

SAFETY FIRST

THE GRAY HAIR DEPARTMENT

by JOSEPH M. ROBERTSON, *Chairman*
SSA Safety and Flight Operations Committee

1. The Club's 2-22 had finished flying for the day and was tied down in a row of airplanes on the field. It was late afternoon. The weather was hot with a 5-15 MPH wind blowing across the field. Thermal activity had almost ceased for the day. Wind direction was from the forward left hand quarter of the 2-22 as it sat securely fastened by apparently substantial ropes tied from rings half buried in the ground to the wing struts near the lower surface of the wing. There was no tie down on the nose or tail. Suddenly a moderate sized dust devil started up across the field and moved toward the parked aircraft. Not many people were on the field at the time so that the dust devil was close to the line of airplanes before anyone noticed its direction or size.

One Club member heard the rushing noise, turned around and started to run toward the 2-22. Before he had gone very far, the dust devil struck the sailplane. The 2-22 strained up against the tie down ropes for a moment then the ropes broke; the ship stood vertically on its tail and right wing tip, toppled over, crashed down inverted on the nose and wing leading edges.

Total damage consisted of a crushed canopy, pushed in nose, bent elevator, damaged right aileron and two badly damaged wings. Almost every leading edge rib in both wings

was flattened to some degree and the left hand wing drag spar was bent beyond repair. Minimum cost of repairing the damage is estimated to be not less than \$1000.00.

Investigation after the incident disclosed that the tiedown ropes were old and where the LH rope was tied to the ring in the ground, one strand had been previously frayed through and the other two strands were not in good condition.

2. A 2-22 was being towed to the hangar after a day's flying. The driver was in the car and the pilot was walking the wing tip. The ship was attached to the car by a ten foot rope. The wind was head-on at 20-30 MPH and gusty. Suddenly the ship became airborne after a series of hops, rose to a top altitude of about 6 feet, and fell off to the right, landing on the right wing tip.

Damage consisted of a badly bent wing tip plus some spar damage. Estimated cost of repair - \$200.00.

Comment - The 2-22 is particularly susceptible to the kind of costly incidents outlined above for several reasons:

1. When the ship is empty, wing loading is only 2.14 pounds per square foot so it does not take much wind to fly the ship without a pilot.

2. The angle of attack of the wing, with the tail on the ground, is relatively high. Therefore, the wing is in a high lift position and sensitive to ground wind velocities exceeding 10 MPH.

To prevent a repetition of the above mishaps, always make sure the tiedown attachments are well buried and the ropes adequately strong. Use new rope if at all possible. Place the tailskid on an object high enough to put the front skid on the ground or attach the release hook to a suitable tiedown or weight.

When towing the 2-22 on the ground in winds exceeding 10 MPH, always have someone in the cockpit to control the ship as well as a man helping on each wingtip.

Never leave *any* sailplane unattended on the ground without either tying it down or quartering it into the wind tail first with a substantial weight on one wing tip.

By not taking these ordinary precautions you invite a substantial repair bill plus loss of the use of the ship for a period of time.

NEW CLUBS AROUND?

In the near future club information questionnaires for the 1960 SSA Soaring Directory will be mailed to all clubs listed in the 1959 Directory. We would also like to include in the mailing all clubs now in existence that were not listed in the 1959 Directory. If you know of any, please drop a post card to SSA giving the name and address of some person in the club to whom the questionnaire could be mailed.

Ed Blalock's Nimbus IIIB sailplane "Obsession" built by him in Reno, Nevada. In background is the Napa, (Calif.) Soaring Club's Schweizer TG-3A.

Photo: Edward Blalock



Sailplane and Gliding

A Bi-Monthly Magazine Entirely
Devoted to Motorless Flight

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M.A., F.R.Met.S.

The official organ of the
British Gliding Association
per copy 50c post free
annual subscription \$3 post free

Direct From

**The British
Gliding Association**

Londonderry House
19 Park Lane, London, W. 1