

West Words

by BERTHA M. RYAN

One of the most important and enjoyable aspects of soaring is the club activity and one of the most successful club operations in the west is carried on by the Associated Glider Clubs of Southern California (San Diego) at Elsinore and Torrey Pines. Elsinore Airport itself is no longer in operation but flying is done at Skylark Field, a few miles south of Elsinore. The enthusiasm of the San Diego Club in particular has caused a marked increase in activity at the Skylark site. Their training program (See Jan.-Feb. issue of SOARING) is largely responsible for this increase in flying. The Club has banded together as a team in a way that should be an inspiration to all other clubs throughout the country. Every member you speak to is so enthusiastic about what they are accomplishing that they immediately want to tell you all about it. And the story makes very interesting listening. They take in about 8 new members a month and train them up through the solo stage by winch tows at their close-in site - Torrey Pines. An efficient training method is provided with the aid of a manual, as described in the last issue of SOARING. When a student solos and his interest has been raised to a peak, he graduates to the Skylark site where he receives further two-place training, using aero tows. From last June through this February, the club soloed about 25 people who had no previous flying experience.

Part of their success can be attributed to an attempt to keep costs low. Club dues are \$10.00 per year. Initial costs are kept low by using winch tow through the first solo. A charge of \$2.40 per hour is made for the glider so that any major maintenance work may be done professionally and thus the down time of the ships is kept to a minimum. They use their own tow planes (2 Cubs, 85 h.p. and 115 h.p.) for a charge of \$1.20 for the first 1000 feet and 10c for each additional 100 feet. There is no charge for instruction. The volunteer time of the members makes for greater club participation and team spirit and thus all feel the real comradeship of soaring.

The Torrey Pines site at present has no permanent facilities but does

have the big advantage of being only 20 minutes from the center of San Diego. Plans are under way to obtain permission from the city to have Torrey Pines made into a permanent gliderport. When that is established, plans can proceed for facilities and increased training activities. The Skylark site already has adequate facilities and soaring of various types is available there the year around.

Among the big factors in the growth of enthusiasm of the AGCSC is their fine club publication (WIND AND WINGS), a close-in training field, a dependable soaring site and good operating equipment, which have made one of the most successful clubs your reporter has seen since leaving the East.

A production high-performance sailplane that is really coming along is the BG-12A. Gus Briegleb is covering the surface of the prototype BG-12A with fiberglass and it is going to be as "smooth as glass," both literally and figuratively. But perhaps the most interesting part of the story is what Jack Wolfe is doing in his shop

the saying goes) but his hard work and faith in the BG-12A has put the business on a firm foundation. Jack is achieving what many people thought impossible - a high performance sailplane in production at a low cost. The next project on the list is a type certificate and progress in that direction is well along. When that comes to pass, Jack will be able to produce complete ships.

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The East seems to be sending more and more of its top pilots to the West to try out our unexcelled soaring conditions. Latest arrival is Ruth Petry, former Woman's National Soaring Champ, who is now living in Phoenix. Welcome, Ruth!

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The famous Western thermals are already beginning to come out of their winter hibernation. Thermal flights to 11,000 feet were made at El Mirage in March. This year promises to be an extra good year for soaring. To add to the competition for California pilots, a system of California State Soaring Records has been established. There will be three categories (each with single and two-place): Open, Senior and Junior. The Open category is open to all pilots. The Senior category was established because California soaring is so good that many of the open

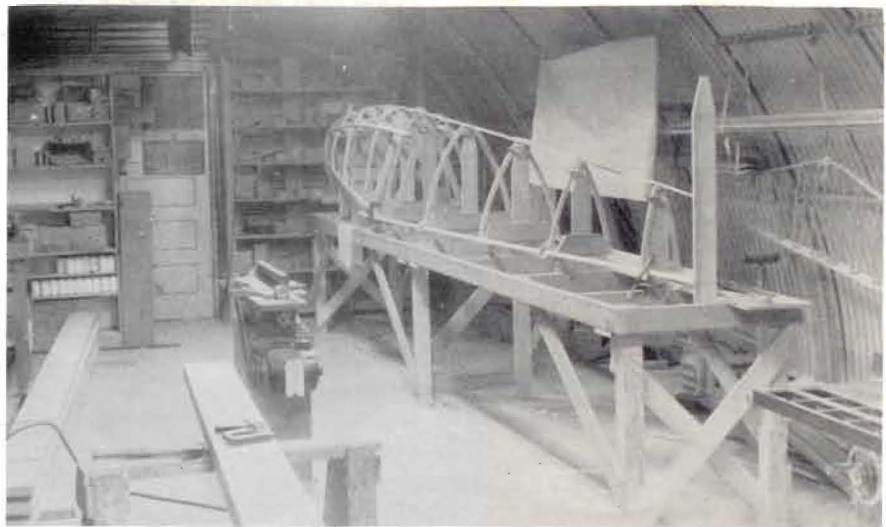


Photo: John C. Wolfe

at Costa Mesa (see accompanying photograph). The shop has the cleanliness and efficiency so necessary to successful production. Parts for extra kits are neatly stacked in various locations throughout the shop (27 kits are now under construction). Everyone working there has an unbounded enthusiasm for their product. Jack started on a shoestring (as

records are also National or World Class Records. The Senior category is limited to pilots with less than Gold C and the Junior category requirement is that the pilot be under 21 years of age. The rules for California State Soaring Records will be similar to those in the FAI Sporting Code but simplified wherever possible. More on records next time.