

with the atmosphere, developing his skill and coordination in the complex and subtle control of a sailplane. Few can come closer to creation than the sailplane builder. The sailplane, of all man's creations, seems to come close to being a thing alive in its quiet, seemingly self-propelled behavior. Just feed thermals to a sailplane and it will carry its pilot wherever directed.

In contest work we have rarely found a finer way for men of similar interest to compete. Here we have all the variables of wind and thermal conditions, sailplane capabilities, terrain, task strategy and luck combined to be thought out by each pilot according to his particular genius and skill. Few experiences can compare with those of the pilot who plans and carries out a cross-country flight. Each flight is an adventure in itself. The whereabouts of thermals, or other lift, and the excitement of the semi-emergency nature of each landing presents constant challenges.

We seem to get more satisfaction from our ability to handle our environment without too much assistance. Nothing, for instance, seems more enjoyable to the outdoorsman than to catch and cook his food over his own fire. In a sailplane our "conqueror of the universe" is more on his own than he would be in other machines. The glider itself by its very nature, is more able to be aware of its atmospheric environment with its low wing loading, sensitive instruments and clean design. Ideally it would be nice simply to lift our arms and soar into the sky! A tiny comfortable hang glider with a 40 to 1 glide angle might be the perfect flying machine.

Many books have been written on how nice soaring is so let's not go on discussing this particular aspect of the sport. Most of the readers of this paper already know and have experienced some of the profound satisfaction it has to offer.

Problems of Finding Importance in Soaring

How does the soaring pilot relate himself to the rest of humanity? Man is very much a social animal. He feels a need to relate himself and his activities to the rest of mankind in some way that seems important to the group.

Unfortunately in almost all cases soaring is of little or no value to people not participating in it. For the very, very few who have actually had jobs using soaring to discover

meteorological phenomena of importance outside soaring, or who have made structural and aerodynamic contributions to general aviation, I can only say congratulations.

We may feel that soaring is important to us, but we are not quite so sure it is an important activity, in the more general sense, or that it has any meaning to other people. This is probably a major reason, among others, why most soaring organizations spend a large amount of time and effort selling soaring to others. The greater number of people interested in the sport the more important it seems. Finding importance in soaring has been a troublesome problem to our activity at various times.

Human beings do many things. Some things they do happen to be more meaningful than others. By "meaningful" we mean that what the person is doing relates in some way to the relief of basic desires of a large part of humanity. He may be an engineer, teacher, businessman, commercial pilot, military man, farmer or any of the other paying occupations. Because a particular human activity does not happen to make a "basic" contribution to the human venture should not mean it is to be discounted. We have come a long way since the average person's life consisted of working from morning to night in his plot of ground to eke out a living while the family laboriously made the clothing and other utensils of necessity. In this era, and increasingly in times to come, the real flowering of human life, through experiences, will increase, depending on the amount and range of individual growth and understanding. One does not have to be doing something meaningful for other human beings in order to attain

the greatest awareness of the world around us.

More and more people have come to realize that these things that we do outside of our "necessary and basic" jobs are the things that are ultimately the most important to us.

Soaring has been accepted more as a pure sport in the last decade. A survey of *Soaring* magazines, among others, through the years indicates this trend. Years ago great efforts were being made to establish soaring as, (1) A more efficient way to train power pilots, (2) A cheaper way to fly, (3) A method of cargo or passenger transportation, (4) Military attack and movement, or (5) rescue operations and so on, as far as the dreams of the glider enthusiast could conceive. I am not going to discuss whether or not any of these ideas are good, but I will mention that there does not seem to be this big drive to do something "important" anymore. To broadly categorize the magazine, most space is now devoted to particular flights, contests, and technical articles.

Summary

Now where does this leave us? First a short summary of the ground we have covered. In days past a man worked hard, raised his sons and tried to be strong and wise. The purposes of life were clear to people then. Now we engage in quite complex activities, i.e., soaring, in which the purposes and meanings are very elusive. These meanings come to be understood when we see that they are of the highest of man's aspirations. They have no practical end, but enable man to experience his world around him more deeply. Attaining this type of awareness is probably the most ultimate drive of man. For the soaring enthusiasts, the measure of these satisfactions is very

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