

# HIGH ALTITUDE OXYGEN TRAINING APPROVED FOR SOARING PILOTS

by TOM PAGE, Director-at-Large

A rapid increase in the number of soaring flights into altitudes where oxygen is a necessity has created a new training need. These flights are typically made in single-place sailplanes. Instruction in oxygen use by soaring pilots has often been the do-it-yourself variety, with only occasional experienced advice on the ground relating to equipment and technique. Considering the stakes — life itself — the quality of preparation for high altitude soaring can be improved.

After meeting an initial barrier—that our employers could not certify that we need oxygen in our work and thus assume liability for training — the SSA has now been able to get FAA approval for soaring pilots to take oxygen training offered by the Air Force upon each pilot's personal waiver of liability. The Federal Aviation Agency acts as the channel through which all civilian pilots are scheduled for this training.

The training consists of ten hours of classroom work and demonstration of oxygen discipline in an altitude chamber. The program takes one and one-half days. Some 30 Air Force bases in the United States have Physiological Training Units which conduct oxygen indoctrination. Some of these bases offer the so-called "passenger course," suitable for soaring pilots.

The SSA Board of Directors approved a suggestion in July that applications for this training by soaring pilots be processed through Regional Directors, acting as liaison with AF units and FAA. In each SSA Region, one of the Directors may share the job with SSA-designated instructors at busy altitude soaring sites. A list of these persons through whom oxygen training application will be funnelled will be published soon in *Soaring*. Each will have a list of the Air Force bases at which this training is conducted. Interested and qualified soaring pilots should get in touch with these regional liaison officers to get the application forms.

Two reasons dictate this liaison

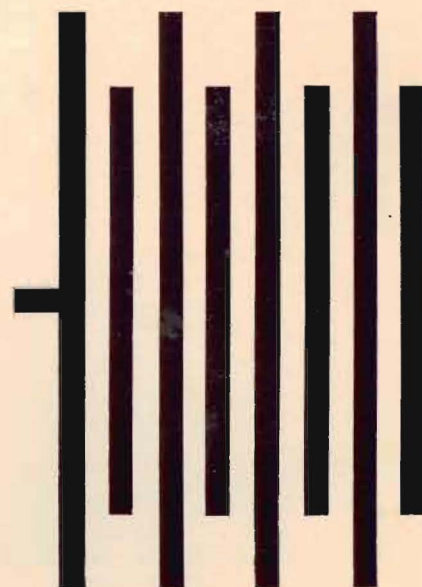
step. First, each application must be accompanied by a \$5.00 non-refundable fee, payable to the FAA. The liaison men can make informal contact with nearby AF training units to get tentative schedules for group or individual training so that the applicants' time preferences will most nearly match the available training slots. They will then forward groups of applications for scheduling through the Physiological Support Service of the Civil Aeromedical Research Institute at the FAA Center in Oklahoma City. Applicants will be notified of time and place for training by this FAA unit.

Secondly, the SSA coordinator of this program had to assure the FAA that only those soaring pilots ready for high altitude flight will be recommended. As general criteria an applicant should have Private or Commercial Glider rating and at least the Silver C, or some equivalent level of training and experience. The liaison men will return premature applications.

The Air Force recommends that oxygen course trainees study Air Force Pamphlet 160-10-3, *Your Body in Flight* (U.S. Govt. Print. Ofc., \$1.00), before training. SSA, of course, recommends Chapter 7 of the American Soaring Handbook, "Equipment I: Instruments and Oxygen."

This training opportunity represents a genuine interest on the part of both the Air Force and the Federal Aviation Agency in high altitude flight safety for soaring. The SSA hopes this service to members will encourage new and more extensive exploration and reporting of high altitude soaring conditions. The FAA has recognized the airspace needs for such flights by designating areas in which high soaring flights may be made without adherence to regular air traffic control requirements. Wave flights have been made at more than ten sites in this country and the full range of these phenomena, both as to locations and seasonal variations, has only been hinted.

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