

## **SAFETY FIRST**

# **THE GRAY HAIR DEPARTMENT**

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

It was a rainy, squally day on the field and any one with regard for his own personal comfort would have been inside, out of the weather. But a dedicated group of pilots were out logging time, particularly on a new BG-6 that had been flown only a few times previous to this day's activity. One pilot, who had made the majority of the flights so far in the ship, arranged for a tow and got set for the flight but did not take a parachute. The take-off and climb were uneventful in the stable air. The pilot released at 2000 ft. in front of a cloud that seemed a bit lower than the others but he was not concerned as he started to circle. The ship was equipped with a bare minimum of instruments, consisting of an airspeed, altimeter, non-sensitive rate of climb, and compass.

Suddenly the pilot noticed a sudden jump in the rate of climb and, at the same instant, found himself in cloud. It suddenly became apparent that he had released in front of a small, local cold air mass that was moving toward the mountains 5 miles to the east. A sudden panic washed over him and was just as suddenly put down while he tried to analyze the situation. Not having spun the ship and not being equipped with a needle-ball meant he did not dare try spinning for fear of ending up in a spiral dive and there were no spoilers or flaps to help.

The best solution seemed to be to slip at a high rate of speed in order to increase the sink and get out of the cloud as quickly as possible. This was done and the ship was flown at 90 MPH (72 MPH RED-LINE) with full rudder and full aileron applied. Every few moments, the stick was pulled back to see if he was still right side up. Luckily, the pilot did not become disoriented.

Finally, the ground was seen through a break in the clouds and the pilot hauled the ship around in an extremely tight turn. He was below the clouds in a moment. The flight back to the airport, four miles upwind, was without incident. On landing, the pilot sat in the cockpit for a moment and thanked his protective angel for getting him safely

back on the ground again. Ten minutes previously he would not have given a very large price on the odds of coming through the flight alive.

**Comment:** It is a well known fact that no one has ever been able to maintain control of an aircraft in clouds more than a few moments without benefit of gyro instruments. In the case cited above, actual time spent in the clouds was probably not over 2½ minutes. The pilot made the mistake, that could easily have cost his life since he was not wearing a parachute, of not being aware of just how close to the approaching cold front he was on release from the tow-plane.

The best policy to follow at all times is not to approach a cloud, or anything that looks like a cloud, unless the ship is fully equipped with gyro instruments and the pilot current for instrument flying. Without gyro instruments a sailplane (or powered aircraft) has absolutely no capability for anything but 100% visual contact flight.

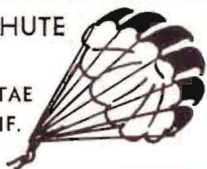
### **CALENDAR AND BINDER SUPPLIES EXHAUSTED**

Supplies of 1960 SSA soaring calendars and binders for issues of SOARING magazine have been exhausted so no further orders for these items should be sent to SSA. The calendars will not be reordered because of the late date and diminishing demand. Those who have some left over from bulk orders might so advise SSA who could then direct interested purchasers to remaining sources of supply. It is hoped to have an even better 1961 soaring calendar available in plenty of time this fall for sales and distribution before the new year begins.

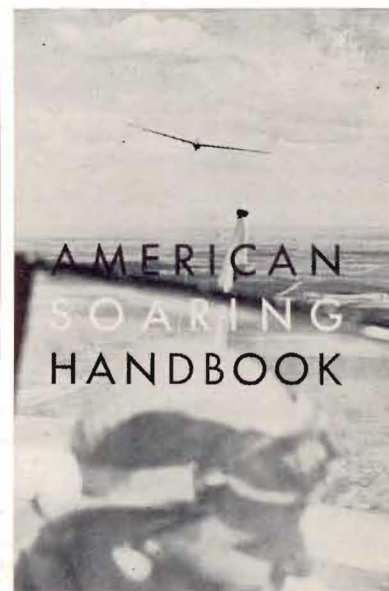
SOARING binders are being reordered and their availability and price will be announced soon.

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