

"SKY SAILING"

A NEW DOCUMENTARY FILM ABOUT SOARING

by RICHARD E. HUPPERTZ

Over twenty years have passed since John and Jim Love began filming "The Sailplane." The brothers produced the first professional sound film about soaring made in the United States, a film that captured the beauty of soaring over the ridges of Torrey Pines in California. They finished the film after the war, and since 1946 it has had wide distribution. "The Sailplane" has become a classic, particularly through the pioneering use of sailplane mounted cameras. These cameras did an excellent job of recording the graceful flights of William Hawley Bowlus over the rocky Pacific Coast.

Since the appearance of "The Sailplane" a number of American-made films on the subject have appeared. However it is safe to say that no full-scale documentaries have been produced in this country since "The Sailplane." True, the Army Air Force made some training films about military gliders during the war, but these were certainly not designed to promote soaring as a sport. Numerous television shorts, newsreels, and club films have appeared, but again these can not be classified as documentaries. Most of these films have helped to expose the general public to the fact that the sport does exist, but no concentrated effort has heretofore been made to produce a film of the nature and calibre of "The Sailplane."

In cooperation with Schweizer Aircraft, a new soaring film was recently completed. It was conceived almost five years ago. For the past eighteen months the film has been in the writing and production stages. It is titled "Sky Sailing;" its length, eighteen minutes. It was filmed in color and has a narration and music sound track.

The purpose of "Sky Sailing" is to create a fascination for the beauty of soaring flight, and to create confidence in the equipment and flight techniques used in soaring. The film shows a contemporary picture of soaring, one which includes all aspects of the sport ranging from the construction to the flying of a sailplane. Strictly technical data is omitted, for it was felt that this material is best approached after an initial interest and understanding of soaring is developed.

The structure of a sailplane seems to be a very unknown factor, even with people who are familiar with flying. There still apparently is a great segment of those people who have heard about soaring, who believes that sailplanes are a type of rice paper and bamboo kite. In order to destroy such ideas about sailplanes, "Sky Sailing" shows factory construction techniques, parts fabrication, engineering, stress testing, and quality control. Common misconceptions about sailplanes are not allowed to develop.

Straightforward illustrative motion picture photography helps answer some of the most common questions about soaring, such as; "how do you learn to fly a sailplane, where do you learn, in what type of aircraft, and after you learn what can you do with the sport?" Current soaring school techniques, contest flying, and related knowledge about clouds, terrain, and aircraft structure is thus developed, as well as the appeal of the sheer enjoyment of soaring.

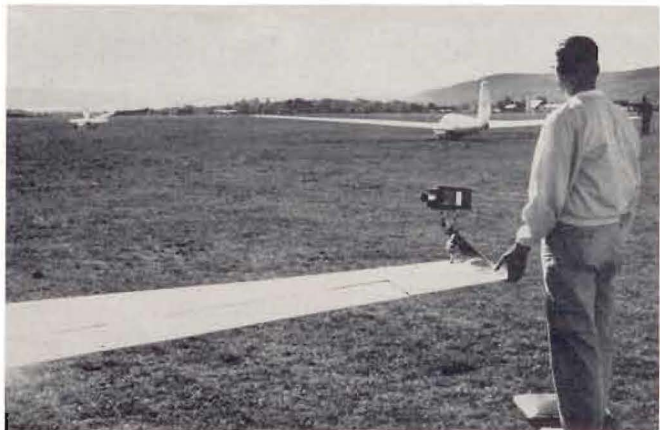
Two production techniques were used in "Sky Sailing" that have not commonly been used in previous films about soaring. They are, the use of sailplane mounted cameras and the use of specially composed and recorded theme music.

"The Sailplane" pioneered the professional use of sailplane mounted cameras. The short spring run of the spring-driven cameras used in those days required hundreds of flights to be made in order to obtain sufficient footage for the film. These cameras were also limited in the variety of lenses that were available. Ultra-wide angle lenses for 16mm cameras were unheard of at that time.

Ted Nelson, the designer of the famous Hummingbird sailplane, pioneered the use of the electrically-driven "gun cameras," which he mounted in various locations on his sailplane. These were the same cameras used in the wings of fighter aircraft to record the firing of the guns. Ted made extensive use of the gun cameras in his film "Soaring the Hummingbird Over the Sierras." The author is indebted to Ted Nelson for the background material he provided

Getting ready for a double tow during the filming of "Sky Sailing." Electric camera is mounted on wing tip in foreground. Wires buried in wing run to batteries and switch in cockpit. Air sequences were shot at 32 frames per second to eliminate any relative wing-to-fuselage movement encountered.

Photo by R. E. Huppertz



Enlarged frame taken by the Bell and Howell movie camera mounted on the wing tip of a Schweizer 1-23H-15 sailplane. Special ultra wide angle lens was used to show the entire sailplane. Black and white test rolls were exposed to establish camera angles and speeds before actual scenes for "Sky Sailing" were taken.

