

# YANKEE PILOT



## *An Open Letter To the Private Pilots and Students of New England*

● When the hurricane struck New England, airplane operating companies jumped into the breach with aid that only they could offer. Their help saved numberless lives.

● Many of those companies lost heavily in the hurricane through damage to planes and equipment. You can show your gratitude for the service rendered to New England by aviation. A little extra flying this month by students and private pilots; a few lagging accounts settled up, will help the operators immeasurably. They are more than entitled to any cooperation you can give.

*The Editors*

Volume I

# YANKEE PILOT

Number 5

*The Magazine of Eastern Aviation*

CONTENTS for OCTOBER, 1938

**THE COVER:** John P. Putnam, Boston sportsman flyer, won the race for light planes at Hyannis, Cape Cod, in his Aeromarine Cub. He received a propeller-clock as prize, and to make it official, the trophy was presented by Mary Brian, motion picture actress, who is shown with him on the cover. The bottle of Coca-Cola is his own.—*Staff Photo.*

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**YANKEE PILOT'S PHOTOGRAPHERS:** The picture of the Ninety-Niners on Page Twelve is by Jean Adams, Boston . . . The pictures used in connection with Mr. Harris's article were taken by the author . . . All other photographs were made by Yankee Pilot's staff.

**YANKEE PILOT'S WRITERS:** H. H. Harris is president of General Alloys Company, lives all year 'round on his yacht Guardian at Boston. His wife, Hortense Harris, is a private flyer . . . Robert M. Fletcher is an attorney at Brockton, Mass.

JOHN A. MACDONALD  
News Editor

FRED S. TOBEY  
Editor

JOSEPH GARSIDE  
Business Manager

# Off to the Races!

By ROBERT M. FLETCHER

I SUPPOSE I start this with two strikes on me. In the first place, I'm just an amateur who recently fell out of the nest and has been drying his wings on less than four days and nights of actual flying time, and in the second place I'm a lawyer by profession. But the precise and technical accounts in *YANKEE PILOT* of my more exalted brethren who have been scrambling around the countryside the past summer have impressed me, and I thought that for variety's sake I might recite my own experiences, high point of which, to date, has been a slightly jittery jaunt to the National Air Races at Cleveland.

I had been groping around for a good hobby that would help me forget the other fellow's troubles, which were beginning to get under my skin after four years of getting started, as we lawyers call it. I picked flying, and found myself in more legal difficulties, confronted with the Civil Air Regulations, the damndest set of statutes I ever had reason to study.

I found flying all that it was represented to be; a grand sport, either for business or pleasure. A rather jealous mistress, she commands attention constantly to the flight at hand. Her bag of tricks is inexhaustible and when you cease to learn you might as well cease to live. Remember the time on that swell afternoon when the sun had plenty of space between itself and the western horizon, as you thought, while you were cruising at a good safe altitude on the way home. And the little catch in your windpipe when you finally got wise to the fact that objects on the ground were casting no shadows. Of course not, for the sun had set according to the ground angle and you still had twenty minutes to go, and things have a way of getting dark plenty fast. That's more or less what I mean.

I GOT to soloing the first part of June after an enjoyable workout with my instructor. The front seat looked empty and the ship climbed for the moon, but the first solo landing was regular enough, and not at all like the landing I had tried to make from 1000 feet up, right over the field, on my first flight with the instructor.

It was about a week after the first solo that I got into a stratum of itchininess at about 1200 feet. The airport looked too damn familiar. So came my

*An amateur dries his wings in the big breeze at Cleveland—and gives us a refreshing slant on private flying.*

first cross country flight alone—an eight-minute jaunt to my home. I remember gazing earnestly at the ground-making copious mental notes of playground locations, streets without wires, portions of cemetery areas as yet untenanted and even safe-looking clumps of trees that might lessen the shock—so I thought—of an emergency landing. I returned to the airport mentally exhausted, having travelled figuratively at least one hundred miles, and with a strained ache between my shoulder blades and a dead sure feeling that the engine didn't sound the same.

BUT in a week this was old stuff, and I had logged airports all over southeastern Massachusetts and been dubbed "XC Bob" by my disgusted instructors, who had been doing more worrying about my getting through the coming B. A. C. exam than I had.

My wife and two children had become accustomed to my excuses for absence,

centering around the airport, but when it got to be week ends it was almost the last straw with the family. I had found a field near Lakeville, Mass., where I could duck down and get in a swim with some hunting pals of mine. They usually greeted me by piling out of the camp with an old horseblanket which they hopefully extended for a windsock, although I never could get any wind direction from it.

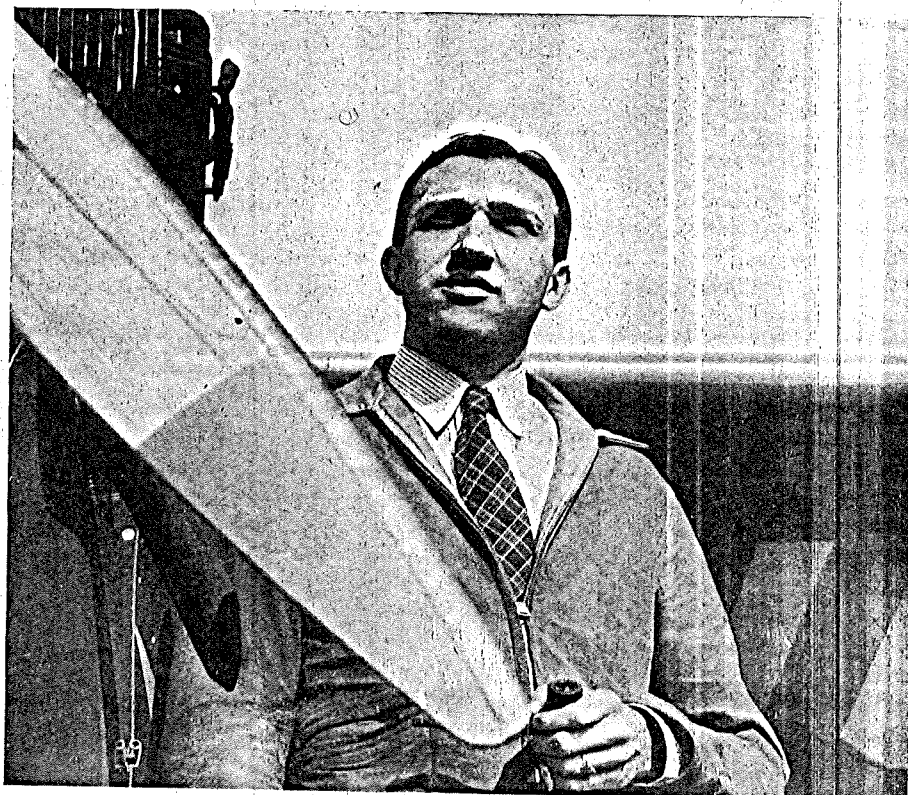
And then came the irresistible incentive. Someone posted me a circular telling about the National Air Races at Cleveland. I decided I must get my private rating before that date and make the trip. All my spare minutes in the ensuing days were spent practising flying maneuvers, and my evenings crawling over sectional maps pinned to the living room floor, figuring bearings and courses for Cleveland.

At last came the day of the exam. My strenuous practise stood me in good stead, and the seal stamped in the log book sure looked good to me.

On the day I was to leave for Cleveland, my wife, who was going with me as far as Rochester, N. Y., arrived at

*(Continued on page 18)*

Bob Fletcher started flying last spring, to forget other people's troubles.



# OFF TO THE RACES!

(Continued from page 15)

the Norwood Airport in an automobile filled with luggage. It took twenty minutes to prune down and repack the miscellaneous assortment of feminine necessities amid my wife's constant refusals to put one foot in the plane unless such and such was permitted to go, in spite of the tag on the baggage compartment marked "20 pounds maximum."

**N**EW YORK was our first day's destination, but head winds changed it to Norwalk, Conn., with an intermediate stop at Essex for my wife to recover from the effects of bumpy air. Next morning we passed close to the site of the coming World's Fair in New York—an impressive sight—and dropped into Holmes Field, Queens, Long Island. After a day lost on business in New York we headed north for Albany.

I cruised at 3000 feet until we were considerably beyond the George Washington bridge, because there just isn't any decent place to come down in the mare's-nest of apartment houses and industrial tangles of upper Manhattan Island in case a motor goes on a sit-down strike. We had more head winds, so it took us two hours and a half to get to Albany.

Following the Mohawk Valley up from Albany is a cinch, and after that you trail part of the old Erie Canal to Syracuse and then the State Canal and the railroad or power lines to Rochester. Lake Ontario can be spotted from the air twenty-five or thirty miles to the north, and the Finger Lakes, relatively the same distance, to the south.

It was seven o'clock, EST., when we arrived at Rochester, and we were tired. Adverse winds had slowed our flying time to six and a half hours from New York City. Early next morning, leaving Marge with friends in Rochester, I joined two other Cubs departing for the sixty mile hop to Buffalo, on the Cleveland route. Due to poor visibility we figured to fly by compass, with myself in the lead as the others had no compasses, but I couldn't seem to hold a decent course, due to gustiness, so we all moved north to a railroad and completed the trip by riding the rods into Buffalo.

We had two hundred miles to put behind us before nightfall if we were to make the races on Labor Day, so despite a stiff wind we took off. The wind was sure playing a swing tune on the Beaufort scale, high in the middle sevens. It was no day for a Cub. The south shore of Lake Erie would have made it simple enough to crab along

the course toward Dunkirk, but the wind proceeded to get worse instead of better, and came off the lake in heavy, uneven gusts, whipping up the waves into spray-blown crests.

This leg of the trip soon became a genuine grind. My legs got stiff on the pedals, and two or three times I actually caught myself looking around to see if the tail surfaces were still with me. My companions were no longer in sight, but on two or three occasions bigger craft passed me. My greatest humiliation was when a long freight train on the tracks below slowly snaked itself ahead and pulled its red caboose out of sight. After about two hours of this I began to ask myself why in hell I had taken up flying.

I soon found myself wondering just what my position was, because my gas was rapidly disappearing, and as the gauge dropped, my anxiety correspondingly rose. A billboard informed me that I was somewhere in Pennsylvania. Where in the devil were the small settlements of Westfield and Ripley, with their airports? Fifteen minutes went by and the gauge came to rest on its metal bushing. Through the haze ahead I could make out a landed hook projecting into the lake. That must be the city of Erie—but could I make it? There were twenty miles to go. But to sit down now meant a long delay, and anyhow I doubted if the plane would stay put on a hayfield in that blow. On the other hand, to run out of gas and land without motor would be worse. I decided to chance it, however, comforting myself with what someone had told me about the gas holding out for a half hour after the gauge struck rock bottom.

Minutes ticked by. Finally I sighted Erie Municipal Airport. The half hour was gone, but the good old 40 kept turning. Shoving the elevators into a good steep power glide I gave her the works for the east-and-west runway, and crossed my fingers. Four miles to go. I leaned forward to help her, and she saw me through.

A gang piled out of the hangar and came tearing down the field to hold me on the ground. The plane didn't roll five feet after landing. That was some breeze. Three hours and five minutes from Buffalo, and the nine-gallon tank guzzled eight and eight-tenths gallons when it was refilled. Close enough.

I heard an airport official say, "We ain't flying Cubs today." He glanced significantly in my direction, and I felt like a little boy caught with the jam

jar. "Better wait a while if you got ideas about Cleveland," said he.

But after two more hours I was in the middle of another endurance contest with the wind, crabbing for Cleveland. I didn't make it that night. Instead, the sun and I went down together at a place called Chagrin Falls. The field was mapped as an airport.

A farmer, chewing tobacco furiously, clambered over a rail fence and ambled up. "Where you from?" said he. "Never seen such a mess of them things as I seen today. What in hell's doin'?" While I attempted to explain the Races to this man who lived less than thirty miles from the Cleveland Airport, a monoplane dropped in hurriedly. "Boston," says I. "St. Louis," says he; and we set about fixing up our planes for the night. Incidentally, the farmer turned out to be a swell old-timer who knew more about planes and flying than he cared to admit. I hopped him around the field before we left, and shall never forget the trouble I had trying to pry his big feet into the front cockpit.

Labor Day dawned bright and clear for the Thompson race, and I came into Cleveland at about nine-thirty. Hundreds of planes had arrived in the two days preceding, and were staked down in gobs between the hangars, looking, from the air, like a gigantic patchwork

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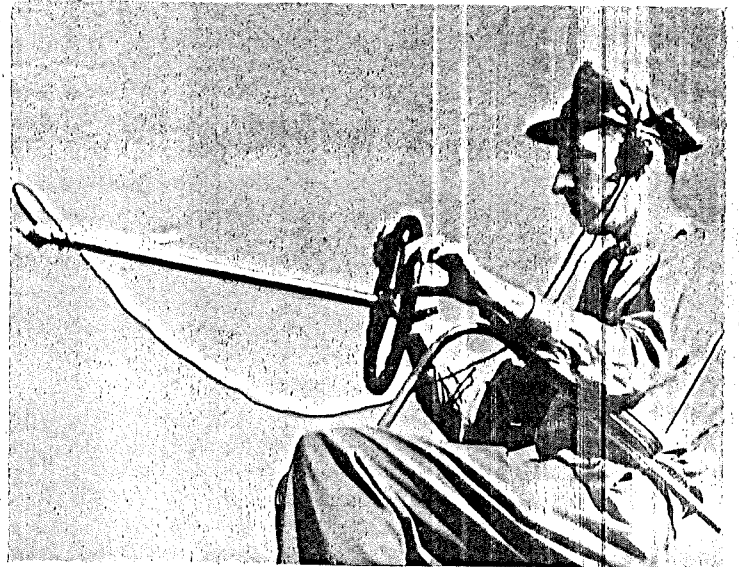
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### "TRIP SEVEN" MUST GO THROUGH!

Caught for all time by Yankee Pilot's amazingly active candid cameraman, the incident of the famous "Trip Seven" is presented exclusively above. Although his plane has outdistanced him, Captain Harry Achorn, with set jaw, is carrying on to the bitter end as every pilot must. Meanwhile Bud Rich's pup is debating the delicate ethics of staying with the ship or jumping back to join the pilot.

quilt of many colors. Somehow I managed to get down, through a traffic situation that must have had the officials bughouse, as the atmosphere was heavily charged with ships, coming and going.

I found that my lost companions had already arrived, and we all finally landed in the bleachers on the far side of the field. The papers estimated 120,000 people in the stands, not counting the rubbernecks outside the park. The weather was tailored for air racing. The clear blue sky was relieved here and there by filmy white clouds and the sun, although hot, was not insufferable.

Up to 4 P. M., the time of the Thompson Trophy race, the program was amply larded with foreign and domestic stunt pilots, interspersed with rip-roaring maneuvers by U. S. Navy Fighting Squadron Five from Norfolk, Va.—eighteen planes—and U. S. Army Air Corps, 27th Pursuit Squadron, Michigan. You're missing something if you don't get to see these babies sometime. How they travel in one blurry knot, close to three hundred miles an hour like a swarm of angry bees, when the wing tips are shuffling each other like a deck of cards is more than I can figure out. When they finished, the ships taxied in a long line to the front of the stands and then wheeled as one plane to face the mob for a hand.

The aerial monkey-business got a big hand from the crowd. Captain Dick Granere, in a stovepipe hat with an old Curtiss Junior pusher for a vehicle (labelled "D T's 4") engaged

in close calls with Mike Murphy, piloting a Cub on pontoons. Murphy got off from the top of an automobile truck and landed square on the bare field, pontoons and all. Then he went scrapping around the field and got the ship off the ground again while everybody shouted advice about going over to Lake Eric for a landing, but in he came and shoved right up to the speakers' stand for his bow, while the plane came to rest rocking back and forth on the pontoons like a grandma's old chair. It took ten attendants to drag it off the field. The revolutionary Feisler

Storch airplane was given a workout by the German, Emil Kropf. Alongside this they had a stock autogyro performing for comparison. The gyro would also hang quiet but the wide-slotted German contraption actually flew backward. (I got in some licks with my camera on this, as I figured even my 1/50th-second shutter could stand the strain of that sort of aviation.)

Some of the racing planes in the main event reminded me of Indianapolis speed cars, except for two fins sticking

(Continued on page 22)



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miniature camera and want to amuse yourself, OK. If you want good aerial pictures with any regularity, forget it.

The best photographs are taken flying low and slow. Haze destroys photographic definition in almost geometric proportion to distances in closely populated areas with domestic and industrial smoke and near bodies of water. Darker yellow filters such as G-2 can be used under ideal lighting conditions to reduce haze. Darker filters give you contrasty clouds and if you like snowy white clouds like cameos against a very dark sky, or yacht sails shining white, get a red filter. Do not waste your money buying low priced filters which slow your speed.

Eight by ten inch enlargements, bought from commercial photographers, should not cost over 75 cents and 11x14

inch prints over \$1.25 with lower prices in reasonable quantities. The high contrast papers are necessary and glossy finish gives better results.

**T**HE famous slogan, "Don't shoot until you see the whites of their eyes," got results. When taking aerial photographs don't shoot anything if

you can't see detail like telephone wires, window pane divisions, etc., if you want sharp pictures of individual buildings.

In practising with another pilot, let the photographer fly the ship into the position, take the photograph and let the check pilot fly out. *Until you have your turns down pat, let somebody else take the photographs.*

## OFF TO THE RACES!

(Continued from Page 19)

out on the sides for a few feet. These were the wings. First they pour in gallons of high-test gas, smelling like ether. Then the pilot, who must be a fatalist, pours himself in; after which the cockpit shield is clamped down over him and a tractor hauls the whole dangerous rig down wind for a takeoff.

The actual duel was between Turner and Ortman, the former in his silver Turner-Laird "Pesco" Special and the latter in his Marcoux-Bromberg Special, but I had much admiration for the boys who were skating across the sky in the more fragile-looking crates. Poor Chambers got his on the day before, and Dory in the Greve Trophy race was at that very moment fighting for his life in a Cleveland hospital because a connecting rod had rammed through the engine head and out through the fuselage, rocketing him down miles from the field into a crowded street.

Eight pilots, living on borrowed time while they careen around the ten mile course in a three hundred mile pylon race, get your seat off the bleachers every time they flash by. You can feel the crowd waiting for something to happen, and from the standpoint of a pilot, it makes a fellow mad clear through.

Ortman's engine skipped a beat on the sixth lap or so and threw out a long black streamer of oil just as he rounded the north pylon leading away from the field. His altitude might as well have been zero if the motor had quit, but he flashed around again and still kept going although trouble was slowing him. Turner took the lead and maintained it, finishing in the dough for \$18,000 and adding another four grand for establishing a new record of 283.419 miles per hour for the National Air Races. I clocked several planes with a stop watch, and most of them took just two minutes and six seconds to get back in front of me again after screeching over the ten-mile course.

We left before all of them got down, but most of the crowd hung around to see them come in. I saw Turner come back to earth safely and thought he

was rather lucky, as he landed the hottest I ever saw a plane land. Wheels and tail took turns kissing the ground for about seven hundred feet before he got slowed down to some semblance of normal speed. He got a big hand, and from what the papers had to say the next day, his popularity stock shot up many points.

I saw one sight that I never want to get in on again. After the races, when I had returned to the hangars, I witnessed a mass parachute jump and one poor devil's chute failed to open properly. Szula bailed out of a trimotored plane several thousand feet above the north end of the airport and dropped within one hundred feet of the field before the canopy partially inflated—not enough to open completely, so that he struck in a cloud of dust and seemed to bounce. He was taken to Charity Hospital with a very slim chance for recovery.

Leaving the airport at Cleveland strongly reminded me of getting your automobile away from a county fair. Those who had managed to unscramble their planes had formed long lines behind each other and were slowly taxiing for a chance at the signal. When my turn came I just buttoned my ears together, took off and kept flying straight ahead until I had put plenty of air space between me and Cleveland Municipal. Faster planes swooshed by on all sides and because of my blind spots I didn't dare to crane around for a good look.

Weather conditions improved going home. I'd like to leave all you fellows and gals with enough enthusiasm to try the races yourself next year. In spite of the irregularity with which past meets have been held, I predict that the powers will certainly be running them off next year. You don't pack over one hundred thousand people into a park without its meaning something down at the box office.

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by WILLIS S. FITCH

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