

EDITORIAL

You And Me And Soaring Magazine

Each month, in response to the mailing of the magazine, a certain proportion of the SSA membership responds with letters of comment. These letters provide the editor with endlessly varied points of view concerning the quality and contents of *Soaring*. Many of them — many more than would be apparent from reading the Letters column — are kind, complimentary, understanding and enthusiastic. Such letters are good for the editor's morale, and hence a vital factor in the quality of the magazine.

Other letters, and other portions of the complimentary letters, contain suggestions as to how the magazine might be improved, comment concerning the features the reader likes or dislikes and recommendations as to the type of material that should or should not appear in *Soaring*. Not infrequently (as was the case with Paul Hardy's letter, printed in the December issue) the editor's judgment in determining the basic practices and policies of the magazine is called into question.

It is almost needless to point out that this give and take between the readers and the editor is essential to the publication of a magazine which, after all, belongs to the membership and not to the editor. Notwithstanding this consideration, it is obvious from many of the comments that there is some misunderstanding, or at least a want of appreciation, as to how *Soaring* comes to be each month. It is perhaps timely, therefore — as we begin a new year, with a new cover — to review the nature of the partnership with shapes the magazine.

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Material for *Soaring* comes from two main sources. The majority of the bread-and-butter items, which provide the foundation of the magazine, either originate at headquarters or are done in conjunction with individuals who have generously undertaken the necessary month-to-month work. We are speaking here of features such as the Safety Corner, The Sailplane Fleet, FAI and ABC Badge listings, Long Flights, Wave Flights and the like. Apart from this, and advertising aside, we have the main body of editorial material which gives the magazine substance and variety. With the exception of certain articles reprinted from other publications, this material comes from *you*, the readers. Furthermore, it comes on a voluntary basis. That's the way things have been for the thirty years of the magazine's history, and the way things are likely to be for some time to come.

Soaring, therefore, is a partnership in which you, the reader-member, and I, your appointed representative, share the responsibility for success. I am as completely dependent on you for the material which goes into the magazine each month as you are on me for the monthly appearance of *Soaring*. To a limited ex-

tent, of course, the editor can, and does, act as a reporter, gathering information and photographs against the future needs of the magazine. He also initiates correspondence which he hopes will provide new, timely or fresh material. Beyond that, however, his effectiveness stops and his reliance on spontaneous contributions begins.

[The Technical Symposium, scheduled for May of this year, is, in part, another effort to get articles of merit for the magazine. Readers are invited to review the short article concerning the symposium which appeared on page 15 of the September, 1966, *Soaring* and are urged to contact Symposium Chairman Bruce Carmichael (34795 Camino Capistrano, Capistrano Beach, California) regarding suitable papers.]

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Not every contribution submitted to *Soaring*, let it be noted, is suitable for publication. Some, although well written, are not considered to be of sufficient interest to magazine readers to warrant publication. Others duplicate or compete with articles recently published or in preparation. Many simply do not meet the standards of quality which the editor hopes to maintain in the magazine, so must be rejected. But no contributor, because his work has been turned down on one or two occasions, should abandon his efforts. Writing for publication is not a simple business by any means. Several attempts may be necessary before you strike the correct balance of subject material, treatment and timeliness that are necessary to connect.

To sum up then: The content of *Soaring* is still largely determined by what is submitted for publication. From what is available we choose what we feel is the best. If it appears at times that high-powered contest reports or descriptions of exotic sailplanes outweigh more rudimentary material — and that we have failed to maintain that elusive quality, balance — we can only suggest that the former subjects are more attractive to the writer as well as to the general reader. And we would like to amplify the point suggested in *Who You Are & What You Want* (April, 1965, pages 12 and 13): Basic material is available from sources such as the American Soaring Handbook and other excellent texts; to repeat this sort of information each month, rather than treating up-to-date developments, would result in a rather dull magazine.

We hope that, from the foregoing comments, you have gained some insight into the reasons for the obvious, and admitted, shortcomings of *Soaring*. We further hope that, should these shortcomings prove for any reason insupportable, you consider your share in the matter of magazine content and the steps necessary to set things aright.

RICHARD MILLER