

## SOARING AND THE SOFT SELL

The phenomenal growth that United States soaring has realized during the past couple of years is probably indicative of some very effective selling of either the "hard" or "soft" variety, or both. With our increased percentage of newcomers our drop-outs are increasing, but our net SSA membership continues its steady growth. This is a very gratifying situation and our congratulations go out to the many SSA members who have been instrumental in bringing about this happy state.

Most soaring pilots can be classed as zealots, if not fanatics. No matter what the composition of the group, the conversation always seems to come around to soaring shortly after they appear. But this is not surprising. To many of us, soaring is far beyond a sport or hobby, it is more nearly a way of life. Whose life will ever be the same after he has felt the living surge of thermal fountains and bent them to his will?

Small wonder that the fledgling soaring pilot wishes to see everyone else share his joys of conquest of the living air, even to the extent of making a nuisance of himself. Then, after dragging his friends out to the airport he is discouraged by the small number who come back for a second time. Adopting the "soft sell" in promoting soaring will avoid disappointments of this sort and may save some time spent on those who had no more than a casual or timid interest.

There are plenty of excellent prospects still available, particularly among power pilots. Many of them need a little time to get used to the idea of getting into an aircraft without an engine. Don't rush them, but continue to call to their attention the availability of an indoctrination into soaring through the local clubs.

We believe one of the best ways of selling power pilots is the "Gypsy Tour," or conducting soaring operations at different airports on different days. This not only brings soaring right under the prospect's nose, but also affords a pleasant variety of surroundings for the soaring pilots and crews.

Once you have your prospect in the air, don't let your enthusiasm run away with your judgement. A short comfortable glide with gently banked turns will do more to whet his appetite than grinding around in thermals in tight turns until he is literally sick of the whole procedure. He is probably going to be very apprehensive about his first soaring flight, so don't forget that maneuvers which are commonplace to you may drive him to the conclusion that soaring is for the birds — not him.

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