

SALESMANSHIP

by JAMES H. GRAY, EASC

We who enjoy soaring are sometimes its poorest salesmen. This is so because we tend to forget that soaring is really a restricted sport and that its aims, benefits and delights are not generally known or appreciated by the non-soaring public. We are restricted in the sense that we fly together, write articles for one another, and gather in select groups to enjoy our own company. Perhaps we enjoy this seclusion and try to preserve it subconsciously, realizing that not everyone can fly a sailplane. It is definitely inflating to the ego and a source of prestige when we find that less than 2000 persons in the United States are qualified soaring pilots.

Looking at ourselves with an outsider's eyes, the picture may be somewhat less flattering. An outsider sees a group of people who talk in incomprehensible terms, who gather together to the exclusion of outsiders and who appear to be engaged in a rather death-defying sport akin to ski-jumping, bobsled racing and perhaps Russian Roulette. Sure, we realize that it ain't so, *but we are the only ones who do.*

Assuming this picture to be fairly representative, let's see if we really should change our ways. After all, why shouldn't we be a select, restricted group adhering to our own ways and treading the narrow path? Well, first of all, we are members of society and are allowed our hobbies only through the sufferance of society. Being few in number we don't really bother anyone, and consequently we are ignored or overlooked. Suppose, however, that someone in local or national government decided that we are a nuisance and a danger to commercial aviation. How long do you suppose that it would take to legislate soaring out of existence? With increased demands for airspace, greater traffic density, and a larger proportion of the public exposed to flying, it is not difficult to imagine a situation where even our modest requirements for space and freedom of movement will assume the proportions of a major obstruction in the eyes of non-soaring people. We are a minority group and, as such, subject to all the prejudices and fears of other groups with different interests and ideas.

Rather than remain inconspicuous, we must strive for acceptance in the collective public mind. We therefore cannot afford to remain restrictive much longer.

Secondly, we who engage in this activity realize that it is relaxing, yet sharpens the judgment and prepares us in a safe, sound manner for bigger things and higher goals. Soaring research has formed a fundamental and inclusive basis for the understanding of the aeronautical world around us. Were it not for soaring pilots, the science of flight— aerodynamics—and the science of weather phenomena— might still be in the dark ages of superstition and guesswork. We serve a useful purpose to aviation and, more generally, to mankind whose future is intimately bound to flight. By taking the public into our confidence and teaching it to see through our eyes we not only serve its aims but our own as well, thus insuring our future. Soaring must be presented as a sport— safe, enjoyable and not in the least death-defying, or unsurprisingly difficult.

Again, if these assumptions are reasonable and concurred with, what is to be done? I believe a program of education, appreciation and consolidation must be undertaken on both a local and national level. We must gain more than acceptance or toleration. We have to have active support — psychological support. Gaining that, financial and physical assistance is bound to come. We must all become salesmen for soaring in every phase of our existence.

It is my belief that such a sales campaign might include the following points:

1. Talk, write, and teach the soaring story to any and all who will listen.
2. Encourage public participation in our club activities, outstanding flights, and soaring personalities. Advertise soaring flights in our own papers and those of neighboring towns within easy driving distance from our soaring sites. Stress safety, beauty and noiseless relaxation.
3. See that articles are placed in national aviation journals. Break

the bonds of restrictive publication, shake loose from the "trade journal" approach. Advertise flight instruction for business men as well as airline pilots. Set up an active program of flight instruction aimed at graduating students with a private pilot and/or "C" certificate.

4. Explain, point out, demonstrate and answer questions from people who visit our soaring sites. A friendly, cooperative approach enlists sympathy and attention.
 5. Let's all try to visit our sites on each weekend; early if possible, late if necessary, but be there. Pitch in and help. When was the last time the clubhouse has had a good cleaning? How does the hangar look? Will our operations inspire public confidence in soaring?
 6. Let's see an active campaign to enlist the interest and help of our public and private schools, colleges, and universities. Why not distribute extra copies and over-runs of SOARING magazines to school and public libraries, vocational and technical high schools and scout groups?
 7. Enlist the aid of sailplane manufacturers in providing data and costs of available sailplanes. In those cases where flight schools operate in conjunction with manufacturing facilities, perhaps a package deal offered to commercial airline companies would stimulate sales and interest. For example, it might be possible to convince a fair number of airline pilots to take the glider course for a fixed fee including rooms, meals and all instruction plus one or more hours of soaring. Through these men it might be possible to convince their employers that a company owned sailplane would help maintain "feel" and provide relaxation for off-duty pilots. Increased sales and more sailplane flying could result.
 8. Stress minimum cost through club programs and maximum enjoyment through mutual participation. Simplicity and fun is the keynote.
 9. We are interested in enlisting the aid and cooperation of people from all levels of our so-
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