

SAFETY CORNER

This month's Safety Corner will consist of a miscellany of suggestions and reports that have come in recently and which should be brought to the attention of all soaring pilots. I would therefore like to thank again all those who have taken the time to report on accidents and make suggestions helpful in promoting safety, and encourage others to send me any ideas they consider pertinent. In addition, if you come across safety articles in other publications and feel that they should be reprinted in *Soaring* let me know so that we may request permission to do so.

There has been a recent incident in which a light-weight pilot, making a first flight in a Schweizer 1-26 by auto pulley tow, spun directly off the top of the launch because the center of gravity of the aircraft was not within the approved limits. Very luckily, a recovery was made after two turns and a safe landing followed, but the lesson is nevertheless all too plain: make sure the C.G. is always within the required range or the sailplane will be unsafe at best and possibly uncontrollable.

Several times this past summer canopies have been left unlatched or have come unlatched after take-off, resulting in obvious difficulties in the cockpit and very erratic flight on tow until a safe release could be made. Now a first report has been received of a very recent fatality resulting directly from an unlatched canopy: a Schweizer 2-32 canopy opened during take-off and the pilot elected to stay on tow rather than release. Moments later the towing airplane was being forced into the ground by the maneuvers of the sailplane and released the tow; the sailplane stalled and spun in while attempting to return to the airport. This accident will be covered more fully when further reports are received, but meanwhile it is obvious that the pre-flight cockpit check must include a check of the canopy to be sure it is closed and fully latched.

We have received a warning concerning some of the surplus parachutes presently being sold to our members. It appears that in some cases 26-foot canopies are being packed in 28-foot containers, which allows the parachute to settle to the bottom of the container. Since the correct operation of the release cable depends on the container being fully packed it follows that a small canopy in a large container causes the release cable to be bent at a sharp angle which makes it difficult or impossible to pull, and there have been instances where sport jumpers have had to use their emergency parachutes when they couldn't pull their main ones because of this defect. Ask your rigger about this situation, particularly if you have recently obtained a surplus parachute. And while we are on the subject, if there is any reader who can write an article or make suggestions on the safest way to bail out of a sailplane I would appreciate hearing from him.

Several situations have occurred involving tow ropes and cables which should be mentioned. In one case a towplane carrying a photographer endangered a sailplane by flying around it with the tow rope trailing in the way. This is obviously dangerous and no towplane with rope still attached should fly anywhere near another aircraft. In another instance a car doing auto towing backed over the polystyrene rope which was still attached to the back of the car, thus crushing and

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stretching the rope which broke during a subsequent tow causing an accident involving serious injury and extensive damage. Also, on a winch launch the wire somehow picked up a large stick lying on the ground and threw it so that it struck the tail of the sailplane while in the air. Both vertical and horizontal surfaces were badly damaged, and the pilot was lucky to be able to land although his controls were jammed almost solid. The moral of course is to make sure there is no trash lying about the airport and in particular on the normal take-off and landing areas. And in another somewhat similar incident a trailer clamp, dropped in the grass during assembly of a Schweizer 1-26, turned up later in the wheel well where it could easily have jammed the wheel and caused an accident.

As a final thought, all our soaring pilots—advanced as well as beginners—should obtain and study all the available chapters of the American Soaring Handbook as well as Parts 61 and 91 of the Federal Aviation Regulations, in order to have a solid basis of knowledge on which to build good safety habits.

MILES COVERDALE

BOOK REVIEW

THE CHALLENGING SKIES, The Colorful Story of Aviation's Most Exciting Years 1919-39, by C. R. Roseberry. Doubleday & Co., N.Y.C. \$9.95. Physically this is a lot of book for the money, being 9 x 11¼-ins. face-on and containing 533 pages and 300 photographs. Of particular interest to soaring pilots will be Chapter 20, *On Silent Wings* (pp. 213-221) which deals with gliding.

The particular 21-year period chosen by the author was, of course, the most vital in the entire history of the sport, and an entire book the size of Mr. Roseberry's could easily be written about those golden days. The nine pages devoted to the time in question are well used, however. The exploits of Klemperer, the Vampyr builders, of Kegel, Kronfeld and Hirth are naturally included.

Gliding in the U.S. is introduced via the 1928 Cape Cod expedition sponsored by J. C. Penney Jr. and the contributions of Bowlus, Lindbergh, Warren Eaton, Richard duPont, Frank Hawks and the Schweizer brothers are duly mentioned. The chapter closes with mention of Woody Brown's 263-mile distance record set in 1939, which item merits a little footnote. Woody, who now lives in Hawaii, recently soloed again after a lay-off of 25 years.

RICHARD MILLER