

WINTER OPPORTUNITIES

In many parts of the country, soaring activity reaches a low ebb during the winter months, although for some obscure meteorological reason soaring in Florida is *better* during the winter than at any other time. There will now be a brief pause while our Region 5 members depart for the airport, but we suggest they return to this essay next April, when it will be equally applicable to them. For most of us, however, the best flying is over until next summer.

But let's not be too hasty in curling up by the fireside with the TV or heading for the ski slopes. There is still plenty of flying that can be done during the winter in all parts of the country. It is not at all uncommon to find thermals strong enough for flights of an hour or more over snow-covered fields. This has been demonstrated many times, but there are still many pilots who never try to take advantage of it. True, there is a higher percentage of gliding than soaring in these months, but this stable air is fine for training flights. Particularly in the primary stages, the student learns much faster in non-turbulent air.

A better known soaring potential lies in the winter winds. Those who operate near ridges can get in loads of slope soaring. However, the greater challenge and opportunity lies in wave exploration. Despite the numerous wave flights in recent years, many feel that no more than ten percent of existing wave conditions have been exploited. Past experience indicates stronger wave action in the winter months. Drag out the red flannels and give it a try!

We will pass quickly over the winter as a time for repairs. This has traditionally been the time for painting and patching. This is the season which delights the gadgeteer as he toils on the labor-saving devices which will be the envy of his less mechanically inclined comrades next summer.

Most soaring clubs continue holding monthly meetings even if there is no flying. We believe serious consideration should be given to holding *more* winter meetings, especially if flying is not possible. Then is the time to plan the activities for next spring and summer. Ground instruction periods and classes can be organized for beginning, intermediate and advanced pilots. Now is the time to pin down the "old pro" and flatter him into divulging the secrets of his success. Discussion panels can be very valuable, even when led by comparatively inexperienced pilots. Their very ignorance will be likely to give rise to valuable discussion of troublesome problems.

This is also the season for social and promotional activities for which time is so grudgingly given during the months of good soaring. Speeches at service clubs (here is a new audience for all those old color slides!), radio and TV programs and displays at schools and airports will do much to encourage interest in soaring. Don't forget the dances and parties, either.

Finally, what about your organization? How can you improve your local club? Is the SSA doing what *you* think it should? If you don't think so, write your Regional Director. And speaking of him, did you vote in the last election? Many SSA members didn't. Elections will be held this month in several SSA regions. Get behind the man of your choice and elect him. He might be timid about campaigning, but you shouldn't be. Remember, however, that the most important attributes of an SSA Director are not his soaring abilities, but rather common sense and good judgment coupled with a willingness to spend a great deal of his time on affairs of the Society.

The above list of activities should give anyone enough ideas to keep time from hanging heavy on his hands this winter. This is the season for *doing things*. Don't waste it!

H.S.