

Easterwood Under Control, FAA In Charge

Traffic at Texas A&M's Easterwood Airport gets the tender, loving care of a 20-man Federal Aviation Administration team that provides the communities of Bryan and College Station one of its most valuable services.

Air traffic, a vital artery of the cities' business and educational enterprises, is soaring at A&M-maintained Easterwood.

Traffic control and safety is the responsibility of three FAA operations sections quartered at Easterwood.

THE OPERATIONS encompass airspace up to 4,000 feet above and within 20 miles of the airfield, plus navigational aids scattered over 3,500 square miles of South Central Texas.

Bobby Clay manages the control tower and flight service station. The airways facilities sector is headed by Frank R. Kemmer.

THE 20 FAA employees take an annual payroll of \$180,000. Fifteen are local homeowners.

How their services aid the local economy is much more important.

The Easterwood tower, transferred from Ellington AFB in 1953 and turned over to A&M in 1958, is manned by seven highly trained specialists. They take charge of aircraft from the moment a plane starts taxiing until it flies out of the 40-mile Easterwood sector and vice versa. As with incoming craft, control shifts from center to center for planes flying IFR (instrument flight rules).

CONTROL IS through two-way radio communication, unless a plane without radio receives special permission to fly into the field.

"FLIGHT SERVICE play an increasingly important role in aviation," Clay observed.

The nine-man station briefs pilots, supplies weather information and data on facilities within 400 miles of College Station, accepts and checks in flight plans and provides airport advisory service when the tower is closed.

The airways facilities sector under Kemmer performs electronic maintenance on \$1 million worth of nav aids located at College Station Navasota, Cameron and Leona, 15 miles north of Madisonville.

THE SECTOR'S four men maintain precision equipment which provides enroute navigational guidance from Houston to Waco and instrument approach aids to Easterwood. Among equipment they support is a recently-installed VORTAC unit. It automatically transmits 360 courses by Morse code and distance information to civil and military aircraft equipped with distance measuring devices. Similar gear is on the drawing board for Navasota.

FAA HAS indicated Easterwood traffic is heavy enough to warrant installation of an instrument landing system (ILS), according to H. Guy Smith, airport manager.

"This projected addition depends on availability of funds," he added, noting that conditions for ILS installation have been stipulated by the administration. "Our plans for a nine-foot, deer-proof fence had to be clear by FAA. The plan they approved requires that the fence be moved further away from the recommended ILS runway."

The fence, a mesh-barbed wire barrier, would interfere with ILS signals.

ILS TRANSMITS precise signals along the runway centerline and glide slope, on which a properly-equipped plane can adjust to land in bad weather that leaves only a 200-foot ceiling and one-half mile visibility.

"The system will be installed at government expense," Smith went on.

ILS maintenance will also be a function of the airways facility sector.

Quarters and office space for FAA operations are provided free to the U. S. government by A&M.

The tower was transferred to A&M under borderline traffic conditions. Traffic quickly increased to make it a necessity. In less than 10 years, Easterwood's burgeoning business is calling for more sophisticated equipment.

A recently-passed airport zoning ordinance became mandatory to protect the airport and its approaches.

Flying is on a continuing upward curve at the A&M facility.

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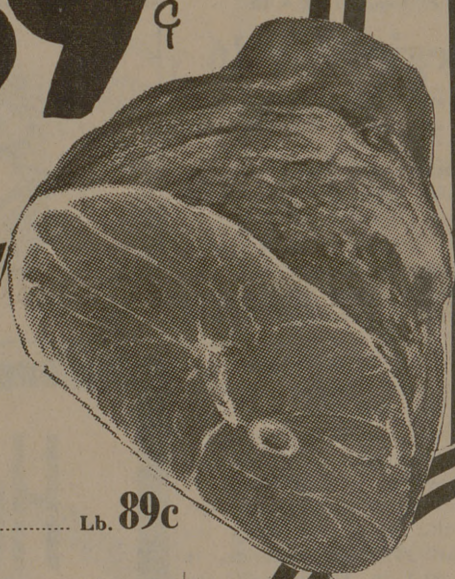
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