

DISASTER AT THE AIR FORCE ACADEMY

A freak wind storm during December destroyed or seriously damaged all of the sailplanes used in the Air Force Academy's soaring program at Colorado Springs. Two of the three Schweizer 2-22C training ships and the 1-26 were completely destroyed, and the remaining 2-22C sustained serious damage. Since the construction of the Air Force Academy in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains west of Colorado Springs, there has also been a great deal of windstorm damage to windows in the buildings. It has been observed that winds may sometimes come roaring out of the mountains behind with extremely high velocities, while several miles away there might be a flat calm. This was the situation on the day that the sailplanes were blown away from their secure tie-downs.

With most of the equipment destroyed, it was impossible to continue the soaring program, but instead of temporarily suspending it while the damaged equipment was repaired or replaced, the authorities at the Academy cancelled the soaring program in its entirety. In order to get information on the exact status of the soaring program from official sources, SSA wrote to Major General James E. Briggs, Superintendent of the Air Force Academy. His reply:

Dear Mr. Selvidge:

Thank you for your interest in the Airman's Curriculum at the Air Force Academy. We share your concern with respect to the deletion of soaring as an integral part of the cadet training.

We simply could not continue the program on a safe and efficient operational basis with our present facilities. During the fall months we operated from the Pine Valley landing strip here at the site. Our experience has proven that even a small scale program could not be continued without considerable construction for protection from wind and weather damage. Interim expenditures for this purpose would not be prudent in that the Pine Valley area is the locale of the proposed airfield for the Academy.

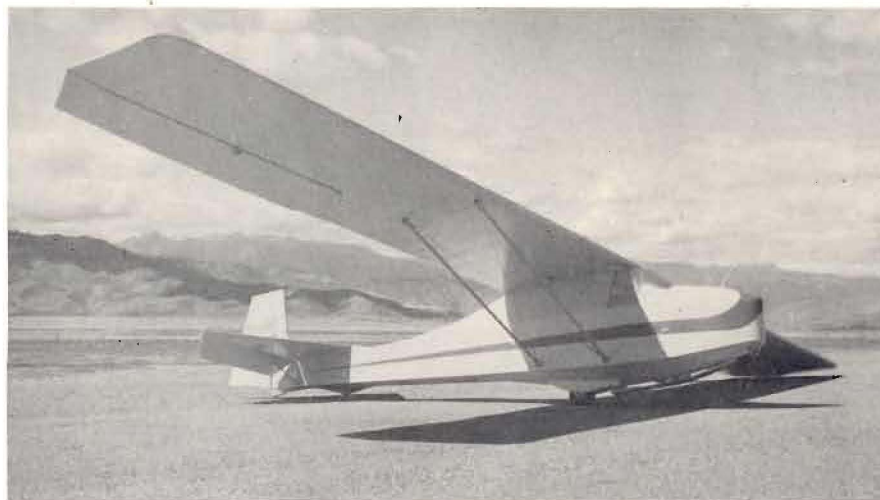
We will reinstate soaring when we are able to provide facilities for a safe and efficient operation.

Sincerely,
JAMES E. BRIGGS
Major General, USAF
Superintendent

Since receipt of this letter it has been reported unofficially that there was some chance that soaring might be permitted at the Academy strictly as an extracurricular activity but without any financial support from the school. The Editorial in the front of this issue of SOARING magazine comments further on this situation.

INTERESTING GLIDERS

by PETER M. BOWERS



Over 500 Kirby Cadets were built by the British firm of Slingsby for use in Air Cadet and Reserve training programs at the end of World War II. The particular machine illustrated was shipped to Canada and found its way into civilian hands after being declared surplus to the Cadet program.

The Cadet was designed specifically for what the British call *ab initio* training, the very first part of primary training, where it was used for ground runs and low, level-ground, shock-cord launches or "bungee" launches as they are called in Europe. Performance-wise, the Cadet was just a bit better than the classic primary glider, and as long as it was used for its intended purpose, it was a very good machine. Control characteristics and crew comfort were sacrificed to simplicity, but could not be considered a handicap when the ship was used properly. Most of the complaints about inadequate aileron control seemed to come from pilots who used Cadets for more advanced work than they had been designed for and expected control response comparable to utility types rather than primary trainers.

Construction of the Cadet was all wood with metal fittings and struts. The fuselage and vertical tail closely followed the outlines of the famous German Grunau Baby sailplane of 1931 but the wings and horizontal tail were of extremely simple straight-line construction, fabric covered. The fuselage was skinned with 1/16" plywood. The wing struts were round

steel tubes without fairing, and drag bracing was provided by crossed steel wires. Take-off and landing and ground handling were simplified by installation of a single wheel.

The basic design was improved for more advanced training and soaring by development of a larger wing of approximately six foot more span with a better airfoil and tapering outboard of the struts. This was known as the Kirby Tutor II.

Specifications for the Cadet are: Span 38' 6", length 20' 10", wing area 170 Sq. Ft. Empty weight is 297 lbs., and the gross weight is 477 lbs., giving a wing loading of 2.8 lbs./sq. ft.

100 BREGUET 905's

The Breguet company of France has announced that production has begun on a group of 100 Breguet 905 "Fauvette" (Warbler) sailplanes. The prototype of this model was flown to ninth place in the World Championships Standard Class last year. It features a vee tail and a number of novel construction techniques. A picture of the sailplane appeared on the cover of the Nov.-Dec., 1958, issue of SOARING magazine. The first production machine will go to Cdr. Tony Goodhart of England, who reviewed its construction details and flight characteristics in the April SAILPLANE AND GLIDING.

A two-place version of the 905, the Breguet 906 "Choucas" (Jackdaw), was scheduled to appear early in May.