

# SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

A soaring friend recently told a wry tale of how he almost became discouraged out of soaring before he got well started, by the activities of some enthusiastic and well-meaning members of a local soaring group. It seems that they were mostly interested in the people and personalities who make up the soaring fraternity, and would deluge him with photographs, slides and gossip about them. Our hero couldn't have cared less about the snaps of these creatures in various weird headdresses. What he was hungering for was some real down to earth — sorry, up in the sky, information on how to center a thermal. All he wanted out of soaring was to soar himself.

Some months and about a thousand kodachrome transparencies later, he had his "C" and occasionally was able to keep the trainer aloft after someone else had been forced to land, and was on his way to become a soaring pilot himself. He has since met some of the people who to him were only funny hats in the pictures, and freely admits that under these wacky lids there frequently lies a diamond in the rough. But he still is primarily interested only in the act of soaring.

All of which is a labored, but true, story to lead into the point of this essay: peoples' tastes differ, even in soaring. Fortunately we have a variety of facets to our sport, in which almost anyone can find a reflection of his own interests. As the French say: "Vive la difference!" After all, wouldn't the world be a dreary place if we were all like (don't look now) *him*?

To some, the most important parts of soaring are the contests. The local, national and international competitors are the ones who get their names in SOARING, and even occasionally in the daily press, if they should be so unfortunate as to have an accident, or be taken into custody for a felonious act. At soaring meetings they silently guard the secrets of their successes with becoming modesty, but will leap into life like a wounded water buffalo if someone mentions a rule change that might remotely keep another piece of grotesque hardware off their already groaning mantles.

The designers and builders are another class apart. When they show up at meetings at all, their hands and clothes bear the unmistakable signs of the ravages of rivet gun and glue pot. From their lips tumbles an incomprehensible mathematical jargon of ratios and symbols. Like certain insects, they frequently withdraw from sight for years at a time, and then burst forth into the light of day with brand new wings, still wet around the edges. Then, for a short time, their family can eat in the dining room without fear of mixing the glue and jam pots, and the car can resume its rightful place in the garage. That is, until the word gets around that a Lichtenstein 4498½ profile might give a couple of more points of L/D.

The gadgeteer is not unique in soaring. He is also found in sailing, fishing and sports car circles, to mention a few. He gets as much joy out of showing off his gadgets as he does in making them. His ship always has the latest instruments, the trickiest map holder and the fanciest upholstery. His trailer practically loads the ship by its self.

Probably the largest group in soaring today is the much maligned "Sunday soarers." These pilots are perfectly content to fly around in the vicinity of the airport all afternoon and may never have intentionally landed away from the field. Yet who are we to say that they don't have as much fun as the rest of us? For many of these pilots, their greatest pleasure is in the good fellowship of other enthusiasts, on the ground or in the air. Our hero would probably look down at the yacht club type of soaring operation, but there are many who feel that the soaring movement could benefit greatly from more of such intimate club activity.

Finally we come to the biggest group of all — our all too often ground-bound families and crews. Despite his gadgets, man cannot soar by himself.\* He needs help to strike the shackles of the earth from his eager feet. Thank God for the host of friends and relatives who help us achieve those heights for which we strive. May we never forget that our achievement is also theirs.

Leaving our faithful crews blinking in this unexpected limelight, let us turn to the problem posed by our friend in the opening paragraph. Two conclusions seem evident. First, in selling soaring, don't forget that your prospect may not be interested in the same aspects of the sport that you are. Try to show him all sides. There is something for everyone in soaring. A second point concerns those of us already in the game. Be tolerant of the one whose way is not your own. We think Thoreau put it rather nicely when he wrote "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away." —H.S.

\*Yes, we hear Ted Nelson crying in the background that *he* can.  
Alas, there are too few Hummingbirds in this world.