

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

With somewhat mixed emotions, I find myself taking office as President of the Soaring Society of America at a time when the Society has just completed its third year of rapid growth with more soaring activity and interest in soaring in this country than ever before. That this is the case should be a source of satisfaction to all of us. Also, it is only natural that I am gratified by the confidence that the members and the Board of Directors have placed in me; however, I must admit to a feeling of dismay at the magnitude of the task when viewed in terms of the standards set by Harner Selvidge, Paul Schweizer and Floyd Sweet, as well as the many earlier officers of the Society who have done so much to achieve its growth and well-being.

The Soaring Society has been most fortunate in having been able to find able leaders who have also been in a position to contribute generously of their own time and office or secretarial support in carrying on the business of the Society. Until very recently the conduct of our business was completely dependent on such volunteer efforts and contributions. Four years ago, President Floyd Sweet pointed out that we could not always expect to find able men with the resources to fulfill the duties of the office in this manner. Also, it was recognized that this situation severely restricted the number of capable soaring enthusiasts who might be considered for the Presidency of the Society. When our first full time Executive Secretary was hired in 1957, one objective was to remove much of the routine work from the office of the President. Lloyd has done a magnificent job of this although both Paul Schweizer and Harner Selvidge continued to conduct a great deal of our business through their own offices. As I pointed out to the Directors before my election, I have neither the office resources nor the desire to continue this pattern. Instead, I intend to depend entirely on the efforts of Lloyd Licher and his small staff, the Directors and the Committee Chairmen, doing only those things myself which the President must do. In the long run, this should provide us all with a more representative group of officers who are perhaps more responsive to the desires of the members.

As has been true of all soaring groups with which I have had contact, the Soaring Society is fortunate in having a membership of individuals representing diverse interests. Some like to fly, some like to build sailplanes and others are interested in the organization or technical aspects of soaring. We would suffer greatly as a group if this were not the case. As many of you know, my personal interest in soaring stems from the beauty, challenge and sense of fulfillment which I experience from the hours spent in soaring flight. Although I have also found the time to take an active part in the affairs of the Society for many years, these efforts have been undertaken because I have recognized that a strong and active national Soaring Society was essential to making soaring easier, more available and more fun to you and to me.

The editorial in the December, 1960, *Soaring* covered our present situation very well. We are now on a plateau built upon the many solid accomplishments of our past efforts. However, much of what we have accomplished has been possible only because of the substantial financial aid from the Chichester duPont

Foundation which was received over the past four years. We are now faced with bringing our operating expenses more in line with the income derived from our membership dues and other activities. This can only be done by increasing our membership, raising the dues or curtailment of services, including not extending the 18 month trial period for the monthly publication of *Soaring* which ends this month. It appears that renewed efforts to increase our membership along with a limited curtailment of services and a greater dependence on the SSA working committees should permit us to continue *Soaring* on a monthly basis and reach a balanced operating budget within the next two years before our reserve and operating funds have been fully depleted. Your Regional Directors will decide our course of action when they meet in Dallas later this month.

Only in the past few years have the SSA Directors been elected on a regional basis. This was done to achieve a more representative government of the affairs of the Society. To be effective, the members and the Directors in each of the regions must work together closely. Normally, each Director will hold regional meetings before attending the SSA Board of Directors' meetings which are held in January and in the summer of each year. If you can attend such a meeting, do it, but by all means let your Director know what you like or do not like about the operation of the Society. The agenda for the January Directors' meeting has not been completed at the time of this writing but will include, in addition to our budget problem: ratification of the NAA/SSA Division agreement and the change in by-laws to permit an additional SSA Director to be appointed by NAA, sponsorship of a 1961 European excursion for SSA members, the part SSA State Governors should play now that SSA Directors are elected on a regional basis, consideration of ways in which we may improve the level of flight instruction including possible recommendations to the FAA for changes in the Commercial Glider Rating requirements and establishing minimum standards for glider flight instruction by the SSA, Should the SSA bid for the 1962 International Contest to be held in the United States?, recommendations for the FAI Standard Class, and the extent of SSA sponsorship of a soaring team to participate in the next International Contest. A formal agenda will be sent to each Director early in January. If possible, go over it with him; if not, send him your suggestions and comments.

Much of the work of the Soaring Society is carried on by the working committees appointed by the President. A complete list of these committees and the address of each chairman is available in the SSA Directory sent to each SSA voting member. If you have questions, need help, or would like to help in these areas, contact the committee chairmen directly.

The Society is growing rapidly. It has a limited full time staff and a relatively small number of Officers, Directors and committee workers, but its greatest asset is the large number of individual members who are the Soaring Society of America. By all of us continuing to work together we can go on accruing the benefits and satisfaction that are derived from a stronger SSA and increased soaring activity in the United States throughout this 1961 New Year.

PAUL F. BIKLE