

NO SUBSTITUTE FOR EXPERIENCE

by JOSEPH M. ROBERTSON, *Chairman*

SSA Safety and Flight Operations Committee

During the past year there has been a series of four accidents with one common dominating factor - that all the pilots concerned were not rated or experienced sailplane pilots. They should not have been flying solo. The four accidents were, briefly, as follows.

(1) An overly-enthusiastic pilot, who had had a small amount of power time more than 10 years previously and nothing recently but ground tows, outtowed a single place Wolf off an airport, got higher and further down the runway than he intended, tried to turn 180° at 200 ft. and spun in. The ship was completely demolished and the pilot very seriously injured.

(2) Another inexperienced pilot was trying to teach himself to fly a TG-3A by auto towing from a short, rough, unfinished field. The story is not clear but it appears his tow rope caught under a rock or bush, he released at 200 ft. and tried to turn 180 back. The TG-3A spun in, striking the ground almost vertically. It was demolished and the pilot seriously injured.

(3) An airplane pilot was flying on aero tow in a Kirby Cadet behind a 100 HP Cub. He had no previous glider experience. On his second tow he appeared to have considerable difficulty in controlling the Kirby, which at best is almost uncontrollable in roll at higher airspeeds due to the large non-differential ailerons. One observer stated that at one time on this flight, the Kirby was almost upside down. A large amount of slack developed in the towline at from 400 to 600 ft. altitude, the rope looped around the wing, and the wing was torn off. The pilot stayed with the ship part of the way down and at 200 ft. altitude he jumped. The parachute did not have time to function and he died a short time later.

(4) A Fauvel, being towed by a Tiger Moth, took off with a power pilot at the controls who had had only 45 minutes of dual glider time before. This was his first flight in

the Fauvel. The pilot climbed so high above the towplane that the Tiger, after becoming airborne, was forced into a dive and, after wiping off the landing gear in a ditch, flipped over and came to rest upside down. Due to the high position of the Fauvel, the Tiger pilot was unable to release the towrope. The Fauvel pilot released when he lost sight of the towplane beneath him for the second time but it was too late. He made a short pattern for a landing and did not realize the towplane had crashed until he was on final.

In all the above cases the pilots were inexperienced and should not have been in the air. The first two pilots were flying without the benefit of anyone around who knew anything about sailplanes. The last two were flying with the help and assistance of experienced people who should not have allowed the pilots to take off without more training.

Two basic ideas are perhaps at the root of these accidents. They are:

(a) "Sailplanes are easy to fly and you can't get hurt because they are slow." This was partially true back in the days of the primary flown off gently sloping hill tops. The woods are full of people who had a try at the sport of "gliding" in a primary when they were young. Usually the worst that happened was a smashed ship and a broken leg. But nowadays the ships are relatively large and fast. Landing speeds approach those of light planes, and some sailplanes can spin easily and rapidly. To approach a modern sailplane with anything but the utmost respect is to invite trouble. This applies to the transition power pilot as well as the green beginner.

(b) "If a pilot is able to take off and land from a short auto tow, he is capable of flying with any kind of tow." It does little good to describe the course of action a pilot should take under certain conditions when he is not familiar with either the sailplane or the situation. It is easy to forget that a student pilot is
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SSA NEWS

SSA DIRECTORS' MEETING

The SSA Board of Directors held one of their semi-annual meetings on June 30, 1959, at Elmira, N.Y. Action was taken on a number of items of interest to the general membership which will be summarized below.

Officers and Directors-at-Large for the calendar year 1960 were elected as follows:

President - Dr. Harner Selvidge

Vice-Presidents - Paul A. Schweizer

Joseph C. Lincoln

Treasurer - Bertha M. Ryan

Secretary - Joseph M. Robertson

Directors-at-Large: Joseph M. Robertson, Bertha M. Ryan, Paul A. Schweizer, Dr. Harner Selvidge and Lt. Col. Floyd J. Sweet, USAF.

The by-laws were amended to change the quorum for Board meetings from two-fifths (10) to one-third (9) and to eliminate the provision allowing Directors to be present by proxy.

Upon recommendation of the Election and Allocations Committee, it was voted to change the allocation of Regional Directors as follows: region 3, one less, new total of one; region 2, one more, new total of four; region 7, one less, new total of one; and region 5, one more, new total of two.

It was decided that instructive-type, impersonal accident reports would be published in alternate issues of SOARING magazine.

The next Board meeting will be held in Kansas City Jan. 30-31, 1960.

SSA Annual General Meeting

On July 10, 1959, the annual meeting of SSA members was held on Harris Hill at Elmira, N.Y. Lloyd Licher, Executive Secretary, gave a report on the status of the Society and described various projects recently accomplished or now underway, following which a question and answer period was conducted for the members present. Various suggestions and constructive criticisms were made by a number of members.

Highlights from Licher's report indicated that the Society is in a healthy, growing state. On June 30th, 1959, the total number of voting members was 1540, the highest it has ever been and over twice what it was two years ago. The number of SSA Chapters (clubs with 100% SSA membership) had grown to 13, whereas there were only two less than two years ago.