

# O. U.'s Quarter-Million Airport

By SIGFRID FLOREN

## Large Airplane Traffic Into And Out of Norman Expected When Extensive Program Of Improvements Is Completed

**A** CREW of 75 men was working steadily last month on actual construction of the quarter-million-dollar O.U.-Norman flying field, an airport that will qualify for the next-to-highest rating given American airports. Westheimer Flying Field will be not only one of the very best university airports in the United States—if not the best—but will also be able to accommodate all types of land planes except heavy bombers.

The convenient location, not far from the campus; the engineering advantages of the 289-acre site, and the careful planning of necessary buildings are expected to give Norman and the University an extremely valuable asset.

Half a hundred individuals who spent uncounted time and effort in promoting the "dream" now feel adequately repaid. They can see the educational dividends the field will pay. They can see the advantages that commerce, the City of Norman, and University friends and visitors will enjoy from it. They can see the important contribution it makes to the nation's defense efforts.

Importance of the airplane was recognized at O.U. as far back as 1928-29 when University officials instituted a department of aeronautical engineering in the College of Engineering. That department has grown and is still growing. Momentum has been added by the wind tunnel, one of the few in the country which has recently been rebuilt to simulate a flying velocity of 500 miles per hour.

By the new addition of actual flying field facilities, aeronautical engineering students will have greater opportunities for study of a plane at different times during its flying life. While it isn't suggested that students will actually test materials and planes by flying them at different speeds, different altitudes, etc., possibilities for observation and study of real planes will add to the effectiveness of the aeronautical engineering curriculum.

Probably the greatest and most immediate of the educational benefits from the completion of the field will be the advantages for the University's program of Civilian Pilot Training. The program has made strides forward with the makeshift facilities used so far, but much better results are expected with a field properly drained, graded, and provided with runways.

Improvements mean added safety. O.U.'s flying program has the commendable record of no injuries to either students or instructors and only one minor mishap which damaged a plane slightly. With a larger field, however, and good runways, the danger of a plane in the hands of a beginner is greatly diminished. Likewise an experienced pilot can handle a plane with greater precision on a field properly constructed.

When the field project is completed and buildings erected—the buildings will be a separate undertaking—there will be space for holding classes that are now necessarily held at the University. There will be room for material displays such as wings, motors, weather maps, for the students' study and observation at any time, and especially while they are awaiting their turn in the air. The University has that equipment now located in the Armory and accessible to students.

With the old airport the University has handled the CPT primary and secondary flying courses. After the improvements, the University hopes to be approved for a cross-country flying course and for the instructors' "refresher" course which is normally

connected with it. Thus, those trainees who wish to continue their flight work in order to qualify for a commercial license, for positions as co-pilots on airlines, or for an instructorship will not have to go to other institutions.

Chances are that after Westheimer Field's completion, the University quota in both primary and secondary training will be increased, R. V. James, engineering teacher and director of the CPT program, says. The University will thus be able to meet the increase in the number of applicants that are expected because of the new policy of the United States Army Air Corps which now gives credit for CPT flying instruction to its cadets.

An indication of a different type of benefit that will be derived from the new field was given last spring when the United States War Department approved the proposed project by declaring it to be of military importance. At that time it issued the specifications which the new field must and will meet in order to make it a Class 3 airport, the type in which the War Department is interested. Specifications include the necessary lighting, grading and drainage of the whole field, and fencing.

When completed, the field will be able to accommodate all army aircraft except the heavy bombers. Light bombers will have ample room to take off and land. No one has suggested that the field will be used as a bomber base, but as a part of the national program for complete defense preparations, it provides one more field which can be used for emergency landings, for practice flight terminals, and as possible location for training bases in the air corps' extensive program of educating aviators.

To the educational and military value of the improved field, add also commercial and civic benefits. Safety in air travel is augmented by each good field added to the number on which passenger or mail planes can land in an emergency. Likewise air travel becomes more useful as the number of cities served is increased by construction of adequate take-off and landing facilities conveniently located. This applies to private flying as well as travel by established commercial air lines. At present there are at least three planes privately owned by Norman townspeople. Undoubtedly there will be more when the new field is finished and hangar facilities are constructed.

Approval of the \$20,000 airport bond issue last summer by the people of Norman was one of the major factors that made the proposed new field possible. The agreement between the University and the City of Norman at that time called for reciprocal easements on land owned by each; that is,



*Walter Kraft, superintendent of University utilities and general supervisor of the big expansion program at Westheimer Flying Field.*

each is to have free legal use of the land of the other—the City of Norman of its own land, the 129 acres bought with a part of that \$20,000 and of the 160 acres bought for the University by Walter Neustadt, Ardmore oil man, with the funds of the Max Westheimer estate; and vice versa. Consequently the field will be the municipal airport as well as the University's flying field.

Funds provided for the field construction project are as follows:

The University, labor and materials	\$14,485
City of Norman, land, improvements	21,000
WPA, regular and defense funds	196,983

Total for field alone \$232,468

With proper facilities close to the town and to the University, the day is probably not far distant when a large number of friends and business guests of the University or the city will fly in, transact their business and return to their homes the same day. As many as a dozen different individuals flew planes in to see one football game this fall. And last year a Fort Worth woman "commuted" to Norman in her own plane to take a special course.

A hangar and other buildings are not a part of the present project to put the field itself in condition to meet the War Department's specifications. Those specifications do not call for any building whatsoever. University officials, however, are formulating plans for the needed buildings, and they hope to be able to begin actual work on them by the time the field is finished. The buildings are expected to cost about \$40,000.

For use in that proposed building program Mr. Neustadt presented the University with another check for \$10,000 in November. The new gift brings the total contribution from the Westheimer estate to approximately \$25,000, which includes besides the original land fund of \$10,500 and the latest \$10,000, large amounts of stone, steel, and other building materials representing between four and five thousand dollars.

Speeding construction work on the field, Walter Kraft said last month, "We're making an effort to have the field in good condition in every way before July 1 of next year."

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### Professor in New York

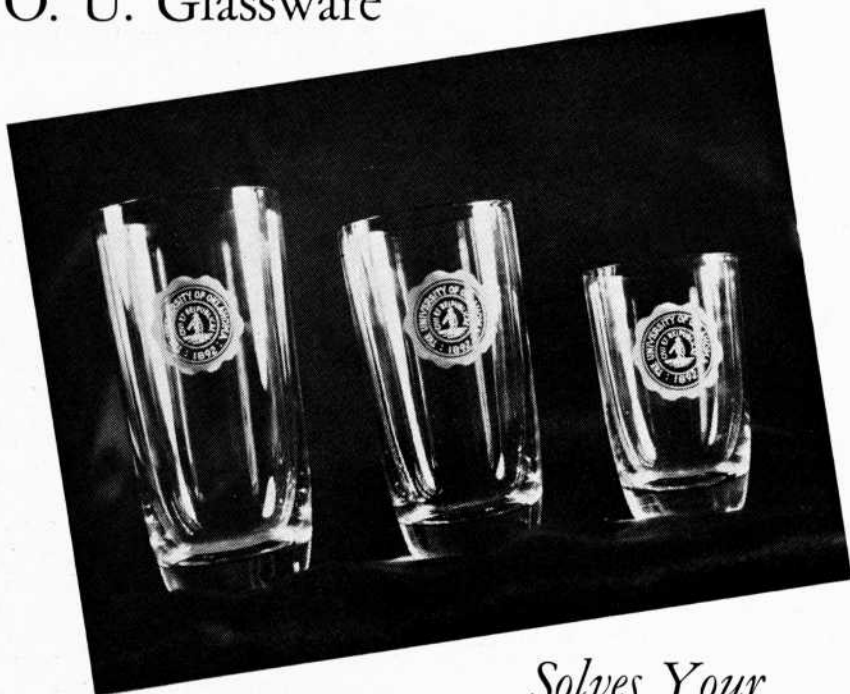
Another Oklahoman making the grade in the big town is Dr. John A. Leavitt, '36 bus. He is teaching statistics, money and banking at the College of the City of New York.

In 1937 he received his master's degree in business from Columbia University, and in the summer of 1941 was awarded a Ph. D. from the same institution. His thesis on "The Voting Trust" was published by the Columbia University Press, 1941.

Mr. Leavitt was in the research department of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York as statistician for several months before accepting his present teaching post.

Mrs. Leavitt, '35ed, is also a Sooner, and like her husband, is a former resident of Oklahoma City.

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