

THE SOARING SIXTIES

When the above title was picked several weeks ago it sounded like a good one. Since then it has appeared in countless publications in the closing days of 1959, and I fear, that it is being run into the ground. As Jimmy Durante would say, "Everybody wants to get into da act!" The Madison Avenue types are using the phrase to promote the sale of everything from powered airplanes to baby powder. To many, it seems to exemplify the boundless optimism with which the coming decade is being viewed. Everyone will have more of everything, including money — we hope.

What of soaring in the sixties? Not the soaring of copy-writers' cliché. The real thing! The art that speaks with the quiet whistle of wind over plexiglass and tells of the lightness of the flickering green pellet as it dances in its transparent tube. The joyous conflict between man and nature with victory marked by orbits soaring ever higher, and defeat announced by the rumble and clatter of the landing roll. What of the next ten years? Hand me that rag you are using to polish the canopy and let's see if we can clear up this crystal ball.

If this new era of greater prosperity and more leisure time that is promised by so many seers is actually realized, it cannot help but benefit the soaring movement. Of course, all you really need is enthusiasm, but some reserves of spare time and money are helpful. The increasing interest of Americans in outdoor sports, particularly those with family participation, will surely swell our ranks. From this point of view the prospects look rosy.

A somewhat more sticky problem is the one of sailplanes. What are all these pilots going to fly? It is certain that 1970 will see some sailplanes flying that long before should have been retired to a museum, but surely the WW II surplus types will have mostly gone to their well-merited reward by then. Probably inflation will keep pace with economies realized by greater production so we cannot reasonably expect prices to fall. If we judge by the experience of the last ten years with both sailplanes and light powered planes, prices will surely rise. A brighter side is the increased number of modern second-hand ships that will become available as a result of the inevitable turn-over in our increasing number of pilots.

The really clouded part of our crystal ball is the murky depth labeled "Government Regulation." Fortunately for us, we have been relatively undisturbed in recent years, except for some encroachments by Restricted Areas. This freedom may not last, however. As the skies get more crowded with aircraft, we get closer to the time when "100% Positive Control" will be the battle-cry. How are you going to positively control a sailplane? At worst, we could get legislated out of the air. At best, we will probably suffer more restrictions, and may be forced to use more expensive instrumentation than required today. This is the sort of situation which can only be met by an organization such as the SSA. It is imperative that we be prepared to speak in Washington with one strong united voice. Here is one of the best arguments for a strong national Soaring Society to which everyone in soaring belongs.

Looking ahead for the next 12 months, we have an encouraging picture indeed. During 1959 the SSA showed a steady growth of more than one full Member per day. Only a slight acceleration of this growth will put us near the break-even point financially by 1961. That will be the first year after the scheduled ending of the duPont Foundation assistance, and we are pleased to report the prospect of being self supporting at that time. We will continue to publish SOARING on a monthly basis, and expect that it will be improved in content and schedule. Nineteen sixty will also see the completion of the remaining chapters of the American Soaring Handbook. We believe that these and other publications will contribute greatly to the sound growth of soaring.

A few weeks ago, the Southern California Soaring Association voted to become a Chapter of the SSA. This affiliation by one of the largest soaring clubs in the country marks a significant step in closer cooperation between the national organization and the local clubs. We will endeavor in the coming year to make the benefits of such an association even more attractive.

Over half of the present members of SSA did not belong three years ago. Many have joined in the last year. We are glad to have you with us. This is your Society as much as ours and the old-timers don't have any monopoly on good ideas. Let's hear how *you* think SSA could be improved. H.S.