

THE COUNTRY CLUB APPROACH

Nearly everyone in soaring has his own pet idea of the one thing that is needed to solve our most pressing problems. These panaceas run the gambit from an inexhaustable supply of inexpensive two-place training sailplanes, to better rest-room facilities at soaring sites. While we like to think of soaring as always being above such mundane matters, a strong desire for better physical facilities and surroundings is a frequent wish of soaring pilots.

Let's list some of these creature comforts: (1) shorter drive to the airport; (2) lounges for pilots and families; (3) playground for the kids; (4) some grass in the desert sites which are so desolate in the summer, and some paving at the midwest and eastern sites which are such a morass during the spring thaws; (5) hangar and shop space for sailplanes; (6) runways where sailplanes are welcomed, not discouraged; (7) last, but not least, clean and adequate restroom facilities. Few soaring sites provide all of these.

If an airport operator won't or can't supply our needs, why can't we do it ourselves? We submit that with a little ingenuity, and a lot of hard work, we can do it more often than we have suspected. The basic mechanism is what we might call the "Yacht Club" or "Country Club" approach. This is an organization which owns real property such as land and buildings. Six or eight people could not swing it, but seventy-five to one hundred could. Not that many people interested in soaring in your town? Make it an "Aviation Country Club" and get the power pilots in. They are also good soaring prospects.

Real estate on the outskirts of most cities is a fine, long-term investment. You can probably get some investors to help who don't give a hoot about soaring. Look at your town today - how much money would you have made if you had bought twenty or thirty acres out on the edge of town fifteen years ago. You don't have to have all the money yourself. All the big operators in the real estate field use other people's money and you can too. We have a lot of smart and successful business men in the soaring movement who could organize something like this if they wanted to.

Is there a country club being organized in your town? Try to get them to buy some additional land alongside the golf course for an airstrip, and have pilots use the same clubhouse facilities and be a part of the club. We understand that the Philadelphia Glider Council, which is really an operating soaring club, has its own private airstrip with the members' houses alongside it. How's that for convenience!

Just this week, SSA was approached by a representative of a group which has already started a big real estate development near one of our large cities. It will also have an industrial park with its own private airstrip. They *want* to have soaring activity at that site. Like many other groups they have been struck by the explosive growth of the soaring movement in the United States, as evidenced by the publicity that we are getting in magazines, papers and TV. They believe sailplanes at the airport will be an attraction which will cause more people to visit the area and incidentally, help sell a few more lots. They are talking about donating space and buildings to soaring clubs who would make this their headquarters. They also want to sponsor contests with prizes as regular attractions. That is one way to get your country club type of operation started.

We have said before that the soaring fraternity hasn't begun to realize the maximum potential of the air in which we fly. Neither have we more than begun to tap the financial and physical resources that are available to those with imagination and perseverance. Think big!

H. S.