

Hidden Valley:

An exclusive part of town

By DON GEIGER
Region Editor

SHADY SHORES — Bill Stratton probably flies his airplane more than any other resident of Hidden Valley Airpark. And that's saying a lot.

Of the 31 families at the development, which is built around an asphalt runway, 20 families have at least one member who is a pilot and owns an airplane. Some families own two airplanes, and about one-third of the residents are airline pilots.

The streets aren't called roads — they're taxiways. And airplanes have the right of way over automobiles.

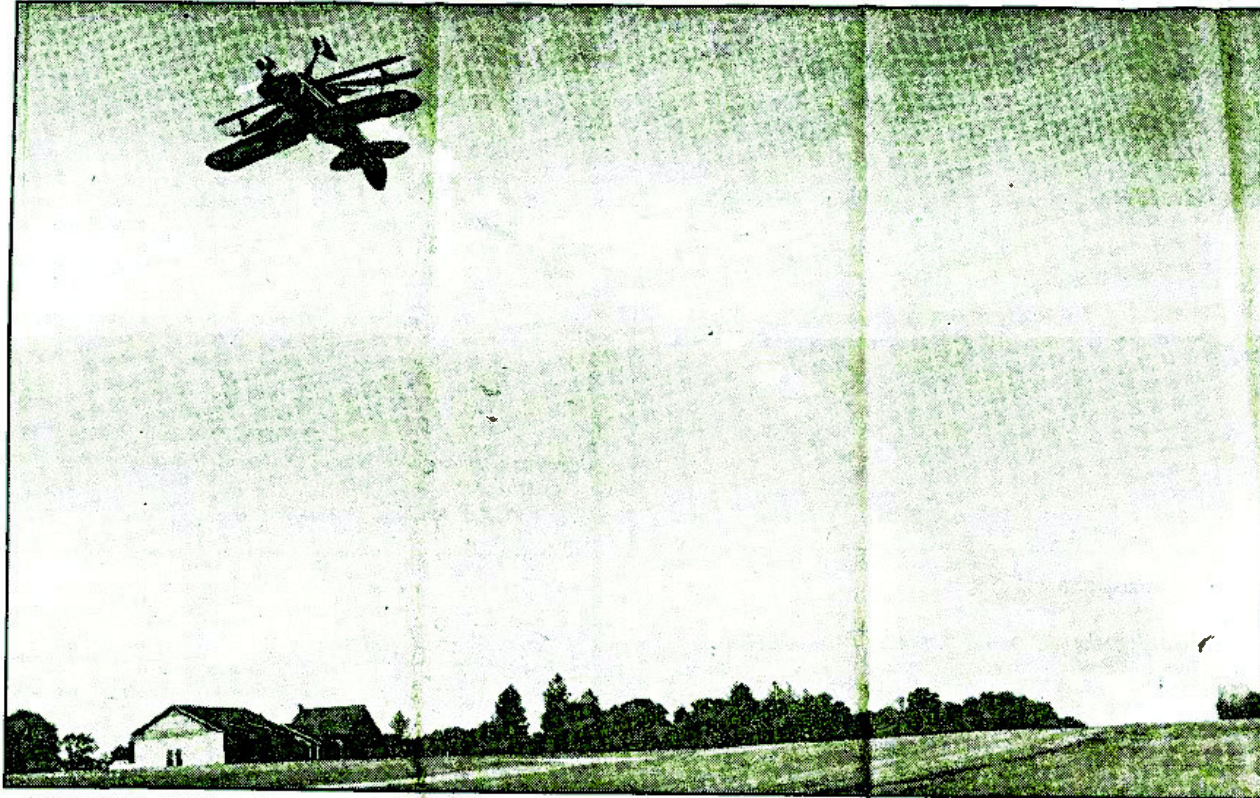
"I've always wanted to have a place to park an airplane in the back yard," said Stratton, a pilot for 33 years who puts about 40,000 miles a year on his plane. "I use my airplane. I use it to go from A to Z."

And other members of Hidden Valley Airpark Association Inc. agree. They think they have the perfect neighborhood.

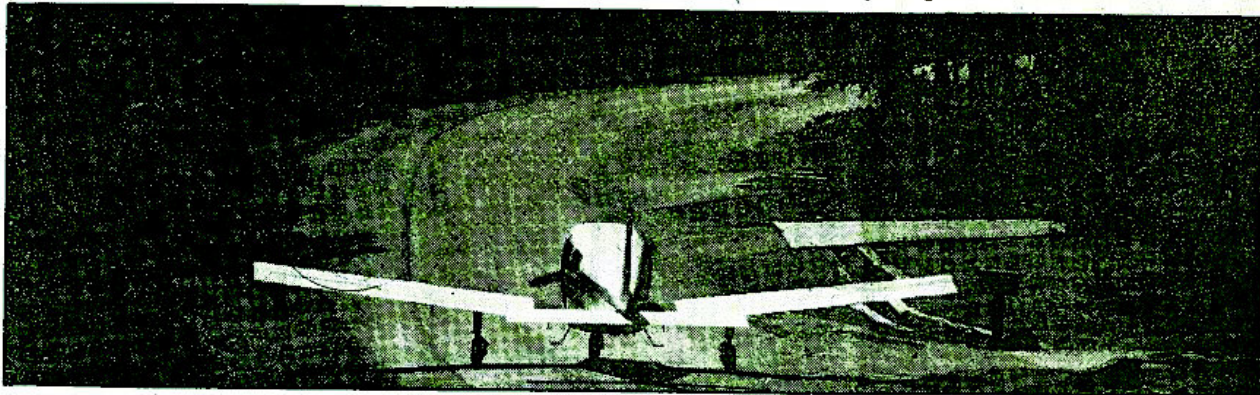
"I put the hangar in the front yard, the kids and the horses in the back, and let the wife have her new home," said Gary Heartsill, a Braniff pilot 15 years. "We do a lot of flying in and out of here — day and night."

To land at night, pilots fly about 500 feet over the runway and two lights mounted on a hangar that is parallel to the runway turn on. They're noise activated — Stratton's accomplishment.

"It's kind of like when I drive in (the development), it's like shutting the rest of the world out," Heartsill said



Gary Heartsill pilots his Pitts biplane over the runway at Hidden Valley Airpark.



An airplane makes its way down a taxiway that winds through the development.

Staff photos by BARRON LUDLUM

"We get folks who like horses, folks who like motorcycles, and folks who like airplanes," said Bill Allen, association secretary. "And we get folks who like all three.

Nearly everyone flies. I don't object to airplane noise or motorcycle noise, so to me it's quiet."

Some residents, a few of whom

fly to a Dallas airport for work, sometimes fly 45 miles to an Oklahoma restaurant for a catfish dinner. "We had so many airplanes (flying to Oklahoma one

weekend), it was stopping traffic on Interstate 35," Stratton said.

Stratton, a 55-year-old chief engineer for a ship that carries wheat and oil around the world,

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has owned five airplanes.

The 167-acre airpark, which was annexed by the town of Shady Shores and includes a 7-acre lake stocked with fish, opened in 1967 and is completely self-sustaining. The association, which recently purchased an additional 72 acres, maintains water and gas lines and keeps the taxiways in good condition. It meets once a year and its officers are elected every two years.

Members, who do not have to be pilots to live in the development, pay \$30 monthly dues and started a crime watch program last month, Allen said. Those who buy lots, which are \$40,000 or \$55,000 for 1.3 acres, automatically become association members. Otherwise a \$3,000 membership fee is assessed.

Homes range from 1,600 square feet to about 3,500 square feet. Some of the homes also have an adjacent hangar.

To build in the development, plans first must be approved by the association board and then are required to meet Shady Shores zoning requirements.

"This is in the heart of a growth area while maintaining a country environment. It's 10 minutes max — even in bad weather — to the (Golden Triangle) mall," Allen said.

"You can see a super airshow out here just sitting in your yard," he said, referring to two aerobatic pilots who live at Hidden Valley.

"That's one of the reasons I go around with a smile on my face — I don't have to ask anyone when to fly upsidedown," said Heartsill, one of the aerobatic pilots and owner of a Pitts biplane.