



## THE 2000<sup>TH</sup> U. S. C BADGE

The list of C awards in the last issue of *Soaring* marks a significant milestone with C badge #2000 in the U. S. going to George F. Squillario of Valdeese, North Carolina, for a flight in a 1-26. There is nothing magical about a round number such as two thousand, but it is a sign of significant accomplishment. The past two years have seen over 600 new C badges awarded, and we went whizzing past the 2000 figure by 99 in the last list with no let-up in sight. This number of

new soaring pilots represents about 80% of the new SSA members during that same period. This shows that we are getting lots of new members who are rapidly becoming pilots. We hope that they continue to take advantage of the many opportunities for personal satisfaction and real achievement in soaring.

We have never met George, but we like to think that should we encounter him on the street we would know him, not only by the three gulls on his lapel, but by a little keener look in his eye than found in those who do not belong to the fraternity of *real* birdmen. He has triumphed, if only in a small way, over the forces of nature and bent them to his will. At this stage numbers don't matter. Whether his first soaring flight was five or fifty minutes is unimportant compared to the fact that he went *up* when a lesser pilot would have gone down.

The variety of goals in soaring is almost boundless. An interesting point is that they are so often expressed in numerical terms, so that a pilot can easily evaluate his own performance and set up his own par performance. The desire to excel is a constant goad for the soaring pilot. However skilled, he has always the opportunity to improve — to fly farther, faster, higher or longer.

Another important and satisfying goal awaits George, if indeed he has not already achieved it before this writing. This is his first cross-country soaring flight. He may not go very many miles, or come near the distance he set out to fly, but there is a finality about the first time you turn your back on the home airport and strike out alone that is not soon forgotten. No longer will the level expanse of the familiar runways lie just beneath the wing ready to save the careless pilot from the consequences of his derelictions. This is real flying — for keeps.

There is a thrill to the first ride back home after the first cross-country that can never again be duplicated. The pilot sees close-up the rock piles, trees, gullies and similar uncomfortable to impossible landing spots he flew over. He will look about him and say to himself, "I flew over all of that because I had confidence in myself and my wings. This patch of earth on this day I have conquered." Where else can one achieve such satisfaction? This is but one facet of the fascination which is soaring.

H. S.