and there be in a fair way to full blown, honest to goodness "class competition" in tournament soaring. And here will be something for SSA's new Contest Committee, Ivans, Bikle, Compton et al., to think about when they evolve suggested contest rules.

Right behind the shadow of clouds of 1-26s, I see these other simplified designs, tailless, conventional, etc. The first time someone runs a wingless by, I'll really curl up like a piece of overdone bacon.

And I see all of this as being nothing but for the good. The sport of tournament soaring will have definitely arrived. How can it be otherwise? Contrary to the opinions of a few, this will in no wise dampen the ardor of the Johnsons, Prues, Parkers, Maxeys, Nelsons et al. Those artists striving for the ultimate in sailplane performance will more than ever be encouraged to press even harder for the ultimate.

Nothing in my opinion gives greater impetus to the soaring movement than our contests. When you multiply by ten the present number of tournament participants, and that is probably a minimum even for the present, you will at the same time increase in the same proportion the perfectionists who will ultimately be satisfied with nothing less than the best. It cannot therefore be feared that class competition in the more simple and less expensive machine can in any way retard the betterment of the breed of both pilot and ship. To the contrary, as pointed out above, the exact reverse is true.

The coming of the classes may very well move soaring into the realm of major sporting activity. We will wait and see—and we shouldn't have to wait too long now.