



Photo by George Uveges

## THE APPEAL TO REASON

by Gill Robb Wilson

My friend, a justly famed big game hunter and I, were pursuing the elusive grouse in the north woods and had paused, empty handed, to meditate our frustration.

"What am I doing anyhow—chasing a handful o' feathers with a popgun," he observed sourly. "I feel downright silly."

"As a grouse hunter you are kind o' silly," I agreed. "What you need to make you look good is an elephant gun in your hand and something to roar at you."

And that's the way it is with soaring—no power in your hand and nothing to roar at you. Anyone who needs these ingredients to enhance his satisfactions had better stay away from the sailplanes.

Frankly, if I had my "druthers" for pilot training, a course in the art and science of powerless flight would precede all instruction. I regard a knowledge of the air ocean as initially requisite to airman-

ship. On the other hand, I'm sure this is sheer idealism to be scoffed at in a world where the ready availability of power and design can shrug off the demands of art. Those who claim "it's easy to learn to fly" are absolutely right—up to a point. And "up to a point" is as far as most pilots care to contemplate, since beyond that point loom the demands of dedicated professionalism where airmanship again comes into its own.

Why then bring up the subject of powerless flight?

For several good reasons.

There is always the chance that the curiosity of some thoughtful pilot will be piqued and perhaps recruited to the cause of art and science in flying.

Should such a one happen to be of the caliber of a Dick duPont or Lew Barringer or Frank Hawks or of some of our great soaring experts of present times, the whole airman's world would be in their debt. Beginning with the Wright

brothers, there has probably never lived an aircraft designer who did not draw on the experience of motorless flight.

And there is a second reason to do what one may to assure that in the format of federal promotion and control of aviation, the role of gliding and soaring be accorded thoughtful and sympathetic treatment.

The only appeal motorless flight can bring to its cause is an appeal to reason. It has no pressure of numbers. It carries no political big stick. It does not shout from the market place. Its contribution to the history of aviation is its only weapon—that and the continuing contribution it makes as research delves in the problems of the space age.

There is no established reason to believe that motorless flight will be denied its place in the evolving formula of air traffic control, yet its voice is such a whisper in contrast to the thunder of the elephant guns and the influences that roar, that one must always be alert that the appeal to reason is not neglected.