

# TWENTY YEARS AGO

With this column starts a new feature in SOARING which will be devoted to the re-publishing of certain selected items from the issues of SOARING of 20 years ago.

SOARING, Volume I, Number 1, was first delivered to SSA members in January 1937. Its editor was the late Lewin B. Barringer, who also served as General Manager of the Society. The first issue was 16 pages with an 8-page insert entitled, "Soaring in America."

This insert covered the history of gliding and soaring in the U.S. with pictures of such early pioneer gliders as those of Octave Chanute, Montgomery and the Wright brothers. It traced the development of gliding from the days of Lilienthal and Pilcher up to 1937, dwelling on the technical development of sailplanes and gliding techniques.

Of interest is a short quote from the editorial page: "At times like these, with European countries looking at one another with knives in their teeth, we find the Glider ever playing a more important part in their respective policies of PREPAREDNESS. Russia, Germany, Italy, England, Japan and France have come to believe that the next war is going to be fought very largely in the air, and that the outcome of the war will largely depend upon the strength of a nation's air force. . . ."

"Any aviator today realizes that in order to learn to fly a modern fighting plane requires more experience than it did to fly the old 'crate' back in 1918, when sixteen-year-old boys were sent into action with only a few hours of solo flying time. . . . Imagine one of our young pilots of the last war being placed in the cockpit of one of our modern air-liners or bombing planes and being asked to fly it! First of all, he would be so bewildered by the maze of blind flying instruments, engine instruments, and levers and buttons for operating landing gear and flaps, that he wouldn't know how to begin. . . ."

National Soaring Records were shown as — Distance 158,299 miles and altitude 6,233 feet. Both records were held by Richard C. duPont. While these appear modest indeed by today's standards when these records stand at 535 miles and 42,000 feet, it is to be remembered that thermal soaring was in its infancy at that time, wave soaring had not been dis-

covered and the machines were rough and crude. We doubt if a single one of the nearly 40 sailplanes in the 1956 Nationals failed to attain that altitude on any day and the distance was common on even out-and-back and circuit flights. So, in twenty years of soaring in America we see some progress.

U. S. Silver "C" pilots were recorded as numbering only eight. Gold and Diamond badges had not been thought of.

The first permanent buildings were just being constructed at Harris Hill.

One feature article in this January 1937 issue dealt with three modern sailplanes being constructed in Germany. The Goppingen #1 utility sailplane "Wolf," the Goppingen #3 High Performance "Minimoo" both by Wolf Hirth, and Wolfgang Hutter's H-17 Utility.

The "Minimoo" had just completed its flight tests and had been granted her German license in August of 1936. It is certain that American soaring pilots read with interest and looked longingly at the photos including construction details of this sleek new sailplane of revolutionary design. It was, perhaps, the world's first really high performance sailplane and certainly one of the most beautiful. A few (one in this country) still remain to delight any pilot who flies them.

The Editor said of the Minimoo, "It is said that in order to break the existing records, the performance of a sailplane counts even more than pilot skill. So without considering piloting ability, we feel that with the excellent climatic conditions found in America, and high performance sailplanes such as these, it will only be a matter of time when all existing international records are brought to the United States."

Besides interesting articles on outstanding soaring flights, the News Notes covered activities of gliding clubs throughout the States.

The Northern California Soaring Society of San Francisco was active flying two sailplanes, a 60-foot Bowlus and one designed by Gil Walters, weighing 325 and 275 pounds respectively. Members named were Ernest Langley, Fred Atherton, James Gough, W. Forbes, Gil Walters, and Ray Stafford. We should like to know if any of these chaps are still around.

The "Y" Flying Club of New Jersey members were working on an

English Kestrel sailplane. Art Schultz of the Detroit Glider Council was to do an article for the Feb. 1937 issue on their gliding activities at Sleeping Bear Dune along Lake Michigan's eastern shore. The Akron Glider Council's work conducting experiments to determine towing forces was reported by H. C. Funk.

Toledo Gliding Club had cracked their only ship, a "Funk," but one Ed Knight was flying about in his "Hawk." The Delaware Soaring Society had been organized by T. G. Bellak and they had purchased a "Waco Primary." William Hawley Bowlus of California was coming along nicely with an all-metal two-placer.

Also announced were the dates of the Eighth Annual National Soaring Contest, June 27-July 12, to be held at Elmira, New York.

Thus went the first issue of SOARING. We have been informed that perhaps no more than a half dozen complete sets of the magazines have been preserved. We know actually of the following: The Society has one complete set, so have J. Shelly Charles, Ben Shupack, Paul Schweizer and E. J. Reeves. Perhaps there are others. We hope so as they have become something of a collector's item.

## SSA DIRECTORS' MID-WINTER MEETING

SSA President Colonel Floyd J. Sweet has indicated a preference for Los Angeles as the meeting place for the Society's Board of Directors' mid-winter meeting. Tentatively he has scheduled this meeting to take place on March 8-9-10 at the IAS Building.

This will be the first time that a Directors' meeting has been scheduled for the West Coast as previous ones have been held in the Mid West or the East Coast. The continued development and increased activity of the Californian soaring movement has, no doubt, influenced President's decision in this instance.

Colonel Sweet has said, "The agenda will probably contain not more than three or four items. However, all Directors are invited to submit items for the agenda."

"The main agenda item will be the reorganization of the Society to provide a sound national structure, aimed at having everyone interested in soaring a Member of the Soaring Society of America, Inc. The corollary to this is the establishment of the position of paid General Manager."