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2008

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MOORE THAN JUST AVIATION

DUMAS' MOORE COUNTY AIRPORT SERVES THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND FLYING PUBLIC WITH QUALITY FACILITIES AND AFFORDABLE FUEL—BUT IT'S ALSO AN OUTPOST THAT CAN HELP SAVE LIVES. AND JUST LAST YEAR, IT DID.

By Brandon V. Webb,
Texas Transportation Institute

It was cold that morning. Temperatures hovered in the mid-20s as workers headed to the Valero McKee refinery in Sunray, Texas. The vital facility in the Valero family of refineries outputs more than 170,000 barrels' worth of refined petroleum every day.

It was a Friday. February 16, 2007. By 2:00 that afternoon temperatures had edged up to the mid-50s and would crest over 60 degrees by the end of the day. Thoughts were on the weekend, which promised cool, clear, breezy weather. And then, just minutes after 2:00 pm, all hell broke loose.

The refinery's propane de-asphalting unit, which processes residual fuel at very high temperatures, exploded in flames, belching a column of smoke into the sky that was visible for more than 60 miles—that might as well be beyond the horizon in the Texas Panhandle.

Four-hundred employees fled for their lives. The explosion injured 20 people with burns, smoke inhalation and chest pains. Imagine that scene viewed from the runway at Moore County Airport, which has a bird's-eye view cross-country of the McKee refinery. You're standing there watching a piece of the county go up in flames. And then the radio comes to life. → *continued on pg. 3*



Moore County Airport



IN THIS ISSUE

As you know, *Wingtips* is the official publication of TxDOT's Aviation Division and one of our primary ways of keeping the aviation community in Texas informed of local aviation developments across the state. In this issue, we are pleased to bring you a series of articles highlighting airports and aviation activities in the Texas Panhandle. While it is not our usual practice to focus on one region of the state, the growth and activity in the Panhandle is a story worth telling. The area has long been an agricultural hub for our state and nation while more recently emerging as a major player in the energy business. The growth in the dairy business including the new cheese plant in Dalhart and the oil refining facilities near Borger and Dumas are some examples. All of this has contributed to a robust economy in which general aviation airports have played and continue to play a significant role. This was exemplified in our last issue by the story on Hereford Municipal Airport, its growth, and its role in the local and regional economy.



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David S. Fulton

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Joe Crawford, Member (Abilene)
Greg Jones, Member (Houston)
Bruce Roberts, Member (Boerne)

MANAGING EDITOR

Chris Sasser
Texas Transportation Institute
c-sasser@tam.u.edu

DESIGN & LAYOUT

Jason E. Hranicky
TxDOT Electronic Publishing Center
General Services Division

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Aviation Division, TxDOT

125 E. 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701-2483
512/416-4500 or 1-800/68-PILOT
FAX: 512/416-4510

<http://www.txdot.gov/services/aviation/default.htm>

As you'll see with this issue, there is a lot going on aviation-wise in the Texas Panhandle. The Moore County Airport is home to the most recent public-private partnership success with the Valero Energy Corporation making a major investment in the runway extension project that will lengthen the runway to 6,000 feet. In addition, we profile the Hutchinson County Airport in Borger and a related feature story on Jerry Parker and his Iskra Jets. Two additional stories highlight the proposed Randall County Airpark, which is currently in the site selection phase, and Cecil Ingram, who has been running the Dalhart Municipal Airport since 1949.

In our Advisory Board profile series this issue, we introduce you to Gordon Richardson who currently serves as Vice Chair. He is an active pilot and aircraft owner and has been a member of the board since 2002.

FAA FUNDING ON THE WAY

Earlier this year, TxDOT's Aviation Division received 75 percent of the anticipated Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) funding for fiscal year 2008, leaving some question as to whether or not we would receive the remaining 25 percent. I am glad to report that the remaining 25 percent of the funding should be on hand by the time you read this newsletter. We are still operating under a "continuing resolution" as Congress has not yet come to terms with reauthorization of FAA programs. In all likelihood, we will not see FAA reauthorization until well after the new president and the new Congress begin work after the first of next year. Hopefully, FAA program reauthorization will become a priority for the new Congress giving needed stability to the FAA Airport Improvement Grant Program.

Please be sure to send any comments or story ideas to us at wingtips@tam.u.edu.

We hope you enjoy this issue!

Dave





Airport Manager Brandon Cox pauses for a photo with Rosie the airport dog.

Brandon Cox, Moore County's airport manager, said Valero responded to the explosion immediately.

"Within minutes, Valero had refinery firefighters in the air in a King Air 350," Cox says. "King Airs kept coming in from San Antonio, where Valero is headquartered. Helicopters landed here and flew patients to Lubbock and Amarillo for medical attention. They flew in here all that night."

While it seems obvious that airports exist to serve, events like the Valero McKee refinery fire highlight how critical minutes—seconds—can be when lives are on the line. Dumas is 50 miles north of the region's largest airport in Amarillo. But the refinery sits only a few minutes by car from the end of Moore County Airport's runways. When the refinery exploded that February afternoon, the airport and its manager showed their readiness to serve—and serve quickly.

Better service for bigger jets

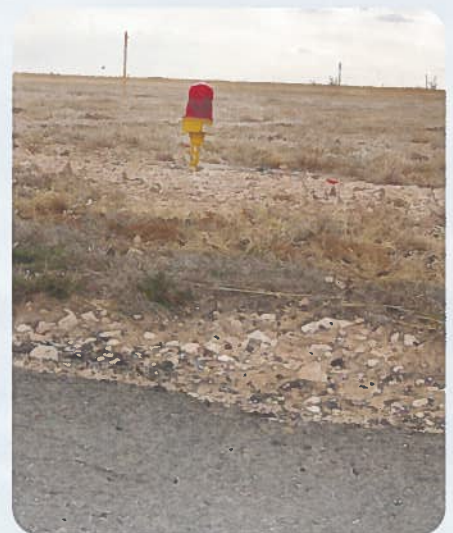
The Moore County Airport's importance extends beyond Valero to the county, the Swift Meat Packing company—the area's largest employer—United Supermarkets, and to Monsanto—the behemoth agriculture company.

"Swift, Valero, and the others—they fly here for the speed and convenience," Cox says.

Getting employees, contractors and parts into the airport's 5,474-foot runway is about to get a boost, too, with a Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) grant to extend one of two runways to 6,000 feet and widen its shoulders to 100 feet.

"Valero's new planes, a [Gulfstream] G550 and a G450, can't come in here right now," Cox says. "They're going to Amarillo to land and then driving from there. You're talking an hour-and-a-half drive instead of 20 minutes. Three hours out of their day, they're driving. If we extend the runway, they can get parts and employees flown in here. I'd say 60 to 70 percent of our big airplanes are going out to Valero, and we're getting bigger Citations, Lear's and lots of King Airs. If Valero wasn't here, we probably wouldn't have half of our big plane traffic—they're just huge for us."

Dave Fulton, director of TxDOT's Aviation Division, says Valero is playing a key role in the runway expansion effort.



End of runway stake shows path of extension.

"We get easier access from our support people if they can fly in. It also helps this area grow. When we need a critical part and it takes 12 hours to get here, it can mean hundreds of thousands of dollars to us. So, any transportation hub you can open to get people and materials here helps our business."

— Tom Shetina, Vice President & General Manager at Valero's McKee Refinery

"The \$6 million upgrade project will allow Valero's large jets to fly directly from San Antonio to Dumas," says Fulton. "Valero has agreed to contribute \$500,000 to the project."

Cox also attributes steady airport traffic to competitive fuel prices he's using to start snagging transient jet traffic traveling cross-country and looking for a bargain on fuel. ♦

MOORE COUNTY AIRPORT MEANS:

- 500 general aviation visitors can stop by each year
- On-airport spending and visitors contribute \$9.1 million in total economic output
- 21 people in the area have full-time jobs, with a payroll totaling \$898,000
- Corporate, recreational and agricultural crop-spraying pilots have a place to land near Dumas

For more information about Moore County Airport, visit: <http://www.airnav.com/airport/KDUX>

CANYONS, CRACKS AND CITATIONS, OH DEER!

HUTCHINSON COUNTY AIRPORT IN BORGER SERVES THE AREA'S LARGEST EMPLOYER AND TRIES TO WARD OFF WILDLIFE

by Brandon V. Webb,
Texas Transportation Institute

Dennis O'Bryant has seen more than a few oddities in the 15 years he's spent managing the Hutchinson County Airport near Borger. From celebrities like Jerry Springer, Roy Clark and Anna Nicole Smith, to a meeting between a Citation XL and a wayward deer (plane's repair bill: \$300,000), he's had a lot to manage.

In-between celebrity sightings and near misses with wildlife, he's overseen the repair of some 60,000 feet of runway cracks in a single year, and he expects to repair at least that much in the coming months.

The airport was built in canyon country in 1948. The runway is flanked at the end by a canyon drop-off that could inspire heartburn in the saltiest of pilots. O'Bryant says the facility was built atop a canyon smoothed out by fill dirt, to which he attributes the constant runway cracks. As he puts it, maybe dirt was cheap.

"We wrapped up a big concrete ramp improvement project and fixed a three-percent grade that was causing a safety issue with airplanes rolling off," O'Bryant says. "We resurfaced the runways and taxiways, improved drainage, widened hangar access and all with the help of the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT's) Aviation Division. It's been a real pleasure for me to work with their staff. They're into airports—just like I am."

On the horizon...

"Our next big project is a new terminal building, which came about through our Borger Economic Development Corporation," O'Bryant says. "They approached me about what they could do at the airport, and I said the biggest thing we could do to enhance our facilities is build a new building—this one is 58-years-old."

Upping the terminal square footage from 2,000-square feet to 3,500-square feet, adding office space, a secluded pilot's lounge and a weather briefing area are improvements O'Bryant says will better serve the ever-growing list of people who use the airport.

THE HUTCHINSON COUNTY HANGARS ARE FULL—

20 small T-hangars

4 medium T-hangars (fitting, say, a King Air 90)

4 large hangars (room for a Citation or King Air 200)

and 1 very large hangar (half of it home to restored Polish Iskra TS-11s)



The terminal at the Hutchinson County Airport in Borger.

"Virtually every major employer in Hutchinson County has business interests that utilize the airport," O'Bryant says. "ConocoPhillips, our largest employer in the county, has Gulfstream IVs and Vs. They have a lot of work going on in this refinery and they're merging with EnCana, a Canadian company, so I'm starting to see their aircraft come in from Calgary. Last time they brought in two jets and 38 people. Oil and gas is the industry here for sure."

The massive ConocoPhillips Borger refinery certainly is eye-catching from its perch near the airport. The facility predates the airport by 21 years, having been built in 1927. It was the first facility to produce 100-octane fuel and the first refinery to remove sulfur from gasoline and diesel—a hallmark of environmental improvements in fuel production. →

"Borger is not very easy to get to. So, we use the airport periodically. One area in which the airport has become even more useful relates to the fact that the Borger Refinery is now part of EnCana. They can fly 8, 10 people at a time from Calgary to Borger, Texas, and doing that commercially is more difficult. The airport makes life easier for us."

– Brian Lever, Refinery Manager
ConocoPhillips Borger Refinery

Shoo, dangit!

As if the veteran airport manager doesn't have enough on his plate keeping fuel prices low, servicing industry executives and building a new terminal, he's got to keep a wary eye toward the runway and the deer who like to graze at its edges.

"The next project we'll kick off is a game fence," says O'Bryant. "With our proximity to the Canadian River and with all of the fires the last couple of years, the game were scavenging for food. We have a real deer problem, and they like to run across the runways. The Citation pilot who hit that deer on landing said his aircraft was still doing about 100 knots."

So with TxDOT's assistance O'Bryant will fend deer off part of the 360-acre airport with an eight-foot game fence.

"I'm looking forward to getting that in. Those deer show up in the evenings." ♦

For more information about Hutchinson County Airport, visit:

<http://www.hutchinsoncountyairport.com/>

—and—

<http://www.airnav.com/airport/KBGD>

PROFILE OF AN AIRPORT MANAGER...

How did Dennis O'Bryant make it all the way from Stinett, Texas, to Borger (distance: 11.3 miles) via Woodward, Oklahoma? Here's how he tells it.

"I grew up in Stinett, a little town just north of here. From the time I was three years old, I wanted to fly airplanes, so I went from high school to flight school and ended up with all my ratings through the *airline transport pilot* certificate. I flew corporate for a number of years, flight instructed and ran charter operations. I was an airport manager in Woodward, Oklahoma, for three years, back in the oil boom days. Then the bust came, and airplanes were sold and pilots were a dime a dozen.

"I graduated from Southeastern Oklahoma State University with a degree in aviation and a degree in business administration and the opportunity came up to come back home. I was selected and ended back up in management. And I've been working here about 15 years."



Canyon Country. The view from the end of the Borger runway.

A POLISH SPARK O'ER PANHANDLE SKIES

AVIATION IS HAPPILY NOT IMMUNE FROM "ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER" SYNDROME. JERRY PARKER STARTED WITH A LOVE FOR FLYING JET AIRCRAFT—AND THEN HE HAD TO LEARN THE POLISH LANGUAGE.

by Brandon V. Webb,
Texas Transportation Institute

Or, Jerry Parker had to learn enough Polish to restore and maintain his Iskra TS-11 Jet Warbird Trainer based at Hutchinson County Airport in Borger, Texas. Iskra means spark in Polish, and Parker—a fulltime aviation enthusiast—is the bird's pilot. He's frequently in Borger to keep the aircraft in the kind of sparkling condition that has earned the admiration of his associate members in the Classic Jet Aircraft Association (CJAA), for which he serves as vice president.

"Flying has been a hobby of mine since 1960," Parker says. "Restoration sort of just came about."

Parker's Iskra TS-11, N6215Q is one of approximately 28 flying in the U.S. It was designed and manufactured in Poland as a trainer for transition into the Russian MiG series of aircraft and is often referred to as the J3 of jet warbirds. The Iskra was designed to train pilots from their first flight through cross-country and instrument flight as well as combat maneuvers, gunnery and bombing. Federal requirements prohibit surplus military aircraft from carrying functional weaponry.

A big fan of Borger

When *Wingtips* asked Parker why he selected Borger as the base for his vintage jet fleet (he owns more than one), he had plenty of kind things to say about the BGD airport and its leadership.

"The airport management team supports the small aviation enthusiast as well as transient corporate jet aircraft travelers," Parker says. "They support transient corporate jets with the lowest fuel prices in the area as well as short turn-around times, and they support local aircraft owners with lower fuel prices and affordable hangar space. The airport is maintained to the highest standards and they continually strive to enhance safety and service. In addition, BGD is within a reasonable driving distance from home. The 6,200-foot runway and virtually wide-open airspace is very convenient to maintain flight proficiency in my Iskra TS-11."

Parker takes his TS-11 to air shows nationwide where dozens of other classic jet trainers and fighters appear. Other Iskra TS-11s, L-39s, L-29s, MiGs and an impressive assortment of lovingly restored aircraft come from around the nation to attend CJAA sponsored "Jet Blast" air shows from coast-to-coast.

Back home in Borger, one can only wonder what the farmers, ranchers and maybe even the cattle below think when Parker fires those jet engines and screams his very own *Spark* warbird trainer across the Panhandle sky. Who knows? Maybe they say something in Polish? ♦

For Classic Jet Aircraft Association (CJAA) information and pictures, see: <http://www.classicjets.org/>

For more information about the Hutchinson County Airport, visit: <http://www.hutchinsoncountyairport.com/>

For more details about the TS-11 Iskra aircraft, check: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PZL_TS-11_Iskra



Classic Jet Aircraft Association (CJAA) planes at Hutchinson County Airport.

ISKRA AT ALMOST FIFTY, AND COUNTING...

The Polish Iskra TS-11 jet trainer began as a concept in 1957. Her test flights came in the early 1960s. By 1963 the TS-11 was in production, where she would stay for the next quarter-century, through 1987. Iskras are popular restoration jets for their relatively reasonable cost to restore and operate.

- More than 400 were built
- The "TS" stands for Tadeusz Soltyk, the chief designer
- The mid-wing plane is all metal, with air intakes in the wings
- Should the need ever arise, both crewmen have ejector seats
- Maximum speed is 450 mph, range 780 miles
- The Iskra weighs 5,640 lbs. empty and 8,210 lbs. loaded

GRANTS RECEIVED

Kimble County Airport/Junction	\$689,070	The aviation construction consists of construct 6-unit T-hangar, reconstruct portion of parallel taxiway and construct & mark apron & hangar access taxiway
Pecos Municipal Airport	\$582,100	The aviation construction consists of replace electric wiring from vault to runway 9-27, replace MIRLS runway 9-27, replace MIRL runway 14-32 and recondition tetrahedron
Miami-Roberts County Airport	\$621,000	The aviation construction consists of replace lighted windcone assembly, replace segmented circle, mark runway 2-20, overlay & mark stub taxiway, overlay runway, overlay apron, overlay and mark partial parallel taxiway
Eagle Lake Regional Airport	\$442,940	The aviation construction consists of hangar construction
Clark Field/Stephenville	\$700,000	The aviation construction consists of terminal building construction
Terry County Airport/Brownfield	\$1,216,400	The aviation construction consists of mark runway 2-20, mark runway 13-31, rehabilitate & mark taxiway A, G & H, rehabilitate & overlay runway 2-20, rehabilitate runway 13-31
Brooks County Airport/Falfurrias	\$3,630,430	The aviation construction consists of overlay & mark taxiway A, mark runway 17-35, overlay runway 14-32, extend MIRL runway 17-35, enlarge turnaround runway 17 end, install PAPI-4 runway 17-35, overlay & mark taxiway E, install perimeter fencing, overlay runway 17-35, construct partial parallel taxiway to runway 35 end, overlay apron and extend runway 17-35, runway 35 end
San Marcos Municipal Airport	\$1,437,067	The aviation construction consists of mark and overlay runway 17-35
Post-Garza County Airport	\$198,210	The aviation construction consists of rehabilitate runways, hangar access taxiways, stub taxiway, apron, and turnarounds and mark runways and stub taxiway
Alfred C "Bubba" Thomas Airport/Sinton	\$1,867,400	The aviation construction consists of rehabilitate runway 14-32, mark and stripe runway 14-32, reconstruct apron, expand apron, reconstruct and mark partial parallel taxiway A, construct runway 14 safety area improvements, reconstruct and widen south hangar access taxiway, rehabilitate hangar access taxiways, construct taxiway drainage improvements and install signage
Addison Airport	\$1,460,000	The aviation construction consists of runway safety area grading, realignment of existing channel and construction of a reinforced concrete box culvert
Louis Schreiner Field/Kerrville	\$6,000,000	The aviation construction consists of reconstruct portion of parallel taxiway A and runway 3-21 and install relocate signage
Hereford Municipal Airport	\$9,876,100	The aviation construction consists of constructing runway, taxiway, apron and electrical improvements
TSTC-Waco Airport	\$1,765,420	The aviation construction consists of construct perimeter road

WINGTIPS PROFILES

AVIATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE VICE CHAIRMAN GORDON RICHARDSON

Over the next several issues, *Wingtips* will profile the members of the Texas Aviation Advisory Committee. The six members are appointed by the Texas Transportation Commission for six-year terms and assist the Texas Department of Transportation with its aviation development programs. Committee members also work with members of the legislature on various aviation issues. Members must have at least five years of experience in the field of aviation and a strong interest in supporting Texas' general aviation program.

In this issue, we profile Vice Chairman Gordon Richardson.

Most of us can't point to just one event in our lives that helped shape everything else we do. But Gordon Richardson can. In business and pleasure, his world revolves around it. His wife jokingly refers to it as "a terminal illness." But for Richardson, it just sounds a lot like the definition of aviation.

Richardson was born in New York City, but later grew up in Canadian Army camps. His father was one of only about 5,000 Americans to join the Canadian Armed Services. (Ogden Richardson fought in World War II and survived a four-year stay inside a German prisoner-of-war camp.) In Canada, young Richardson took up ice hockey, which eventually led to an athletic scholarship with Boston University. After college, he accepted a job with a Houston, Texas, life insurance company.

Richardson met and married Judy Williams in 1967. They decided to move to her small hometown of Caldwell, Texas, about 100 miles away from his work. Because Richardson was driving back and forth, he decided to take flying lessons at College Station's Easterwood Airport. By 1971, he was a licensed pilot, and his flying habit was about to become a full-blown addiction. →



Richardson inside his Piper PA-18 Super Cub floatplane.

With license in hand, Richardson became an independent insurance agent. "Flying allowed me to live in a small community and build a significant statewide clientele," he explains. "If a friend in Corpus Christi needs life insurance, I'm able to fly down and back the same day and still have time to work in the office."

During his distinguished insurance career, Richardson's passion was slowly taking over. He bought and restored airplanes and joined numerous aviation associations, including the Experimental Aircraft Association Warbird Community and the Seaplane Pilots Association. He attends the major national air shows like Oshkosh and Sun 'n Fun, and even attends formation classes with his sons, Gordon II and Randall. Both of his sons are pilots.

Richardson has had several planes over the years, including a PT-19, Beechcraft Bonanza, Harvard Mark IV, T-28, T-6 and his floatplane, a Piper PA-18 Supercub.

During the summer, Richardson and his wife can be found in the state of Maine feeding his addiction. If flying is his illness, then his Supercub is his enabler. "Maine has a lot of remote lakes which are only accessible by floatplane. It's a combination of boating and flying and there's nothing else like it."

The couple spends the months hopscotching from one remote lake to the next, being sure to avoid the moose and crosswinds.

Wingtips: Flying might be a big part of your life, but isn't your family encouraging your addiction?

Richardson: Actually, they share my addiction. Both sons are pilots and my wife has logged 2,000 hours by my side. So, yes, they encourage me because they love it as much as I do. And that makes it extremely satisfying.

Wingtips: What was your motivation in accepting the appointment on the Texas Aviation Advisory Commission?

Richardson: My great love for aviation, firstly, but I also saw this opportunity to be involved in the goal of helping general aviation prosper in Texas.

Wingtips: Was there a memorable experience that you can share that has occurred during your term?

Richardson: My first trip to an airport (Mt. Pleasant) to see the results of TxDOT's aviation partnership with a local community to grow an aviation facility. It told the story of why Texas has the finest airport system in the U.S.

Wingtips: What are the biggest challenges you see for general aviation going forward?

Richardson: I see two challenges: one, to educate the young people in Texas about what a great opportunity there is to learn to fly and become involved in a career in aviation; and, two, to keep the importance of general aviation in the minds of our legislators.

Wingtips: What would you like the public to know about general aviation in Texas and why non-pilots should care about it?

Richardson: That general aviation in Texas is a valuable segment of our transportation system and the state's business prosperity. And that entire communities in Texas that don't have airline access depend on general aviation for growth. ♦

For more information on the TxDOT Aviation Advisory Committee, visit: http://www.txdot.gov/services/aviation/advisory_committee/default.htm

TEMPLE AIRPORT RECEIVES GOLD AWARD

The Draughon-Miller Regional Airport in Temple received the 2007 Premier Spirit Gold Award from ExxonMobil Aviation during a luncheon on July 30. This is the 10th time the airport has achieved award recognition in the Premier Spirit Program. The airport, which competes with over 250 fixed base operator (FBO) airports nationally, has also consecutively won the Gold Award for the past three years.

The Premier Spirit Program rates airports on four criteria: customer service, quality control, fuel sales and image. Pilots that utilize an airport rate the facility based on the service they receive at the participating FBO. In one of the components, quality control, the Temple airport consistently scored 100 percent compliance for their management of the fuel and fueling equipment. ♦

"We're very proud because we ranked right up there with the big airports by winning the Gold Award. It is a tribute to our wonderful staff who are dedicated to giving the best service to our customers who come in here every day."

– Sharon Rostovich,
Temple Airport Director



Temple Airport employees arrive at their award lunch in style.

AFTER RUNNING THE DALHART MUNICIPAL AIRPORT SINCE 1949, 82-YEAR-OLD CECIL INGRAM IS READY TO TURN OVER THE KEYS

by Brandon V. Webb,
Texas Transportation Institute

“When this lease is up, I’ll be 91-years-old,” says fixed-base operator and owner Cecil Ingram. “I came out here in 1948 to be a mechanic and flight instructor, and I was only going to be here long enough to make enough money to leave—and I’m still here.”

He sprayed crops for 45 years—the first in the area to sell farmers on the newfangled idea—and was an FAA pilot examiner for more than 30 years, issuing private and commercial pilot certificates. He also erected several buildings and T-hangars that help—along with city-owned facilities—to comprise the Dalhart Municipal Airport. It is a scrupulously maintained outpost on the grounds of the former Dalhart Army Airbase. Stare at the massive, city-owned hangars on the property and the 9,000-foot runway (7,500 feet are lit), and it isn’t hard to hear the rumble of the B-29s that lined the field in 1942.

From Sunday fly port to the wings of war and back

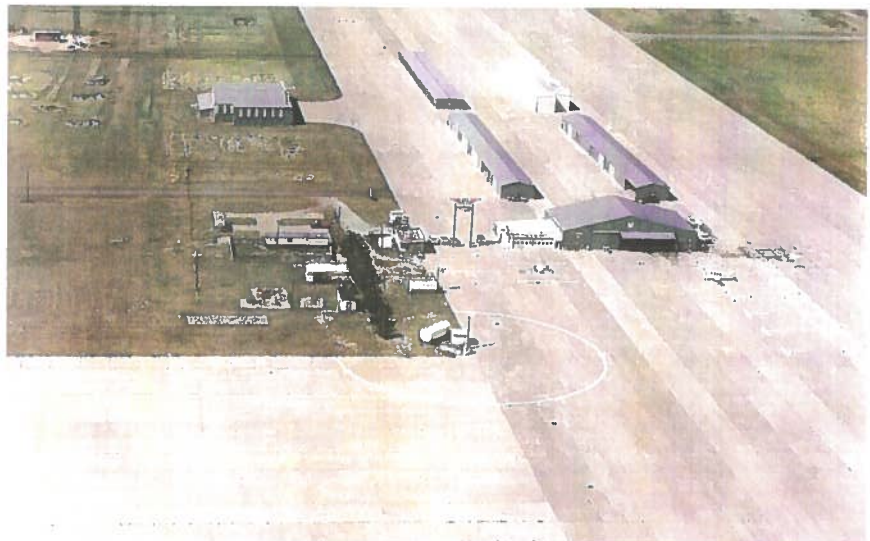
Men were trained for wartime flight in gliders, B-17s, fighter planes and the venerable B-29s in the early 1940s. But before that, what would become Dalhart Municipal Airport was only an idea when Robert Earl Johnson and Burton Hanbury bought the grassy field near Highway 54. The *Dalhart Texan* reports that the pair, “built a runway and hangar and were in business primarily for ‘Sunday pilots’ and some ranchers....”

In need of flying facilities, the more ready-made the better, the U.S. government began buying airports in a hurry when World War II broke out. From 1942 to 1945, some 15,000 soldiers passed through the facility on their way to war. In all, three bases would be spread out over the Army airfield’s 3,000 acres. And as of 1949, when Cecil Ingram started his crop spraying business, the former Army base was once again in the hands of the Sunday flier.

Ingram Flying Service

With tongue planted in cheek—or maybe not—Cecil Ingram describes the years not long after he took over the Dalhart Municipal Airport. →

THIS FBO IS FOR SALE



ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, WITH 2 SHOPS
36 "T" HANGARS AND 12,000 SQ. FT. HANGAR
CAFE WITH TRAILERHOUSE

"I created the false image of success in the early 60s," Ingram says. "I had some good banker friends that flew airplanes, and that helped a lot. I was able to borrow money for a new Beechcraft and fly it on air taxi for the insurance and fuel, and sell it to get my seed money back and go get another one. I owned a lot of brand new airplanes, flew them away from the factory and enjoyed every bit of it. But like I say, it was the false image of success."

Humble though he is, Ingram is nothing short of a legend to his students, an aviation pioneer among crop sprayers, and a terrific boss to his assistant of 20 years, Belva Griego.

"It's been a success all the way, Cecil," she says turning to him, "Or you wouldn't still be here."

"Well," he pauses, "I've managed to pay it all off. I don't owe a dime to anybody on this airport. And, I've gotten to meet the best people in the world that fly. All of the greats that came along. We were almost like pioneers in this business."

On a personal note

Cecil Ingram no longer pilots airplanes. Six decades after learning the craft, he is content now to no longer fly. The morning of our interview he'd completed his last act of flying, giving a student a biannual flight check. His flight instructor rating expired in February 2008, and he isn't renewing.

"You might say I've had a perfect run and I don't want to get like some of my friends and get so old I forget to put the wheels down," Ingram says. "I'm at the age now it's time to hang it up. I had a heart attack in '94 and lost an eye because I took so much blood thinner to keep me alive that the retina in my left eye detached. I still got away with flying after that, but when they put a defibrillator in my chest, the insurance company said I need to ride in the back seat. The technology is fantastic." →



Cecil Ingram and longtime assistant Belva Griego.



The fifties era airport cafe awaits a new operator.

And that seems to summarize the man—at once looking both forward and backward. He is both nostalgic for the past and optimistic about the future. At the conclusion of our interview, I asked Mr. Ingram if I could snap a few photos of him near a vintage airplane in the lobby of the airport terminal.

After refusing help, he wrangled the large hangar doors open on the side of the terminal building. He started toward the airplane to pose for his picture, noticed something and frowned. He reached in his pocket, whipped out a tissue, crawled under the plane and started scrubbing the tile floor.

At 82-years old, Cecil Ingram had spotted a quarter-sized oil leak that he didn't want in the picture.

And by the way, Mr. Ingram says the spotless, vintage airport café sits ready for reopening, if you happen to know any good cooks. ♦

For more information about the Dalhart Municipal Airport, visit: <http://www.airnav.com/airport/KDHT>

For a nice write-up about the Airport Café, currently seeking a new operator, visit: <http://www.swaviator.com/html/issueMA05/Hamburger3405.html>

DAIRIES TAKE FLIGHT IN DALHART

The dairy industry in ag-friendly Texas is booming. Growth in the Panhandle has been nothing shy of phenomenal, and Hilmar Cheese is thanking the airport for its role in their growth.

Dairies in TX:

- Texas A&M Dairy Extension calculates cow numbers in the Panhandle rose from 23,000 in 2000 to more than 125,000 in 2006
- One third of Texas' milk production has moved to the Panhandle; half of all Texas dairies will be north of Lubbock by 2013

Hilmar Cheese says: "The Dalhart airport is a valuable asset to the community and has been used extensively by our company during our expansion. Regional airports are an important feature and provide the opportunity for rural communities to quickly connect to mainstream commerce."—David Ahlem, Dalhart Site Manager for Hilmar Cheese

Hilmar, a California-based cheese cooperative, will process 5 million pounds of milk each day near Dalhart. The facility will grow to process up to 9.5 million pounds of milk daily.

WINDSWEPT PLANES

SITE SELECTION FOR RANDALL COUNTY AIRPARK AN OPPORTUNITY FOR TEXAS.

by Brandon V. Webb,
Texas Transportation Institute

General aviation activity in Texas means more than:

- **62,000 jobs**
- **A payroll of more than \$2.5 billion**
- **An total economic impact of \$8.7 billion***

*http://www.dot.state.tx.us/services/aviation/economic_impact.htm

Can a 6,000-foot stretch of asphalt and a few hundred acres be the keys that unlock untapped opportunities for growth in the Panhandle's Randall County? County Judge Ernie Houdashell is counting on it.

"Amarillo is split by two counties," says Houdashell. "Potter County is on the north side, and Randall County is on the south side. The counties are about the same size, but the industry is up north in Potter County. They have about 29,000 industry jobs; we have about 2,900. Randall County doesn't have much industry because there isn't an airport that focuses on industry."

But that could change if Judge Houdashell—himself a pilot—and supporters of the proposed Randall County Airpark are successful. With a population of 114,000 and a growth rate near three percent, the county airport would expect to tap into industrial growth by offering jobs, a place for cross-country jets to refuel for a bargain and a several hundred-acre industrial park to support the airstrip.

"There are very few options for aircraft owners in the area," says Linda Howard, project manager for the Texas Department of Transportation's Aviation Division. "The new airport may provide more access for business and for small personal aircraft."

If built, the Randall County Commissioner's Court feels the Airpark could become a hub for manufacturing aircraft component parts and other aviation related companies. Houdashell says companies that move to Randall County could take advantage of Amarillo's relatively central location, moderate climate and affordable costs of doing business, but perhaps the most important enticement for a company would be the county's new, 21st-century airport. He also emphasized the area's outstanding quality of life as a draw for families. →



What dreams may come. Judge Houdashell studies the land.

OTHER AVIATION IN THE AREA*:

- Bell Helicopters—a major employer in aviation
- Rick Husband Amarillo International Airport—owned by the City of Amarillo
- Tradewind—a private general aviation airport
- Tradewind Turbines—aircraft mechanical and electronic parts
- Leading Edge Aviation Services—aircraft painting services
- Headsets, Inc.—manufacturing noise-reduction headsets
- TACAir—Fixed Base Operator

*Amarillo Economic Development Council listings

Houdashell says the proposed \$18 million project—now in the site selection phase of airport development—may break ground around 2010. And they'll need plenty of ground to break, considering the proposed airport needs 440 acres and the industrial park another 500. If approved, the runway is expected to stretch some 6,000 feet.

Coffee, the Judge and Me

Wingtips rode along with the affable and energetic Judge Houdashell on a mid-morning tour of sites that could represent the kind of land he's looking for. We met at a truck stop where the judge introduced himself and bought a round of coffee. We drove a few miles while your reporter wedged a few questions in as his honor laid out his vision.

"Now this area here," he says, indicating a windswept field, "is pretty flat. You could shoot a rabbit on your stomach if you wanted to. We want to avoid telephone lines, the landfill (birds, you know) and anything else that might be detrimental to aircraft and pilots."

I asked the judge why on earth, when nearing retirement, he'd get involved in such a long, drawn-out and exhausting process like building a new airport. He turned, patted me on the shoulder, and said, "We've pushed this a long way down the road. We've accomplished a lot. And if I've brought anything to the table, it's that I understand flexibility."

He paused long enough for me to snap another photo, and then the judge took me back to the truck stop. ♦

For more information about the economic impact of aviation in Texas, visit:

http://www.dot.state.tx.us/services/aviation/economic_impact.htm

To learn more about Randall County, visit:

<http://www.randallcounty.org/>



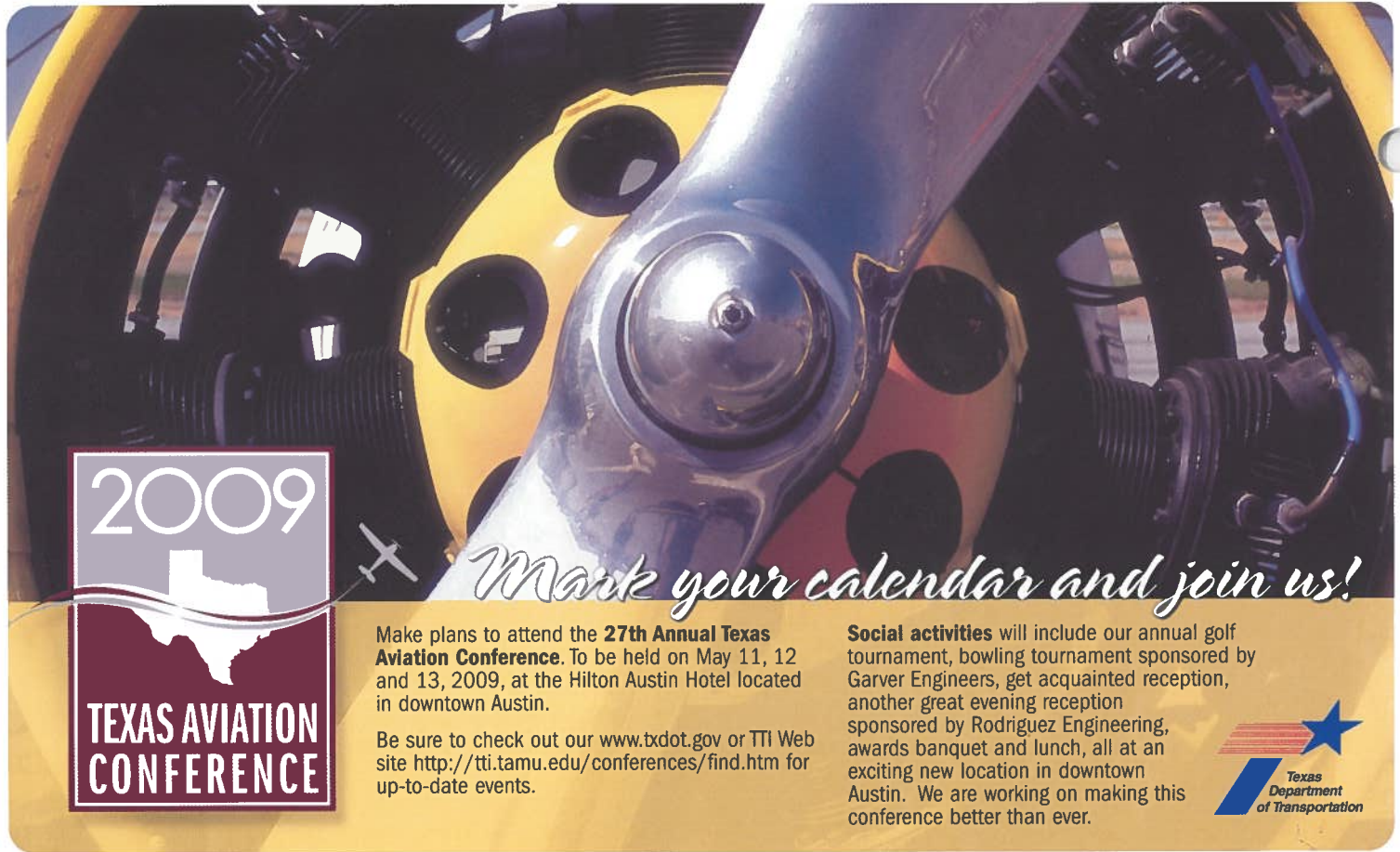
It doesn't get much flatter. The geography of Randall County.

WANT A NEW, PUBLIC, GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORT? NOT SO FAST.

The Mount Pleasant Regional Airport opened on August 17, 2002. No public, general aviation airport has been built in Texas since. Initial studies for the airport began in 1993—almost a decade before the first plane took off. The airport process from concept to concrete is extraordinarily long and detailed for two reasons. First, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) takes a great deal of time and care to evaluate the need for and impact of a new airport. Second, airports are so expensive to build and maintain that the priority is on maintaining existing investments in airports rather than building new ones. It can be done, but it might take a decade or more, and community involvement is vital throughout.

Here are the steps communities take with TxDOT:

- 1) Ask, does the community want one? Determine community interest**—local momentum builds and an "assessment of need" is done. "Need" can mean a new airport or replacement, increased demand, inadequate facilities, lack of facilities, etc.
- 2) Will it work? Conduct feasibility studies**—determine if need is significant enough to justify going forward and if the project is financially feasible for the community. The state/local funding match is 90/10 for eligible items; everything else is local.
- 3) Where should it be? Site selection**—locate aviation-friendly sites with good access, few or no obstructions, that are capable of development, not in environmentally sensitive areas, etc. Narrow the list of sites. Conduct a detailed analysis on the final site.
- 4) How will it impact the environment? Environmental Assessment & Master Plan**—assess/research any limitations or impacts determined so far.
- 5) Where will it be, and what will it look like? Acquire land and design**—purchase property and prepare complete designs.
- 6) When can we build it? Construction**—timelines and budgets are key when the dirt starts flying.
- 7) Take flight.**



2009

**TEXAS AVIATION
CONFERENCE**

Mark your calendar and join us!

Make plans to attend the **27th Annual Texas Aviation Conference**. To be held on May 11, 12 and 13, 2009, at the Hilton Austin Hotel located in downtown Austin.

Be sure to check out our www.txdot.gov or TTI Web site <http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/find.htm> for up-to-date events.

Social activities will include our annual golf tournament, bowling tournament sponsored by Garver Engineers, get acquainted reception, another great evening reception sponsored by Rodriguez Engineering, awards banquet and lunch, all at an exciting new location in downtown Austin. We are working on making this conference better than ever.



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