

## COMMENT

In greener days, before I had shed so much innocence, it was my impression that the soaring pilot was a fiery young Apollo of the cosmos, flashing across sun-drenched skies, guided in his course by divine intuition, disdainful of any impediments to his aureate, aerial way. With time this image has given way to another, that of a rather careful technician plodding cautiously from one finely balanced set of decisions to the next, assisted by those habits of character derived from consistent and patient endeavor.

Concurrently it was necessary to abandon the idea that the Flight Story is the *ne plus ultra* of the pilot's reading diet. For those interested as much in the means as the ends of soaring flight the Technical Article is obviously of primary importance. Even the most cursory look through the Membership Renewal Forms revealed a very large proportion of low numbers in the Technical Articles column. Although I was personally somewhat pleased to find that Flight Stories finished in first place I don't feel that the slender lead of five points is at all significant. An assessment of another 247 sheets might well produce an upset. **Flight Stories** and **Technical Articles** must therefore be accorded equal importance as material for *Soaring* readers.

Good material in these categories is by no means common. The usual Flight Story tends to be a tedious enumeration of climb rates, altitudes achieved, speeds flown and such like. Accounts such as Dick Johnson's *Touch and Go Over the Pampas* and Bikle's *557 Miles! Sun Valley to Swift Current*, are extremely rare, even rarer than such outstanding flights it seems. First-rate Technical Articles are no more common and are submitted for review to the appropriate SSA committee prior to publication. This process, although somewhat cumbersome, is an essential safeguard for magazine readers. (Technical articles with many equations are also quite costly to set in type. A piece dealing with optimum cross-country speeds is currently hanging fire because the typesetting costs are far beyond the limitations of the magazine budget.)

Considerable attention is being given to the matter of obtaining Technical Articles of merit. We invite suggestions for such articles from readers and will publish these, as they arrive, in the Letters column.

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A good **Pilot Report** would seem to be in the enviable position of combining the first four items on our preference list inasmuch as it constitutes, at best, a Flight Story, a Technical Article and a Sailplane Description as well as a Pilot Report. We consider Bob Moore's Phoebe story (December, 1965, *Soaring*) to be a model of good reporting and can only hope for more such material in the future from people as perceptive, experienced and able as Mr. Moore.

**Sailplane Descriptions** are probably one of the easiest items to provide due to the general willingness and cooperativeness of designers and manufacturers. While touching on standards of excellence we would like to note the superb drawings of the K-11 and AS-12 done by Lynn Christensen for the March issue and hope that he can be prevailed upon to provide more such professional work for the magazine. *Soaring* will simply pass on what performance figures it receives and trust that readers are wise enough to treat them accordingly.

**How-to-do-it** items are perennially popular and certainly very much in order in light of the current intense interest in kit- and home-building. Would-be contributors of how-to-do-it articles are frequently pretty busy doing it themselves. Our case in point is Dick Schreder who has such a series pending but is currently extremely busy with the many aspects of the HP-14 project.

**Sailplane Photos**, which marks the mid-point in our list, needs little comment beyond our grateful acknowledgment to contributors. The increase of the payment for the cover photograph from five to ten dollars is a tiny step in the direction of saying thank you to those individuals (Alex Aldott chief among them) who have supplied, and continue to supply *Soaring* with such excellent photographs. The Frontispiece will be considered as a display case for pictures of exceptional merit, not as a must feature for every issue.

The remaining five items on the preference list will be given somewhat briefer coverage. What was said above of Flight Stories might be applied as well to **Contest Stories**. Their merit would seem to be more in the telling than in the contest results. Witness *Meanwhile Back at the Pass . . .* and *Decisions, Decisions*. A **Beginner's Section** has been written and published and is called the American Soaring Handbook. These handbooks are meant to provide basic information and to circumvent the necessity of republishing such material continually in the magazine. **World News**, we feel sure, is of interest to soaring pilots in proper measure and you will be getting some from time to time, possibly a bit more than the magazine has carried in the past. A Foreign News Editor would be a welcome addition to the staff and anyone wanting that job is invited to contact the editor. With this issue we begin a series on one-page **Site Descriptions** which have been in the works for some time and will continue as long as we get material from readers. And we will have **Personality Sketches**, if not **Personality Stories**, mainly to accompany and embellish articles of other types. Although human beings may be considered less interesting than max. lift coefficients and drag spar fittings we do feel they deserve an occasional smidgen of space.

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The foregoing analysis and commentary can be considered to constitute the general editorial policy of *Soaring*, as far as subject matter is concerned, in the immediate future. There is more to a magazine than content, however. My principal concern during my first six months as editor has been with the presentability and readability of *Soaring*, areas where I felt rather obvious improvements could be made. During the shifting about there were, inevitably, some excesses which must have offended individuals of good taste. They offended me at times, but I considered them justified by the terms of that philosophy which holds that omelettes don't get made without eggs getting broken. Changes in the future, one area excepted, will be more modest and experiments less frequent.

Finally it is hoped that this digest of the Membership Renewal Forms proves to be as valuable to the readers and contributors of *Soaring* as it has been to the editor and that it provides all persons concerned with knowledge that will help make the magazine as good as it can possibly be.