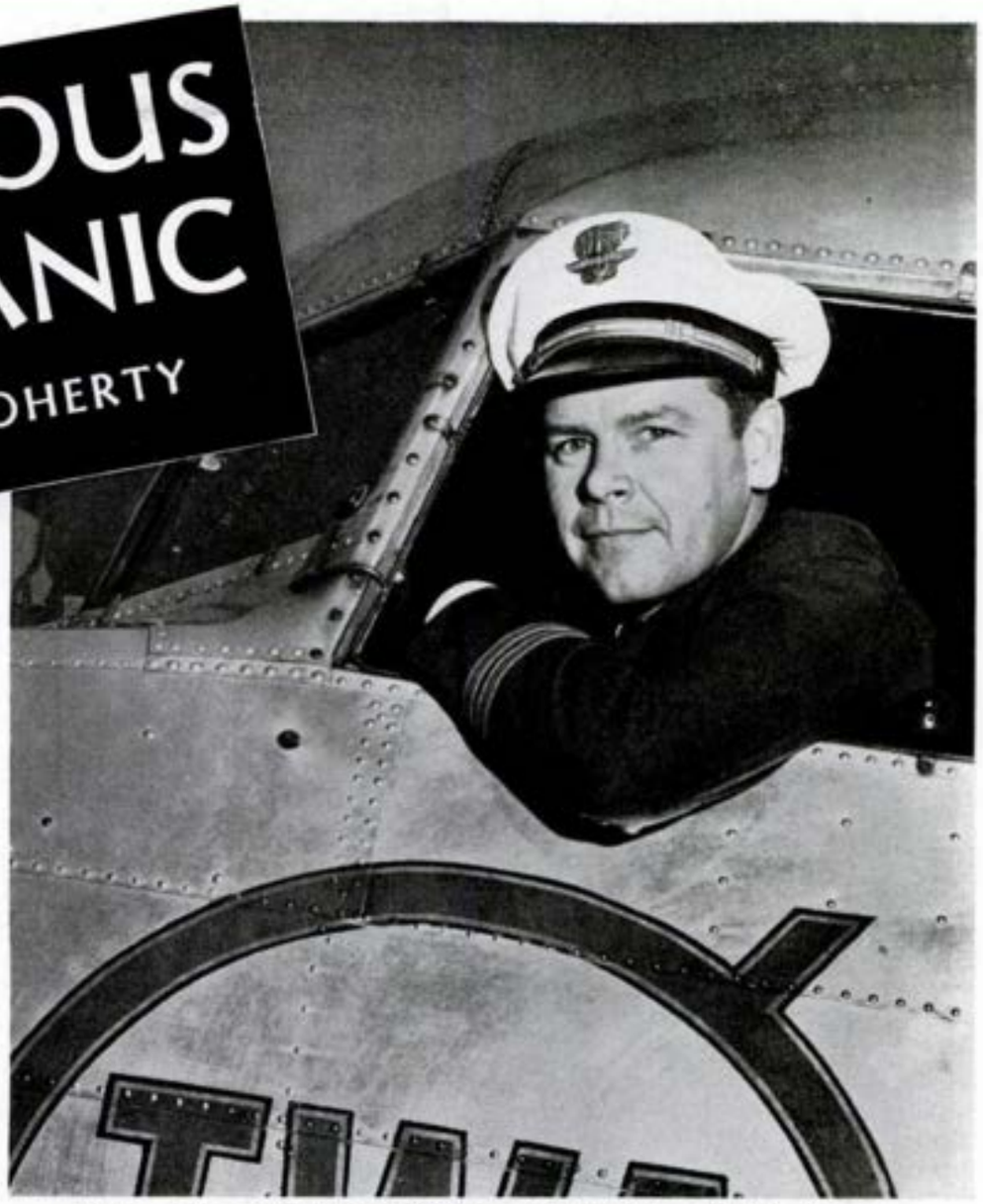
# AMBITIOUS MECHANIC

by E. JAY DOHERTY



With experience that includes 10,000 hours aloft to his credit, Orm Gove has been promoted to the post of TWA flight superintendent at La Guardia Field.

*When a man's so interested in aviation he will throw up a good selling job to work free for an airline, he's sure to succeed.*

ORM GOVE jokingly says he got his first taste of flying the day he was born when he took a trip with a stork and he's been flying ever since. At the age of 16 he soloed. At 20 he booted away a good job selling food products on the West Coast to work for Western Air Express at old Vail Field in Los Angeles.

There was no job in the aviation industry for him, but he went to work anyway. After 10 days of voluntary labor for the airline he had laid two miles of three-inch waterpipe and his supervisors were so astonished they put him on the payroll—as an apprentice mechanic whose main job was to wash the grease off cowlings. Financially this was an awful setback, but as Orm says, "I was spending all my spare time hanging around airports washing cowlings and doing odd jobs to pay for my flying time. And you can't spend 16 hours a day leisure time on your hobby and do justice to your job in the other eight. So I quit the selling job to devote more time to my real interests." When he wasn't messing around the airline he did dirty work for the Army as an enlisted man in the National Guard 115th Observation Squadron at Griffith Park, Los Angeles.

One might think from his meager beginnings in aviation that Gove was awfully anxious to fly. He was—but he had greater things in mind than just flying. Instead of setting out to make a lot of money as a salesman to finance his flying time he chose the hard way because his interest in aviation was so intense that he must know *all* about it. He wasn't—and isn't—gunning for a particular job in aviation; he's so interested in the business that he knows it from the ground up and at 32 is one of the really accomplished executives in the air transport industry.

Consider this: At an age when most men are just getting settled in their jobs Orm Gove is senior flight superintendent at New York for one of America's largest airlines; he is fifth in seniority as captain in the eastern region, being outranked only by the division superintendent, the chief pilot and two others. He owns his own airplane and in addition to his duties as flight superintendent he puts in 40 hours a month as captain of a transport plane—half as much time as the pilots who make a career of flying.

It all goes back to his school days at Hollywood High when, like many others, Ormond M. Gove got the flying bug. Unlike his fellow students Gove knew what to do about it. By doing odd jobs at airports he paid for a few hours instruction which completely sold him on the business. Graduating from high school, he went to work as a salesman. His salary paid for some private flying instruction at the Santa Ana airport from Eddie Martin and Hap Russell. He soloed in 1925. One day he had a chance to purchase an OX Travel Air which had discouraged its owner from further flying by plowing up a plot of land with its nose. Orm bought the plane at a ridiculous price, slaved over it, got it into flying condition, built up flying hours and resold it at a good profit. With the money for the Travel Air he picked up a Waco. The owner of this plane, too, was willing to part with it for a minimum consideration because an unfortunate experience had dulled his enthusiasm for flying. Gove bought gas and oil with his own labor as a grease monkey to keep the plane flying.

At that time there were no airlines. The principal means of making money was by barnstorming and Gove did not care for that. A practical man, he dislikes the spectacular. He believes in aviation as other men believe in insurance. So he kept his selling job and devoted himself to flying, dismantling and remaking his plane when-

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family went to Florida quite frequently. One time we stayed at Pensacola. My mother says that I was about four then, and that I spent all my time watching airplanes, talking about them and wanting to ride in them." Her mother opposed her interest in flying—not because she thought it was dangerous but because she thought that a woman who flew was traitor to her sex.

Mrs. Huntington has since relented and Grace has proved she can be charmingly feminine, even upon discovering that a grease monkey has failed to gas a plane or has left a cotter pin out of a wing strut bolt. She longed to fly all during grammar school and high school, even in the strictly ladylike feminine surroundings of exclusive schools. Once, when she was 16, she flew to Avalon, 23 miles off the coast of California in a flying boat operated by the Wilmington-Catalina Airline. Later she had a "joy hop" at Union Air Terminal, where she now works, when she was about 19 years old.

"I got Charles—my brother—interested in flying when he was 17," she says, almost ruefully. "I found out where he could go to school, how much it would cost and all about it. I finally sent him to Joe Plosser. He took to it like a duck to water and soloed in eight hours."

As soon as Charles got a Fairchild, a gift from his mother, Grace began pestering him. But he didn't want to teach a member of his own family. However, he did let her have the plane now and then and she received her instruction from Burleigh L. Putnam, now a CAA inspector stationed in the east.

She soloed in *seven* hours. This was on July 6, 1936. In the following January she got her private license. This didn't satisfy her at all. She started building up time, studied for her instrument rating, learned about motors, meteorology and everything else she could, getting some of her information here, some there but most of it from Jim Barwick, former motion picture stunt pilot and Lockheed test pilot. In spite of the fact that she still wrote for the Disney studio, she found time to go places, too. Once, she went to Honolulu. Again, to Mexico City via the airline. When she had 100 hours she flew to Chicago and back with her brother, doing her share of the flying. In 1939, she flew with her mother and her brother to New York City, where they embarked on a trip around the world. She flew the Fairchild back alone.

She got her instrument rating. Then came the endurance flights—the record-breaking ones in the Fairchild and the Taylorcraft. By now, she had decided that she'd rather fly than do anything so she dropped all her other activities. Finally, she even quit the writing job with Disney. She went east once to pick up a Taylorcraft at Alliance, O., returned to get a Ranger Fairchild and fly it out to the Boeing school at Oakland.

Then, a few months ago, the job with Paul Mantz turned up and she went to work with a will, flying her allowable hours as an instructor right up to the hilt.

"I'm grateful to Paul," she says, "for giving me a chance to prove myself. And I don't feel that I've done badly. So far, no man who has dropped in to see about flying instruction has changed his mind either at sight of me or after flying with me. I do hope, however, that other types of jobs will open up for women, as well as opportunities to get the necessary instruction in motors, maintenance and the like. If women are going to fly they must have real incentive. A great many women who want to learn to fly hold off because they can't see where aviation will return a living to them. The field must open up to them if we are to have a worthy and worth while feminine representation in the business."

END

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## Ambitious Mechanic

(Continued from page 33)

ever he could get away from the canned goods. He joined the National Guard which gave him an opportunity to learn about different types of engines and planes, about maintenance and flying tactics. Here was a boy who didn't do the mopping up just to get an occasional airplane ride.

It was in April, 1928, when he went to work for Western Air Express as a grease monkey. His experience and his application to the work carried him through a whirlwind apprenticeship. Within a year he was not only an accomplished mechanic but a crew chief. During the following year the airline, financed with Guggenheim funds, operated between Los Angeles and San Francisco over the model airway carrying passengers, mail and freight. The crew on tri-motored Fokkers in those days consisted of pilot and flying mechanic. Gove was one of the first flying mechanics in the country. He kept the log books, serviced the ships on the ground and supervised maintenance of the planes. That's quite a picture when contrasted with today's transport. When they land, air conditioners are attached and mechanics swarm over them to check instruments, engines, radios and appearance. Cleaners tidy the cabin. Others gas the planes. Still more personnel handle cargo and passengers.

But this is 1941 and Orm Gove instead of being responsible for the safety of one plane sits at a desk and guides many of them through the air at once. This is a job he can do because for 12 years he has learned the business as it progressed. Spectacular success stories abound through the aviation industry, stories of men who have entered aviation and overnight became famous. But Orm Gove is not spectacular. His success has come through determination to succeed the hard way which is to know as much as possible about every phase of the busi-


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ness than anybody else and then to apply what he has learned. But Gove won't tell you anything like that. He's so modest that many of the men with whom he works don't know the story of how he worked up from the lowliest job to one of the most desirable.

In the air transportation business dispatchers' reputations among their confreres are based on the amount of strain their nerves can take without being reflected in their tempers. Gove is unbelievably level-tempered. He seldom allows himself to get angry but when he does "Goldurn!" is the strongest of his expletives. He neither smokes nor drinks, probably because there is never a moment when he has nothing to do.

"I didn't have much time to pick up bad habits when I was younger," he says. "When I wasn't working on my steady job I was piling up hours or puttering around with my own planes. By the time Western Air Express merged with TAT I had about 1,200 hours logged and had earned my commercial license."

Shortly after that the Bureau of Air Commerce decided flying tri-motor Fokkers and Fords was too big a job for one man to handle and required that airlines have two pilots on every plane. So Orm just naturally became a co-pilot, a position he retained for five years. During that time he flew between Los Angeles, Albuquerque and Salt Lake City. As a first officer Gove saw many changes in the transportation industry. He flew the first four-motored planes to operate in the United States. "They were Fokkers," he recalled, "and they carried 32 passengers and a lot of freight. Were they good planes? I'll say they were good! But it didn't pay to use them; people weren't traveling by air in '29 and '30. It would break your heart to see those swell old ships now subjected to their greatest indignity. Imagine—they're used on the West Coast as gas stations!" It took 10 years for his faith in four-motored transports to be vindicated.

During his five years as first officer, Gove continued to buy and sell private planes. He has owned eight of them including two Trave Airs, a J5 Stearman, Monocoupe, Pitcairn, Keystone *Commuter* and two Wacos, one of which he has now—a 1935 cabin model with Continental engine. Of them all he liked the Monocoupe best. "It was the least expensive to operate and I had it fixed up with instruments and a hood to learn instrument flying. When I was transferred to Newark I flew from Los Angeles in the Monocoupe for only $36.35 including one night's storage in Amarillo." He says things like that with a shy pride as if he were bragging about a child.

Although he has never owned a "flivver plane" Orm gets excited about them. If anything will get the public flying, he believes, it's the little planes that don't require too much skill to operate—and what's more—that compare favorably in up-keep to automobiles. He sighed. "The biggest obstacle to owning a plane like that is hangar rent. Storage on a lightplane is way out of proportion to the other costs. But maybe something will be done to correct that situation."

Shortly after moving east Gove picked up his *Commuter*. It was in terrible condition. The all-metal fuselage was corroded to such an extent he wasn't sure it would be worthwhile to bother repairing it. But Casey Jones, whose mechanics' school is located in Newark, suggested to Gove that he be allowed to use the Keystone to give his students actual experience in repairing a plane. It would be quite a project for a group of student mechanics to take the almost hopeless plane and put it into flying condition. Gove assented.

"Well," he grinned, "it took them two years and I don't how how many man hours but they certain gave that amphibian a going-over. Those school kids rebuilt the plane—at no cost to me except for parts—and it handled beautifully. It sure had wonderful water-handling characteristics." He drifted off in thought. "But I traded it in recently for my Waco which is less expensive to operate."

Orm buys planes at the drop of a hat. He'll buy one if he thinks he can sell it at a profit, sticking to standard models because they bring a better price for resale. Lest any one get the impression Gove is money-mad, it should be understood that airline personnel don't make a lot of money and the manipulation of planes on his part is just his method of making the ships support themselves. But although he doesn't say so, there is a deeper reason why Orm moves from one plane to another. He is in love with flying and with planes and engines. He swings from one to another because he can't afford to collect them. In that way he gets the pleasure over a period of time of the hobbyist-collector. He likes to fly to football games and other sports events with his wife—who is not a pilot—because of the ease of it. He probably suppresses many a laugh between Floyd Bennett and New Haven when he looks down and sees the traffic.

Six years ago he checked out as a captain with a total of 5,200 co-pilot hours tucked away in his log books. He was flying in the east then between Newark and Kansas City. He survived the air mail cancellation and settled down to what he considers an easy job of flying 85 hours a month on the left side of the cockpit on DC-2s and DC-3s. He wanted not merely to be a pilot, but to sit right in the thick of the activity so he could see what was evolving over the whole system. The next move up was to dispatcher at Newark, where he would control for eight hours a day the busiest sector of the airline. That was in 1936.

He still has the same job only he's called a flight superintendent. He's at La Guardia Field and the airline's operations have more than doubled, which has made the job that much harder. But Orm doesn't mind. He's composed entirely of those qualities that make a good dispatcher. Mild-mannered and unflusterable, he has a respect for details that comes of long hours spent assembling engines. He has the viewpoint of a pilot and the caution of a mechanic. But above all his understanding of the operating problems and his ability to evaluate them make a powerful background for the man at the desk who gives orders to the men in the cockpits.

Orm Gove is typical of the new generation which has been presented the job of making air transportation safe and com-


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fortable and selling it to the public. He's been flying planes constantly for 16 years—has spent more than 10,000 hours in the air—*and he's never had an accident!*

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END

## I Learned About . . .

(*Continued from page 43*)

biplane. It had become second nature to to figure in about 500 feet for instrument lag, but it must have been far beyond that figure on this occasion. Third, I didn't think of the extra amount of altitude that would be consumed in the pull-out, due to the extra speed. All in all, I committed the one unpardonable flying sin: I just didn't think.

Feb. 20, 1939, was a beautiful Southern California winter afternoon of the type so well advertised by the Chamber of Commerce. Pt. Loma and San Diego bay passed lazily underneath as I shuttled back and forth between Oceanside and the Mexican border, making speed versus power runs at various altitudes. I was flying a Vought SB2U-2, the hottest dive bomber in the fleet at the time. We had had the planes about a month-and-a-half, but the installation of radios, sights, guns, emergency equipment and the host of minor items that constitute military equipment had kept them in the shops pretty continuously, so that I had had only 25 hours in the type—of which 17 hours had been cross-country from Washington to San Diego, with no opportunity for experimentation.

Our old planes, Great Lakes BG-1's, had been fine dive bombers, not too fast in the dive and very easy to pull out into level flight. With the adjustable stabilizer rolled all the way forward, it was possible to stay in a steep dive only by exerting considerable forward pressure on the stick. When you wanted to pull level, you merely relaxed the forward pressure and, as the nose started up and the speed fell off, applied back pressure on the stick. Several hundred hours of dive-bombing in these ships had made it instinctive to use just the right amount of pull on the controls for a rapid but non-blacked-out recovery. While I was flying BG's that instinct was of great advantage, but it contributed to my near-downfall with the new Vought.

As I have said, I had had only eight hours playing around in the SB2U's. Those hours had been spent on landings, formation flying and various other familiarization work, with only one or two shallow dives thrown in. After two hours of tedious work holding the airspeed and altitude constant and jotting down reading after reading on the knee pad, I was at 12,000 feet with the runs completed and a brand new dive bomber just waiting to dive. I was in the mood for a little excitement and, to my mind, there is no thrill like the feeling of a plane straight up and down, with wings taut and rigid in the howling airstream and the earth coming up at 500 feet a second. So, with 12,000 feet of altitude to be lost, a new sturdy plane underneath and a craving for excitement, what was more natural than a good screaming dive?

I eased the gun off and lost my excess speed by a gentle zoom that carried me up an extra 1,000 feet. When the ship seemed almost motionless in a near stall, I pushed the nose straight over and down. A pencil that had previously fallen down below the seat suddenly appeared floating in mid-air in front of my face. I hastily retrieved it and stuffed it into a knee pocket of my flying suit. The airspeed needle started to wind up around the dial and the altimeter hands began to unwind. As the speed mounted I eased forward on the elevator tab wheel to take the increased load off the stick.

By the time the altimeter showed 10,000 the airspeed needle was well into its second revolution of the dial. The wings were beginning to feel stiff and the airstream was a mounting crescendo as it pushed past the windshield.

Nine thousand. Eight thousand. The airspeed hand was progressing only slowly, but the altimeter was really winding down rapidly. I eased forward again on the Flettner control and the ship was trimmed in an almost "hands off" condition for the dive. It was good to be alive, feeling the ship's alertness to the speed, feeling the tenseness of the structure and sensing the terrific rush of air. The earth still seemed remote and only slightly closer than at the beginning of the dive. I put my eye to the telescope sight momentarily and noted that the ball was dead centered, showing that the ship was diving absolutely straight with no skid. Again I eased forward a little on the elevator Flettner to counteract for the now almost terminal velocity.

As the altimeter flicked past 6,000 feet I commenced the pullout. Why I decided to end the dive then I don't know, for it was several thousand feet higher than was normal for routine dive-bombing. The decision saved my life.

The airspeed indicator was well over 300 knots; how much more I can't tell vou, for it would be disclosing confidential performance data. In any case, it was faster than I had ever been before and faster than I had any desire to go afterwards. I eased back on the stick with the instinctive BG technique. The nose seemed to be coming up at about the right speed. As the forward load on the stick increased due to the slowly slackening airspeed, I pulled back harder. My concentration was now on the water, rather than within the cockpit.

All of a sudden it dawned on me that the water was coming up at an alarming rate. We were still at a 45° angle at least and descending rapidly. It was going to be awfully close as to whether or not I got the ship level before we hit the water. By this point I was pulling back on the stick with about all the strength I had in my right arm, but it