

FATAL ACCIDENT IN TEXAS

Rather wide publicity has been given to a most unfortunate and regrettable accident which occurred at Eagle Mountain Airport, north of Fort Worth, Texas, on June 16th. Mr. Charles Hillburn of Fort Worth lost his life in connection with his experimentation with an aerial device that has been publicized as a "glider accident."

Mr. Hillburn, aged 24, was a well-known aerial exhibitionist and had engaged for a number of years in exhibition parachuting, wing walking, etc. He had recently constructed something in the nature of an "air sled," a device as we understand it, to be expended in each flight. The plan was to maneuver in turns and spirals downward to an altitude where the jumper would release himself from the device, parachuting himself to earth—another version of a "bat-man" act.

Phil Easley, who flew the tow, and others of the Texas Soaring Association group who witnessed the fatal incident, had understood the foregoing described plan of the flight operation was to be followed. It appears, however, that either something unforeseen happened or that Mr. Hillburn became sufficiently satisfied with the maneuverability of the device that he concluded a safe landing could be accomplished.

The tow had carried to 5,500 feet above the field without incident. After release Hillburn was seen to maneuver quite well but at high speed and fast sink. After it became apparent that a landing was to be attempted, observers thought it might have been accomplished except for a try at a full turn at low altitude.

Mr. Hillburn was not a member of the Texas Soaring Association or the Soaring Society of America. He was extremely well liked by all who knew him and we report this incident with regret and deep sympathy with his family and friends.

NOTICE!

Effective immediately, all FAI Award applications should be sent to Ben Shupack, 141 Utterby Road, Malverne, New York.



Spiraling with E. J.

CONTEST DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN . . .

With the summer comes soaring's season of contests. This year again is the time for another of our FAI monitored World Gliding Championships which are held each two years. This world event will be flown from St. Yan, in France, under the organization of the French Aero Club. The great U. S. National Soaring Championships in Texas under the TSA organizational direction comes hard on the heels of the World's.

These two, probably the largest, along with other National and Regional tournaments come at last to be aviation's only remaining sporting events really worthy of the name. These events in motorless flight carried on as they are strictly for their sportive values, truly occupy the world aviation spotlight for the moment at least. Airmen and aviation enthusiasts everywhere are thrilled once again at this one remaining aviation sports event.

And so we of the soaring movement in this country might consider for the time, the true value of contests as such. We might count the costs of time, money and material that go into the making of a major tourney. We must be conscious of the fact that these absorb much of our resources as well as diverting our time and attention away from other things—other things concerned with the promotion and enjoyment of motorless flying. Is it worth it?

There are arguments against these tournament efforts. It has been said, and by quite sincere people, that too much of our substance is turned in this direction; that all of this energy and material could be put to more useful purposes; that an international meeting detracts from and actually hinders the progress of our movement at home. And by the same reasoning, over emphasis is given our U. S. National to the detriment of important state and regionals. And many other good and substantial reasons in opposing these major contest efforts are offered.

Nothing points up the whole soaring spectrum, as does these big well-directed tests of men and machines in a major soaring melee. Whether you like it or not, the keenest of our pilots and crew people, observers et al, live actually from one contest to the other. Most generally it is with the idea of putting a better ship in a contest, that has encouraged our builders and designers on to better equipment. We see right today in this country some of the best efforts in the entire history of soaring by those who would 'better the breed' of high-performance sailplanes.

Ask the man who is building one, what his ambition is for this new 'child.' Invariably his answer will be—to see her go big in the National. And take our designers of the past and ask them of the urge that goaded them on. I dare say the answer will be the same. Or, go of a Sunday to the barns and garages where soaring men are wont to labor long and painfully over a hunk of war-surplus or outdated flying machine, in order that she may look and act like a lady. Query one of these 'metal maulers' or 'wood butchers' as to the why of their efforts to make this 'sow's ear into a silk purse.' The answer will be the same.

Soaring is a jewel with many facets, justification for all of them. None more important however, in my opinion, than its purely sportive phrase. Take it away and you will dim its luster.

Sure and major tournaments are hard work, for the contestants, the organizers and operators. They consume considerable amounts of our time, money and efforts. But they are, I think, here to stay. And what's more and maybe most important, they're fun.—E.J.