but impair his judgment and abilities. The obvious answer is not to attempt a maximum glide to a straight in landing but to land when down to an altitude of at least 500 feet above the ground. This gives the pilot time to plan the approach.

Figure eights off the downwind side of the chosen spot are an old standby but they usually tend to revert to steep turns at the last moment and these have all the inherent dangers outlined above. This is reason enough why they are not recommended.

One widely used landing technique that is a wide-open invitation to disaster is the practice of "hot" pilots and lazy pilots to consistently plant the wheel of the glider on the ground in the first 12 inches of the runway. This reduces the distance required to push the ship back to the starting line and, at the same time, demonstrates the pilot's mastery of the landing technique to his admiring friends. If fences, trees or poles obstruct the approach, many pilots see how close they can come to the obstruction and still miss it. This generally works fine until the day the unexpected sink is present, in which case the pilot, if he is lucky, is faced with only six months of repair work. Local areas of sink, a ground wind shear, or impaired judgment and perception due to long periods of time at high altitude can change things drastically. The truly lazy pilot, therefore, will always make a conservative landing away from the end of the runway because he knows the repair work he is saving himself. He is lazy, but he is smart enough to know that the law of averages can only be pushed so far.

Cross country landings demand the utmost in care and skill because of the infinite number of variables involved. Many times these include the difficulty of determining wind direction, the unknown altitude of the ground or the inability to determine whether or not the ground is suitable for landing, i.e., hidden contours, the height of the underbrush or grain or the presence of rocks. The pilot can reduce these variables in several ways. One is constantly to practice judging his altitude over known heights and then check his estimate against his altimeter. Another is to fly a "wind circle" to check his drift. This means that when he has chosen his point on the ground and is down to not less than 800 feet above the terrain, he flies a constant rate-of-turn circle with reference to a fixed point on the ground. Any change in his position at the end of 360 degrees of turn will indicate the direction of drift. With this knowledge he can then set up a proper pattern. The best method of choosing suitable ground on which to land is to stick to prepared or cultivated fields if at all possible. The fact that the ground has been worked over generally means that it cannot be too rough and the season of the year should determine the height of the crops. Nothing will be said here about the course of action to be taken by the pilot when the farmer appears on the scene.

It all adds up to this; well over half of all glider accidents from all causes are due to mistakes made while in the approach and landing phase of the flight. The best way to reduce this number is to adopt a method which gives the greatest degree of control over the variables, and that method is the standard airport approach. Try it some time for peace of mind.