



# The CG-4A

Army Air Forces Photo

by Lt. Leeds Mitchell

**T**HE most important glider in the country today is the CG-4A, the Army's standard motorless troop and cargo transport. The picture has by necessity changed from the days of slim-winged, clean and beautiful sailplanes. God willing, we'll soon see them again, but in the interim the job is to be done with a bulky, snub-nosed, square-winged, craft which, to the uninitiated is a definite shock to the aesthetic eye and usually calls forth oaths of disparagement.

However, it is axiomatic that anything proved useful—anything which, thoughtfully designed for a specific job of work, performs that work with efficiency and ease—becomes, in the eyes of those who understand it, beautiful. Look, for instance, at river barges: every line is blunt, yet without such lines the craft would be useless for its purpose. The same goes for many vehicles of land, sky and water.

The CG-4A is one of these. I know the glider, and I know what she can do, so to me, as to most Army pilots who have really used her, she is beautiful.

Take, for instance, yesterday. We—a group of average glider pilots—were practicing landing in formation into a very small field, previously unknown to any of us except by maps and drawings. A field surrounded by tall trees, planted alternately in corn and soft, sandy weeds. Nine gliders were pulled near the field at 200' on a base leg. Prop wash was rampant. Pilots were fighting the controls in both tugs and gliders. The first released a little late, putting him high over the field, some few hundred yards back of it. All the other gliders released in nearly the same location.

Get the picture of that before going further: eighteen aircraft in fairly close formation, three-tow elements in

echelon to the right, each element approximately 700 feet behind the other. The first glider releases, leaving a tow rope dangling in front of him. His glider is slowing down while sixteen other aircraft are tearing at him at the same elevation from behind. If he should turn even slightly from his flight path, 1300 hp. meat choppers could chew up his glider and his passengers like a hamburger grinder. However, no pilot changes his flight path, the tugs pull up and out of the scramble, finally leaving nine gliders in a long trail for their planned positions over the trees and into the field ahead.

To return to this first glider: I was sitting in the hot seat. A goodly number of men were at least physically behind me in the ship, and a co-pilot was sweating it out alongside of me. What in h— do you do with a heavy airplane when there is only one small place to go and you are d— certain to overshoot that place if you don't think up something fast? Many precious seconds are spent while you dissipate the excess speed given by your tow. During this time you can use spoilers. You may also slip, since the glider will slip very handily. However, you must utilize forward slips, since any change in direction of flight path will, to say the least, embarrass some other pilot who is making his plan with necessary regard for yours. While doing all of these things, it is almost necessary that you adjust your elevator trim tabs, because your glider becomes increasingly nose-heavy as you dissipate your speed.

I was busy with both hands and feet, and using my knees to hold the wheel back. My eyes were watching the field too far below with tense fascination. I came abreast of my destination, started my turn. It was obvious that forward slips and spoilers were not going