



Max Westheimer Field, located on O. U.'s North Campus, is the world's largest university-owned airport. Main building is topped by tower.

WORLD'S LARGEST

The University's Max Westheimer Field is not, nor does it pretend to be, a giant air center. Yet, it is the world's biggest university-owned airport.

SOME UNIVERSITY OF Oklahoma students live on the North Campus in Norman; some attend classes there in the School of Aeronautical Engineering, and many flock there during the warm months to take advantage of the swimming pool. They are in the habit, too, of driving out to say goodbye or hello to a departing or arriving football team which travels to out-of-state games by air. Therefore, students present and past obviously realize that the North Campus is the site of an airport.

Yet, few realize that Max Westheimer Field is the world's largest university-owned airport.

The field has four concrete runways, a

central building, a tower, hangers and a cafeteria. It has two main functions: 1) serving as an airport, and 2) as a flight training, academic unit.

Joe Coulter, a thin, quiet, friendly man, is in charge of both functions, something which he calls "definitely an accident." It gets a little complicated sometimes. For example, there are two different budgets which Coulter must keep watch over, but the finances have a habit of touching into both; the flight training program pays the airport for facilities used.

Also, Coulter finds himself a landlord's agent. Four different tenants rent land and the airstrip from the University, among

them Naval Reserve and National Guard flying units. They pay for gas and maintenance of aircraft, as well as rent.

There are nine University planes at Max Westheimer—six trainers, one instrument trainer, and two others which are kept available for faculty and staff travel. Six instructors (including Coulter) teach students how to fly, but a staff of 15 is required to operate all the airport. The control tower, which functions only at certain periods, is manned by qualified civilians paid by the hour.

Oklahoma has practically perfect flying weather, ranking as the third or fourth best state in this respect. With few clouds

and almost no fog, it sees clear weather most of the year.

Large planes, such as the DC-7's which cart football teams, find Max Westheimer a top-drawer installation. Smaller planes, including an occasional jet, find it ideal. And there are times when the field is literally deluged by planes: on the day of this season's Notre Dame football game, more than 200 of them dropped in and demanded parking space on the ramp while the owners went across town to Owen Stadium to witness a major grid upset.

It is not unusual for parents to arrive at Westheimer in private or company planes to pick up students when holiday vacations begin. Coulter recalls that a large Convair landed one morning as Thanksgiving holidays started, and two mothers hopped out to greet their broods, then whisked them home along the airways.

Westheimer Field was developed before World War II. The University owned it scarcely one year before the Navy moved in, took the field over as an emergency measure and quickly expanded it. Then, shortly after war's end, the airport was deeded back to O. U. by the War Assets Administration. That same year Joe Coulter took over as director, and he's been there ever since.

Westheimer is not, nor does it pretend

to be, a large and busy air center. No scheduled commercial airlines land there (though one did until a few years ago), and no giant construction programs are likely to pop up and change the airport's face radically (though at this moment one runway is being completely rebuilt at a cost of about \$90,000).

Still, the field buzzes in its own small manner with activity, and seldom do things get really quiet. Students run in and out of the main building, cramming their minds with flight theory and law, then nervously taxiing out to the runways for a solo flight. Many of them participate in national flight contests, and there is a glass case at Westheimer jammed with 19 trophies won "for navigation, for bomb dropping, for power-off accuracy landing," even "for Sky Queen" (who is Gene Nora Stumbough, a sophomore from Colorado).

Faculty and staff members fly, too, to faraway conferences whenever flying is possible budgetwise and weatherwise, and some to keep their private pilots' licenses in good standing. President George L. Cross soloed at Westheimer in 1949, the year a tornado hit the airport and swept a great deal of it away. Funny thing is, he had to use a plane borrowed from A&M College (now Oklahoma State), O. U.'s sister school and traditional rival.



A control tower operator at Westheimer Field shoots permission to an aircraft to take off. Light guns are sometimes used in this respect when the planes are not equipped with radio.

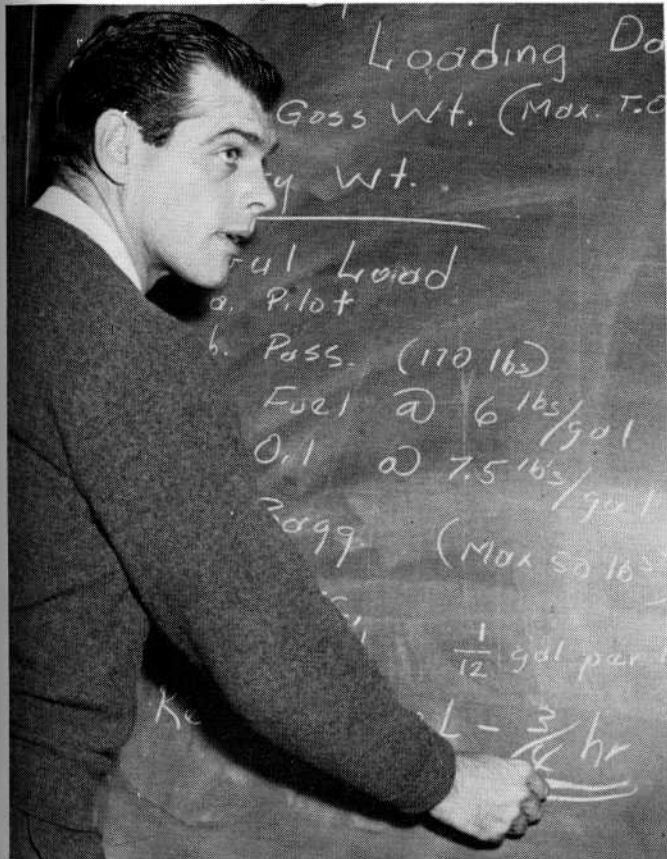
Two students solo on a clear, cold day. Student in background has landed, is anchoring plane. Other man is checking out plane before taking off.



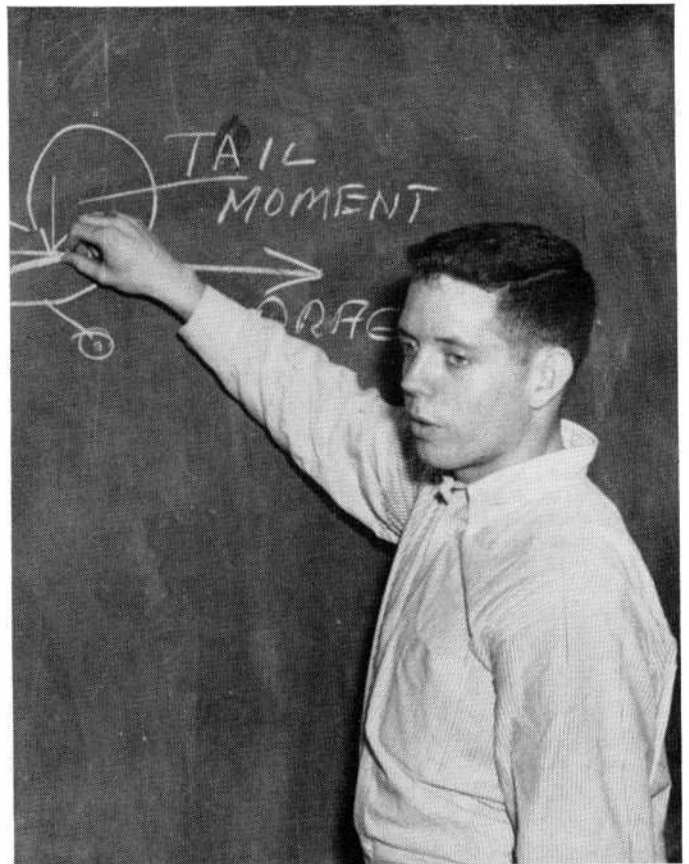


Joe Coulter, director of O. U.'s airport, inspects the installation's trophy case. Students have won a total of 19 air trophies.

John Holland is one of six instructors at the airport. Students have to be enrolled for credit before they can use facilities at the field.



Student, after watching Holland's recitation of items to check before flight, takes his place at the board and recites the theory of flight.



WORLD'S
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Continued



The University is a landlord over four tenants at Westheimer Field. Here a mechanic works on an aircraft belonging to one of the tenants — the Naval Reserve.