

# EARLY GLIDING IN TEXAS

*Flights That Probably Established World's Record Distance  
by Auto Tow Method*

Lt. Col. R. D. Ormand of 209 N.E. 22nd Street, Grand Prairie, Texas, now associated with the Engineering Division of the Chance Vought organization, may be the first Texan to have built and flown gliders.

As a boy in the early twenties, this West Texas ranch lad was thinking of a smoother ride than the back of a mustang cowpony; something that did not require saddle breaking every time it was brought out of the corral.

Col. Ormand's favorite reading of those bygone days ran mostly to

Ormand went back to the magazines in search of a more 'modern' machine. Sure enough there showed up in 1930 a picture of a machine after the fashion of the old German primary the 'Pruffling.' Once again the Col. started his second glider building programme. Several hundred glue joints later he was back in the air with his second machine.

West Texas as everyone knows is one vast area of perfectly flat country, especially the area around Sudan, Texas. There being nothing even re-



*Col. R. D. Ormand  
about to leap into the  
air in his home made  
"Dieeder Glider"*

'Mechanics Illustrated' and like publications. It was from the pages of such publications that he ran across a picture of a glider, the first one he had ever seen. Then it was that he started construction of his first machine, having only the photo as a guide. This was in 1928 and the aircraft was, as the Col. remembers, a 'Dieeder Glider.' This activity led quite naturally to the Col. acquiring some knowledge of aircraft construction details along with at least the rudiments of piloting something other than a wild bronco. The fact is, of course, that it led to a most successful career in aviation.

With this first ship he taught himself to fly. The operation of the same was not without incident. Finally it was broken in what the Col. describes as a rough landing but not too different from many a spill he had had in the local rodeos.

Recognizing that his first machine lacked something structurally as well as being slightly less than satisfactory as far as stability was concerned,

*Ormand's second home  
built glider, which  
closely resembles the  
old German "Pruffling"*



sembling a ridge in those parts, the nearest one being many miles away, the Col. realized that he would have no opportunity for sustained flying as along a slope. He did however, have the advantage of long, straight unobstructed roads. Telephones were not common in the far reaches of West Texas' ranch lands of those days, and REA had not been thought of.

The main road ran by the Ormand homestead and extended uninterrupted and unobstructed for a solid fifteen miles to the first turn. A



*In the foreground is the family auto photographed by Col. Ormand during one of his marathon auto tows.*

dozen or so lariat ropes tied end to end with the family auto furnishing the motive power and Col. Ormand was off on a fifteen mile cross-country glider flight to a goal at the first turn of the road. We have an idea that maybe these 15 mile hauls established a world's record for continuous auto towing. Perhaps this record still stands.

As will be seen from one of the accompanying photos, Col. Ormand was at this early age, something of an aerial photographer. He had ingeniously rigged and mounted an inexpensive camera on his glider, actuating the shutter with a pull-

string. His photo album includes many aerial shots of the West Texas countryside which were exposed from his many glider flights.

Col. Ormand then rebuilt one of the old Cessna primaries. This was his third project and he finished it and flew it in 1932.

By the time of World War II, Ormand was an accomplished airman including skills in aircraft design and construction. His eagerness for aviation led to his joining with the Royal

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