

# PLANEGRAM



## “I FLY BY NIGHT!” THE SWATH – JUNE 1957

*(EDITOR'S NOTE: Dusting and spraying at night is not exactly a new wrinkle in our work, but those among us who have done any amount of it are certainly in the minority. Obviously, those things we call hazards in our type of flying become more so at night; to the extent that about the only time and place night work is feasible is when and if the fields are big, the obstructions low and few, and the farmers can be persuaded that the job can be done safely and effectively at night. To all this might also be up for night work, and the pilot's initiative and ingenuity in getting everything rigged up for night work, and the pilot's willingness to "learn new tricks."*

*Curly Adams is not only an old-time duster pilot, he's an operator in his own right and has an up-and-coming manufacturing and conver-*

*sion shop at Visalia. Curly's version of what it's like to break in on this night work. –Ed.)*

Still a learnin'? You be the judge!

I was (and am) a flying-machine driver before I became a mechanic. So, as each season rolls around you can usually find me in a seat somewhere. This year it's with George Willett of Lemoore, California.

A typical date for this operation is as follows:

Hey, Curly, wake up-come on, boy, let's go! The wind's dying!" So into the saddle we go and everything is abnormal. I get loaded, the engine checks out OK-can't stall any longer. I look down the runway and all I can see is three flare pots; flip on my lights, pour the cob to the mill

and hope for the best.

Yea, got her in the air; now let's see, where is that darn field? Can't see no sunshine, so guess maybe those lights that keep blinking must be the flagmen. Head out that-a-way and, yep, that's them. Start to get lined up for a pass; the doggone flagmen must have motor scooters, can't seem to keep up with them! Better make another turn-that's more like it, not more than 45 degrees off anyway- so I turn on my landing lights. Yep, there's the flagger, and I can even make out the alfalfa. Got both flaggers in line now; let's slow down and get down, can't spray at 100 feet altitude. That's better. Turn it on, you got her in the groove.

What the heck's the matter with that dang flagger-

*continued inside*

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running off down the field!? Oh, well, just follow the rows. Hey, even the rows are cock-eyed! Hmmm, must be a little wind. Drop your wing and boot in a little rudder, that will hold her. There's that telephone wire, pull up just a bit; got it in the bag. Well, only three more passes and you can get another load. Nothing to it.

Now, let's see-pull up to about 300 feet for the turn around. Hey, turn off the landing lights. Now where did that field go to? Somebody down there lighting a cigarette-there's another one. Boy, a cigarette sure would taste good. Hey, bub, wake up there's your flagmen. How high are we? Murt said 300 feet for the turns, and that thing sure looks like a 6. Yea, that's what it is, 600 feet- better go on oxygen! Oh, well, just make a little longer turn. Back on the power, hold her as she is- now turn on your lights, there's the flagmen. You've got it made. Telephone

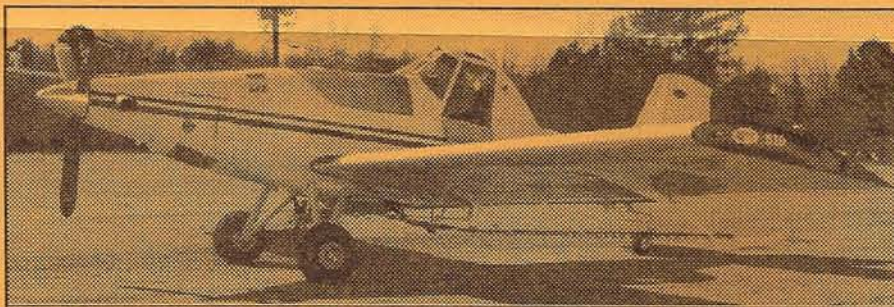
wires-over we go-back on the power a little. Got it. About 8 feet off. Flagger's running away again! Drop your wing. Now you're crabbing-you're all fouled up like Hogan's goat! Anyhow, there's the other flagger-shut off, pull up, 300 feet, remember. Turn your lights off. A couple more passes, then back to the strip.

Six flare pots-sure look close together! Easy now, you're drifting. That's better, you're on. Where the heck are those flare pots? Well, what do you know, right where they belong; but what am I doing with my neck

stuck out so far to see? You know better. Slow her down, attaboy, we got it made. Truck coming up, turn around now. Think I'll take five and have a smoke. Mixture back, all witches off-gosh, it's quiet. Or was, until Murt Dula climbs out of the front seat!

Murt is chief pilot for Willett and, I thought, my friend, until he starts chewing! Automatic crab-oxygen-lights-lost-and several other things I can't repeat!

Anyway, suffice it to say, I guess you're never too old to learn!



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