

## 44 EXCITING MONTHS



This month marks the end of my term as President of SSA, and I am celebrating the occasion by dropping the editorial "we" which has always aggravated me when attempting to fill this page with words of wisdom. With a new administration starting next month, it is proper to take a quick look at the past, and see how we got where we are today. Perhaps the most significant period in SSA history was the last 44 months, which started well before my terms of office. This period has been characterized by an almost explosive membership growth. In my opinion, the most significant milestones were those listed below:

Date	Event	SSA Membership
March, 1957	Executive Secretary Hired	980
July, 1957	Regional Directors Established	1080
November, 1957	duPont Support Received	1320
January, 1958	SSA Insurance Plan Started	1370
January, 1959	"New Look" on <i>Soaring</i> Magazine	1923
July, 1959	<i>Soaring</i> Magazine Published Monthly	2147
November, 1960	End of duPont Support	3100

When the Directors voted in March, 1957, to hire an Executive Secretary, there was no assurance that we would be able to pay his salary, but means were found, and this daring and far-reaching step started paying off almost immediately. It marked the beginning of our upward climb. The establishment of Regional Directorships was an important step in obtaining closer relations between the SSA leadership and the members, and has resulted in a much more satisfactory group of representatives on the Board. I feel it has notably solidified our organization.

The biggest thing that made possible the rapid growth of SSA over the past several years was the financial support from the Chichester duPont Foundation, which Floyd Sweet was instrumental in obtaining. They promised us financial assistance in four annual installments of ten, eight, four, and two thousand dollars. This tapering support was to enable us to do the things it takes to get members, before having the financial support that increased membership brings. Had it not been for this, our membership building program would have proceeded at a snail's pace.

The SSA insurance plan, started in 1958, turned out to be more important than many of us expected, in furnishing an incentive for new pilots to join the SSA. It has been one of the biggest factors in the formation of SSA Chapters, since all members must belong to SSA to get the insurance. In return, it has helped the clubs and individual obtain the kind of insurance they need at reasonable prices.

The "New Look" on *Soaring* Magazine started with the January-February, 1959, issue, and was a long step in presenting a modern image of the SSA to our members and to the equally important

group of potential new members. In July, 1959, we started publishing the magazine on a monthly basis, after 19½ years as a bi-monthly. This has indeed been an important factor in our growth. Nowadays, anyone suggesting that we go back to a bi-monthly is very properly howled down by our enthusiastic reader membership. Other publications, such as our promotional brochures and the American Soaring Handbook, have also played a part. Much remains to be done in the publication field, and I hope we will be able to increase greatly the vigor and quality of these enterprises in the future.

This month we get our last scheduled contribution from the duPont Foundation. When we started our expansion with their help, we told them we planned to be self-supporting by the time the grant was finished. It was not then planned to publish *Soaring* monthly, and except for this added expense, we are now in fact operating without a deficit. Our thanks go out again to the Trustees of the Chichester duPont Foundation for their support and confidence. I believe the record shows that it was well placed.

What of the future? We are continuing to publish *Soaring* monthly, so we have an operating deficit. We need to economize where possible, and get more members—lots more members. Steps are already being taken in these directions, and you will hear more about them in subsequent issues. The best way you can help is by signing up new members. Be sure to do *your* part.

To the many SSA members who helped so much to make my terms as an SSA officer pleasant ones I give my heartfelt thanks. Let's all get behind our new President, Paul Bikle, and help push SSA and soaring in the United States to even greater heights—H.S.