

maple trees while turning on to final. Get her on the ground and stopped before you reach the top of the hill because there is a rough washout there that would jar your teeth. All this takes less than four minutes and I checked out after five rides, shaking like a leaf.

Larry teaches students who've never been in an airplane and solos them in 40 tows. They've had eight different types of patterns to the right and the left, have been taught the snap decision required to handle a wire breakage, and they almost never land off the field. He's found a sure way to prevent the students from landing off the field. It costs them \$30.00.

At \$3.00 a tow I can't think of a less expensive or a more concentrated way to learn to fly and I guarantee that there's not time for dreaming.

If you want a quick refresher course in how it should be done, ask Larry Gehrelein to check you out on his winch tow. He'll straighten you out good and probably and you will be truly impressed and go away a better pilot. He told me he had over 10,000 winch tows on the 2-22C which had less than 600 hours on it. It's never had an accident worse than a hard landing. The winch of Larry's design and construction, which has a Corvette engine with automatic transmission, has been operating since 1957 without a breakdown. Its only disaster occurred when some friendly Chevy owner stole his carburetor. Now they put the winch in the barn every night (it's built as a trailer). He's built a number of these for the Air Force, and there's one at the Air Force Academy and several in Indonesia as part of our State Department's Foreign Aid Program. He sells a complete winch, or a winch kit.

This operation at Thermal-G-Ranch, near Erie, Pennsylvania, can make as many as six flights an hour, which includes retrieving the cable, walking the 2-22 back down the hill, getting in, hooking up and blasting off again. I can't recommend it too highly as a model of how a club or operator can teach flying, hop passengers, or just have fun economically and without wasted hours waiting for your turn. Every moment of the flight is a concentrated lesson, or practice, or just fun. On a good day you can catch a thermal and go about your business from the winch tow as well as from an aero tow and the winch need not have a licensed pilot to operate it. Larry has developed a simple hydraulic cylinder with a load pulley under the wire to indicate on a pressure gauge a measure of wire

tension, so that in a very few runs a new operator can be checked out by holding the cable tension at a given gauge reading. Jay and Rodney operated the winch as young boys. Rod ran it when he was 11 years old.

Larry Jr. runs the welding business in Erie, and daughter Cindy is married to Vic Perres, who built an HP-11. They are also building a new sailplane of Larry's design and have built several 1-26's from kits.

Larry said it would be okay for me to tell how hairy I thought the tow was at first if I'd promise to tell how easy it was after he'd checked me out. I promised, so if you think I'm shaking it isn't from fright, I'm just laughing at myself for ever thinking anything so tame could be so hairy. That's really the reason I'm shaking. Well, Larry, I promised.

Larry feels that a student must have been flying pretty regularly for at least a year on the winch to be safe. Another interesting thing he says is that the high school type will almost never pull the spoilers instead of the release knob, but the PHD type will surely do it once or twice without fail. The average glider pilot will check out in four to six flights and the average power pilot in 10. I'd think that a winch operation would be a real adjunct to any flight operation or club and has the advantage that the winch costs less than a tow plane, runs for years without maintenance and does not require a licensed pilot to operate it nor an A & P to maintain it.



Rodney Gehrelein operates the winch at Thermal-G Gliderport.

### Quotable Quotes

I sat there toward the front of the room in full view of everyone, giving an occasional nod to indicate full comprehension and making copious notes. This was a bit of gamesmanship I had picked up from Stan Smith in Texas the year before. Toward the end of the briefing, I asked a very sophisticated question, nodded again, and wrote furiously for a moment. Then I let the faintest shadow of a smile creep over my face. The effect was tremendous. Half a dozen contestants were shooting worried, furtive glances in my direction. One even tried to peek over and see my notes, but I nonchalantly turned them over and concentrated on Barney Wiggin's finale. When he finished, I looked over the charts, made a few corrections to the manuscript and walked out with Maxey, solemnly talking about the "conditions." I flew twelve miles that day.

SOARING FOR DIAMONDS

### Call for Committee Chairman

The Technical Committee invites interested persons to apply for the chairmanship of or membership on the Aerotow Subcommittee or the Winch/Auto Tow Subcommittee, both of which are being formed at this time. The main work of the aero tow subcommittee involves the maintaining and coordinating of an up-to-date file of all FAA 337 forms on approved tow hitch installations and also to provide, upon request, information on the installation of tow hitches. The work of the Winch/Auto Tow Subcommittee will consist of the collection and dissemination of information and data pertaining to these types of launches. Contact John Graves, Chairman of the Technical Committee, 579-31st Street, Manhattan Beach, California, Regarding participating in the work of these important committees.

—JOHN GRAVES