

Cause: Failure to plan the flight before take-off and during the flight.
Comment: None.

16. Bowlus BA-100

The pilot, with 176 glider flights, and 210 hours total time and both airplane SEL and private glider rating, towed off in a Bowlus behind a 220 hp Stearman. This was his first flight in a Bowlus but he had been briefed prior to take-off on the flight characteristics by the pilots who had flown the ship immediately before this flight. Take-off was normal except that the glider appeared somewhat low and could have been in the slipstream of the towplane. When the towplane reached an altitude of about 100 feet and at an airspeed of 62 mph, the pilot was observed to release, continue climbing momentarily, then level off. The glider then entered a shallow dive to an altitude of 30 feet at which time the dive steepened to approximately 30 degrees, ending in contact with the ground. There was no flare out or change in attitude.

The sailplane was demolished and the pilot severely injured. Injuries to the pilot were broken back, both ankles broken and numerous cuts and bruises. Shoulder harness was installed. Had it not been for this, head injuries could have been fatal. Damage to the glider was total, with the fuselage forward of the headrest demolished and the tail boom failed at the rear spar attach fittings.

There were indications of severe rudder flutter (stop to stop) as observed by a witness at the starting point. The pilot reported rudder flutter and no elevator control whatsoever. There were no signs of structural failure in the airframe or control system, other than that caused by the crash.

Cause: When the rudder oscillations started, the pilot released the tow and froze on the controls with the stick full back. The ship stalled into the ground.

Comment: The Bowlus Baby is susceptible to large tolerances in the control system. It is possible that a flutter condition could have been initiated by the comparatively powerful slip stream of the 220 hp Stearman. The writer has personal knowledge of flutter in a Bowlus brought on by large tolerances in the elevator control system, resulting in a severe pitching instability. Bowlus owners are strongly advised to reduce any control system slop to a minimum.

A DIFFERENT BOOK

by PETER M. BOWERS

For several years now I have been accumulating data for a semitechnical book on soaring — sort of a latter-day “Flight Without Power” that will show American glider operation as it is conducted today. I even found a publisher who was interested in it, but there was one catch—the publisher wanted another book to be written first, a “True Adventures in Soaring” sort of thing. I just couldn’t turn out this kind of material in a way that pleased both of us, so everything same to a stop for a while.

Now, however, I am going ahead on the textbook, handbook, or whatever you want to call it. It is not intended to be the ultimate document that will make the reader into an expert soaring pilot. It is intended, rather, to introduce interested strangers to soaring, to show them how to get into it, and to familiarize them with the various things they are going to have to know and do in the process of becoming glider pilots.

Those who are already average glider pilots may derive some benefit from the book because certain chapters may touch on items that so far have been outside the range of their experience. A very serious attempt has been made to include items never before presented in a glider manual. No subject will be discussed on the “expert” level. To do this, the chapter on meteorology, for example, would have to be expanded to a full book.

The “different” aspect of this book lies in the way it is being handled in the preparation stages. Usually, a book gets written and published, and then the author finds out what is wrong with it after the critics work it over. This is a bad thing in the case of a textbook or handbook unless the author is a tip-top and unimpeachable authority on his subject. In order, therefore, to avoid the two common short-comings of leaving out something that should have been included and including details of operation that are true only for specialized local conditions rather than the national average, two steps are being taken to allow the critics to have their chance at the book before it is published. First, the complete Table of Contents is being published at this time so that people who are interested can see whether or not any item in which they are particularly

interested has been left out and can so inform the author. Second, the various chapters will be sent around to the recognized experts in each specialized field for approval. Extra effort of this kind and the cooperation of the potential readers can do much to make this a really desirable document rather than “just another glider book.”

In order to accomplish the first step, readers of SOARING are invited to study the Table of Contents presented below and send their comments, if any, to the author.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1	The Sport of Soaring
Chapter 2	History
Chapter 3	American Gliders
Chapter 4	Glider Sites
Chapter 5	Pilot Requirements
Chapter 6	Familiarization
Chapter 7	Instrumentation
Chapter 8	Auxiliary Equipment
Chapter 9	Instruction Methods
Chapter 10	Control and Communication
Chapter 11	Ground Launching
Chapter 12	Aero Launching
Chapter 13	Meteorology
Chapter 14	Soaring Technique
Chapter 15	Cross Country
Chapter 16	Contests
Chapter 17	Trailers
Chapter 18	Tow Planes and Tow Hooks
Chapter 19	Maintenance
Chapter 20	Storage
Chapter 21	Sources of Gliders and Materials
Chapter 22	Home Building
Chapter 23	Costs
Chapter 24	Ownership
Chapter 25	Paperwork
Chapter 26	Forming a Club
	Appendix

One major problem facing the author right now is the one of picking a suitable title. Most of the really good ones seem to have been used already. Such names as “Flight Without Power” and “Soaring Flight” were among the best. That leaves such unromantic possibilities as “Introduction to Soaring” or “Soaring Handbook.”

Any comments on the subject of the title, contents, or format of the book will be appreciated by the author.

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