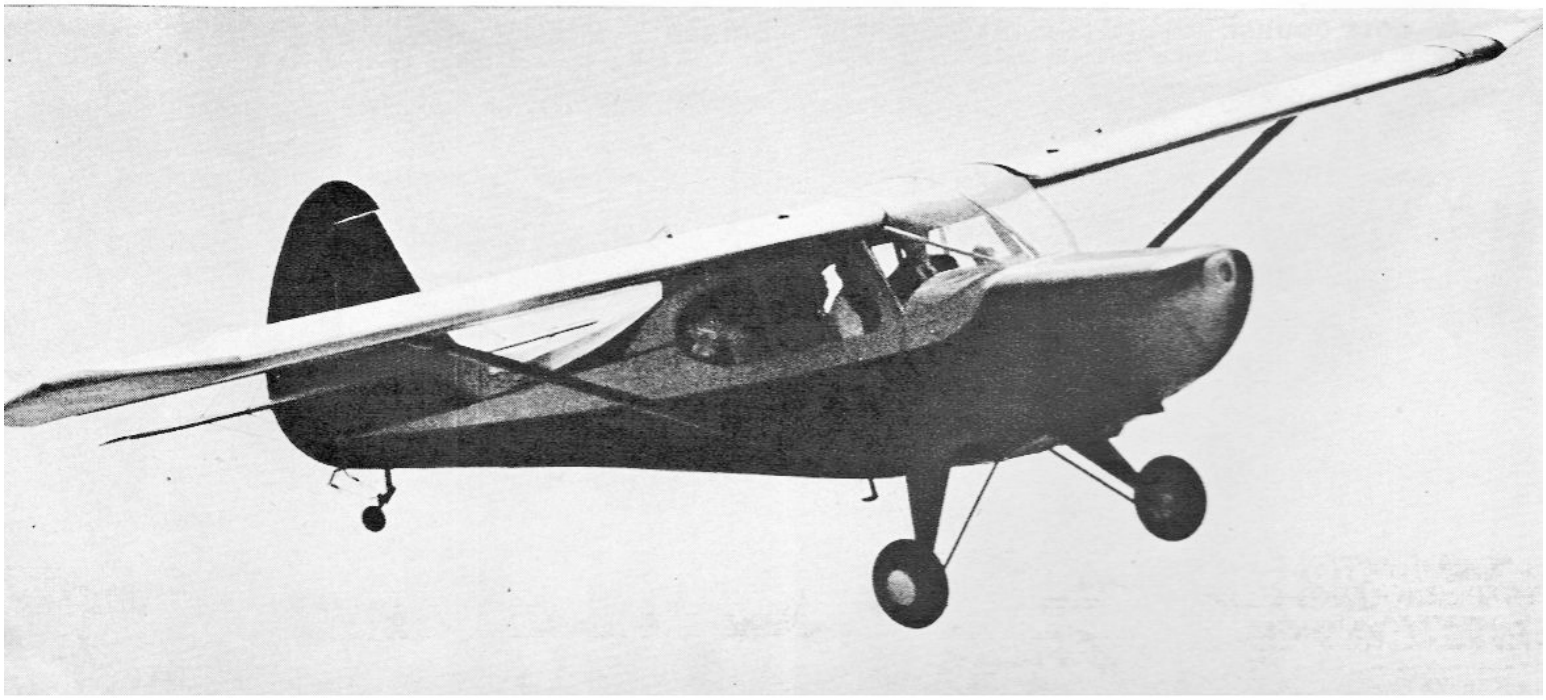
NEW AERONCA SEDAN, on delivery flight to California, proved an excellent performer. Here author checks gas cap

Pilot's Report . . . AERONCA SEDAN

By CHASE CRAWFORD

CRUISING SPEED of the ship with a full load was a good 110 mph at 5,000 feet. Cabin was roomy and comfortable



(This is the second in a series of impartial pilot reports on new, four-place family airplanes. Next month, the Ryan NAVION.)

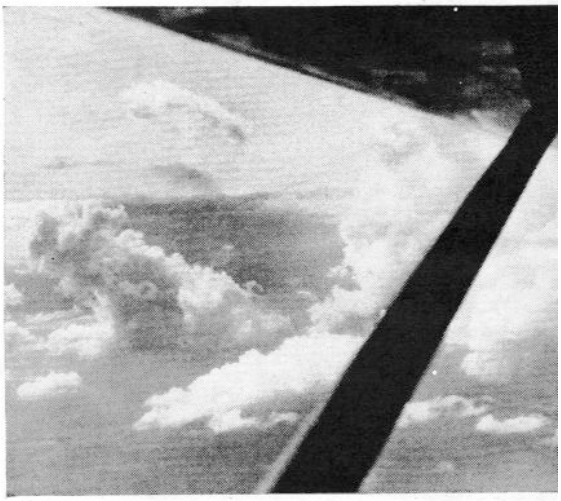
YOU LEARN a lot about any new plane on a cross-country ferry flight, and ours in the new Aeronca *Sedan* gave us fun along with the good hunk of learning.

The higher the country, the better the performance of this new Aeronca. Short-field take-offs and steady climb with full loads should make this plane popular, particularly those parts of the world that are covered with dark brown on airway maps.

For a report more complete than the story of half a dozen landings in a new plane, we picked up Aeronca's production model #13 at the Middletown, Ohio, factory and ferried it west to a Southern California dealer.

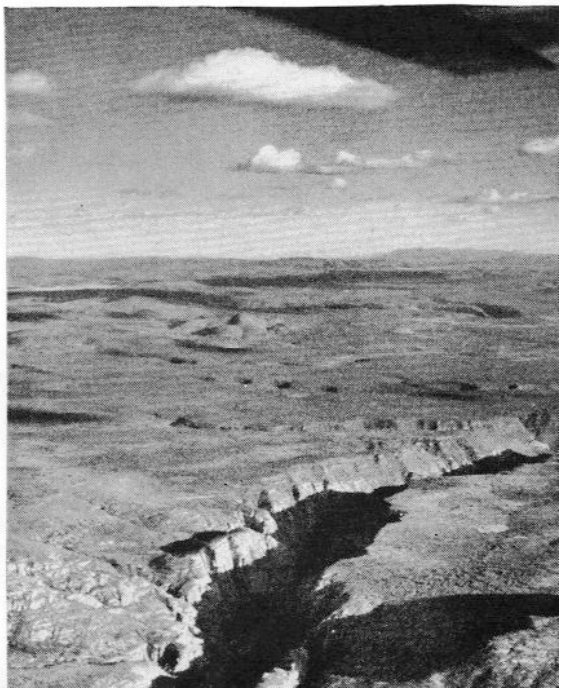
You'll never have any trouble in recognizing the Aeronca *Sedan*. That 37½-foot, all-metal wing stands out like a silver signboard. Sales Manager Floyd B. Simmen explained at the factory that the metal-skinned wing was designed as a money-saver for the owner. The wing has 80 per cent of the total area of the plane but is normally subjected to little or no damage other than natural deterioration. The fuselage, on the other hand, is usually the part of the airplane that is bent-up in hard landings and taxi accidents. With the *Sedan's* conventional steel-tube fuselage, even extensive damage can be *(Continued on page 50)*

INSTRUMENT PANEL on the *Sedan* is neat, well set up. Note its dual wheel



STORMY WEATHER dogged the *Sedan* from factory to L. A. Despite this, trip was fun. Photo *(below)* was taken from *Sedan* over Pecos River Canyon

AIRPORT people from Ohio to California welcomed the new Aeronca. At every field crowds of local pilots, business men and operators milled about the new ship, gave it nods of okay. At Cutter-Carr Airport in Albuquerque, N. M., a snow squall *(below)* hit ships just at take-off time



Pilot's Report

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repaired with a welding torch and a bucket of dope. That's the thought behind this metal-wing and fabric-fuselage design.

Aside from the wing, the new Aeronca is strictly a conventional plane built with two primary ideas; ease of flight and low cost. There are a number of parts interchangeable with the smaller Aeronca *Champion* and *Chief*. Control wheels, hinges, instruments, glove compartments, seats and rudder pedals are the same on all models and that helps keep tooling costs down on this new model. Production expense is lowered by using only a single cabin door, sliding windows on one side only, brakes and an adjustable seat on the pilot's side only and a simplified instrument panel.

One of the most popular points in the design of this new plane is its plenty of cockpit room. There is more than enough knee and elbow room for even the six-foot-or-better pilot. And the back seat is spacious when compared with many four-place planes. Interior upholstery is of high quality and the soft green and tan color is easy on the eyes. The seats are well padded and quite comfortable and the designers have been able to keep the cabin noise level remarkably low as long as the windows remain closed. There is plenty of space for the 120 pounds of baggage allowed. A B-4 bag presents no problem.

Why not join us on our 28-hour westward ferry flight, and find out the merits of this new plane. The entire flight was made with three passengers, a full load of baggage, and all kinds of weather, mostly bad.

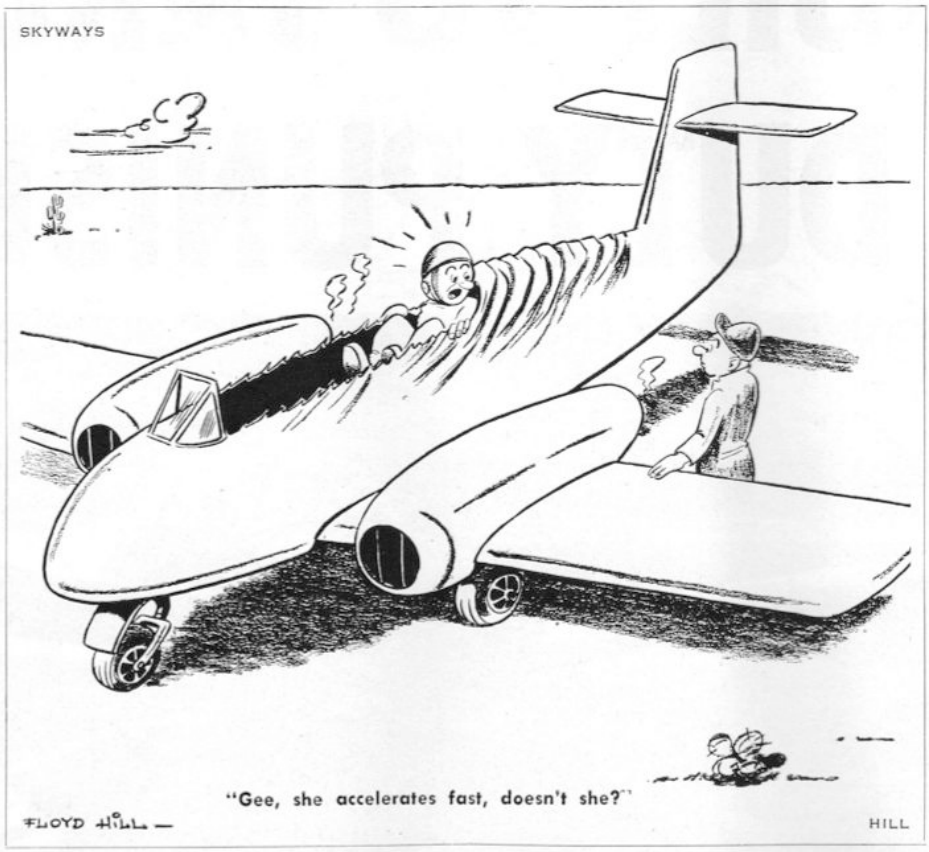
Early this summer the weather was anything but good for a hundred-mile-an-hour airplane headed West. Had we been going toward the Atlantic, our flight time would have been about 50 per cent shorter for there wasn't a single mile of the trip that we didn't have headwinds of from 20 to 50 mph. Cold storm fronts, towering cumulus thunderheads and dust storms made this a good "shake-down" flight for the new Aeronca.

A pre-flight check on this four-placer is as simple as on any two-place plane. The smooth-running electric starter eliminates the hazards of hand cranking and within a few minutes we were taxiing out the sod runway at the Middletown Airport. The *Sedan* has a rather stiff landing gear and it bounced over the taxiways cut-up by recent rains.

Our first take-off was quite a surprise. The plane picked up speed quickly and seemed to hop into the air at about 50 mph. We headed south and circled the Lunken Airport at Cincinnati. Only the hangar roofs showed above the muddy flood waters of the Ohio River.

As this particular ship had not had its radio installed yet, we didn't try to fly the airways and so headed cross-lots for Terre Haute, Indiana. *Sedans* coming off the assembly lines at Aeronca now are equipped with Hallicrafter Skyfone trans-receivers, a very fine bit of radio equipment.

In flight, the Aeronca is very stable. We tried some stalls that broke easily and cleanly,



straight ahead. Then we trimmed the airplane for hands-off, level flight and stamped down hard on one rudder. The nose veered sharply but returned at once to its original position as soon as the pressure was released. The plane responded smoothly to all controls.

Since this complete trip was made under such changeable weather conditions, a really accurate speed check was impractical. The plane averaged out, however, at its advertised speed—about 112 mph at 5,000 feet, and 105 mph at sea level. On this particular production model there was some parasite drag. The metal cowling between the landing gear was not flush with the fuselage and the half-inch gap did cause drag. Adding to the drag was the position of the elevators in level flight. The counter-balance section of the control remained nearly an inch above the plane of the horizontal stabilizer when the plane was trimmed out. We noticed this unusual characteristic only after having a map sucked out of the window in flight. The map caught on the stabilizer and stayed there until we landed at Terre Haute.

The *Sedan* lands easily. Except for the longer nose housing the 145-hp Continental engine, a pilot could just as well be landing an Aeronca *Chief*. The brakes are excellent but it is difficult for a pilot with big feet to keep from riding them while taxiing. This is something, though, that would go by the boards when the pilot becomes accustomed to his new ship. Fuel consumption was an even 8 gallons per hour.

The CAA Weather Bureau forecast 40-mph headwinds on the nose and we debated about taking off at all. Only after the Weather Man advised that it would be fairly calm at 10,000 feet did we taxi out and climb out to the West. The 166-mile flight to East St. Louis, Illinois, took an even and a half hours.

We landed at the Parks field in East St. Louis. Because of the gusty surface winds, we were tied down as soon as the prop stopped turning. Here a gas attendant fueled the plane promptly, but forgot to replace one of the gas caps. Let that be a lesson to cross-country pilots—always check your gas caps. You'd be surprised to know how many careless field attendants there are, and if you want security, you'd better keep track of things yourself. The plane took its first quart of oil: it burned only three quarts on the whole trip.

Our last hop of the day was to Boonville, Missouri, where approaching darkness and a "Modern Cabins" sign on the airport office roof made a landing seem appropriate. Standard equipment on the *Sedan* includes cockpit, navigation and landing lights. The factory explained that landing lights were included as standard equipment because the wing had to be wired for them anyhow and the actual lights were comparatively inexpensive.

After the usual pre-flight inspection the next morning, we took off for Albuquerque, New Mexico. Roaring headwinds pounded us all the way and with it some pretty rough riding. But everyone soon became accustomed to it. We stopped for gas at the Cutter-Carr field in Albuquerque, and while the gassing was going on, we took time out for a leisurely cup of coffee. Here, as at every field we stopped, the Aeronca *Sedan* created a great deal of interest. Crowds of pilots and mechanics milled around the ship and gave it the going-over of physicians at a post-mortem.

Although sorry to have to break up the fun, we had to be on our way, and so took off for Gallup. Almost all the way over we had to wind our way around scattered snow flurries. Light rime ice formed on the wing struts as rain and snow leaked out the bottom of the broken cum-

ulus clouds. With full carburetor heat, the smooth-running engine never missed a beat.

At Gallup, the take-off performance of the Aeronca again proved amazing. This 6,500-foot-high airport demands a long roll from most so-called "light airplanes," but the *Sedan* literally hopped into the air. Into a brisk 20-mph wind, we climbed to nearly 500 feet before crossing the boundary.

The flight from Gallup to Prescott, Arizona, is second only to the Grand Canyon in sheer natural beauty. The Painted Desert, Meteor Crater, the bright blue of Mormon Lake fringed with tall pines, "Bloody Basin," scene of many Indian wars and the huge open pit copper mines at Jerome all rolled under the wings of the Aeronca in two and a half hours of scenic beauty.

Prescott is unique in its accommodations for the transient pilot. With paved and lighted mile-long runways, they boast both a good cafe and overnight cabins on the field. At the request of three of the flight instructors on the airport, we took a full load of pilots up over town. Without exception they were very favorably impressed with this new plane.

"This ship gets off the ground better than anything we've got on the field," remarked the instructor behind the wheel. "It ought to be a good airplane for any high-altitude airport operator."

From Prescott we wandered over the hot desert toward the Colorado River. Ventilation in the *Sedan* is the only problem. With no openings but the two sliding windows on the pilot's side, it takes considerable juggling to divert enough fresh air into the cockpit without blowing the passenger in the left rear seat almost out of the airplane. If the rear window alone is opened, the air circles around the cockpit and hits the pilot in the back of the neck. If both windows are opened, maps, chewing gum, navigation aids and any loose articles on the pilot's side are apt to be sucked out by the air rushing from the front window. Snap vents or wing root-section ventilators will be needed badly in summer weather.

Our last stop was at the Lake Havasu fishing resort on the edge of the Colorado River. Year 'round bass fishing and two 6,000-foot runways make this resort (marked as Kingman Auxiliary Site 6 on most maps) a mecca for sportsmen pilots. Here again the *Sedan* was the center of attention among both pilots and by-standers.

The hop from Lake Havasu to Los Angeles is over some of the most barren country on the map, but the reliable six-cylinder engine didn't seem to mind a bit and we finally delivered the *Sedan* to dealer "Hank" Coffin at Vail Field, all in one piece.

In 28 hours and 10 minutes in the air we had burned 241 gallons of gas and 3 quarts of oil.

Considering the extremely unfavorable weather, the trip was very comfortable and the Aeronca *Sedan* showed surprising high-altitude performance. Like the other Aeronca models that have always enjoyed popularity with pilots and passengers, the new *Sedan* is bound to be included on any list of good airplanes. Whatever shortcomings showed up in the model we flew, one of the first off the assembly line, are bound to be corrected, but as far as we are concerned, the *Sedan* is another good Aeronca.

Flight by Night

(Continued from page 46)

past it. Beacon #26 will become visible at the same time.

The town of Belleville (E) is the next check point. Ordinarily a town this size would be a poor check point and might be confused with Fredericktown. However, the code signals of beacons #25 (.-.) and #26 (-.-) positively identify the adjacent towns. Besides, with an ETA for Belleville, its identity is assured.

The city of Mansfield (F) is the final point before the field. Suppose, however, that a strong southwest wind prevailed from take-off and no correction was made. When the ETA for Mansfield expired, you would be over Ashland (X) instead of Mansfield. How would you know you were over Ashland?

The difference in size would help, but if you were not able to compare the two, you could not positively identify Ashland on the basis of size alone. Each city has an airport to the north, making the similarity greater. In addition, the cities are shaped roughly the same.

The airports would be the strongest points. Mansfield Airport has lighted runways, (note the LF) and has a rotating beacon. Ashland has neither beacon nor runway lights.

In addition, to fly to Ashland necessitates flying over beacon #27. The course lights flashing the code letter D (- . .) for a number seven beacon will be visible, and the error in course will be noted.

Finally, a few points to keep in mind when navigating at night:

1. Before making a night trip get your eyes accustomed to darkness, and avoid looking at lights.
2. Keep the cabin lights off, and don't stare at the instrument lights. Study your maps with dimmed flashlight.
3. *Know* your instrument panel.
4. If possible, avoid flying at dawn or dusk. Navigation is particularly difficult during those hours. Remember that a moon is a big help.
5. Don't become over-absorbed in your navigating. Remember that other planes are in the air. Keep your eyes open.
6. Know what to expect before you take off. Study your maps. ETA's to check points are important.
7. Keep checking groundspeeds and ETA's.
8. Don't lose your head if you get lost temporarily. Don't change course or fly in circles. Check back to your last *sure* check point. Using groundspeed and track (or airspeed and compass heading, if you have nothing better), measure off the distance for the elapsed time. Look for a check point in that area.
9. Learn to navigate from map to ground —and—from ground to map. It's particularly helpful to be competent at both when you're lost.
10. Finally—and this applies to all methods of navigation, day or night, *never stop navigating*. Never be so sure that you don't check and recheck with all means available. Navigating is a full-time job that pays off in safety.