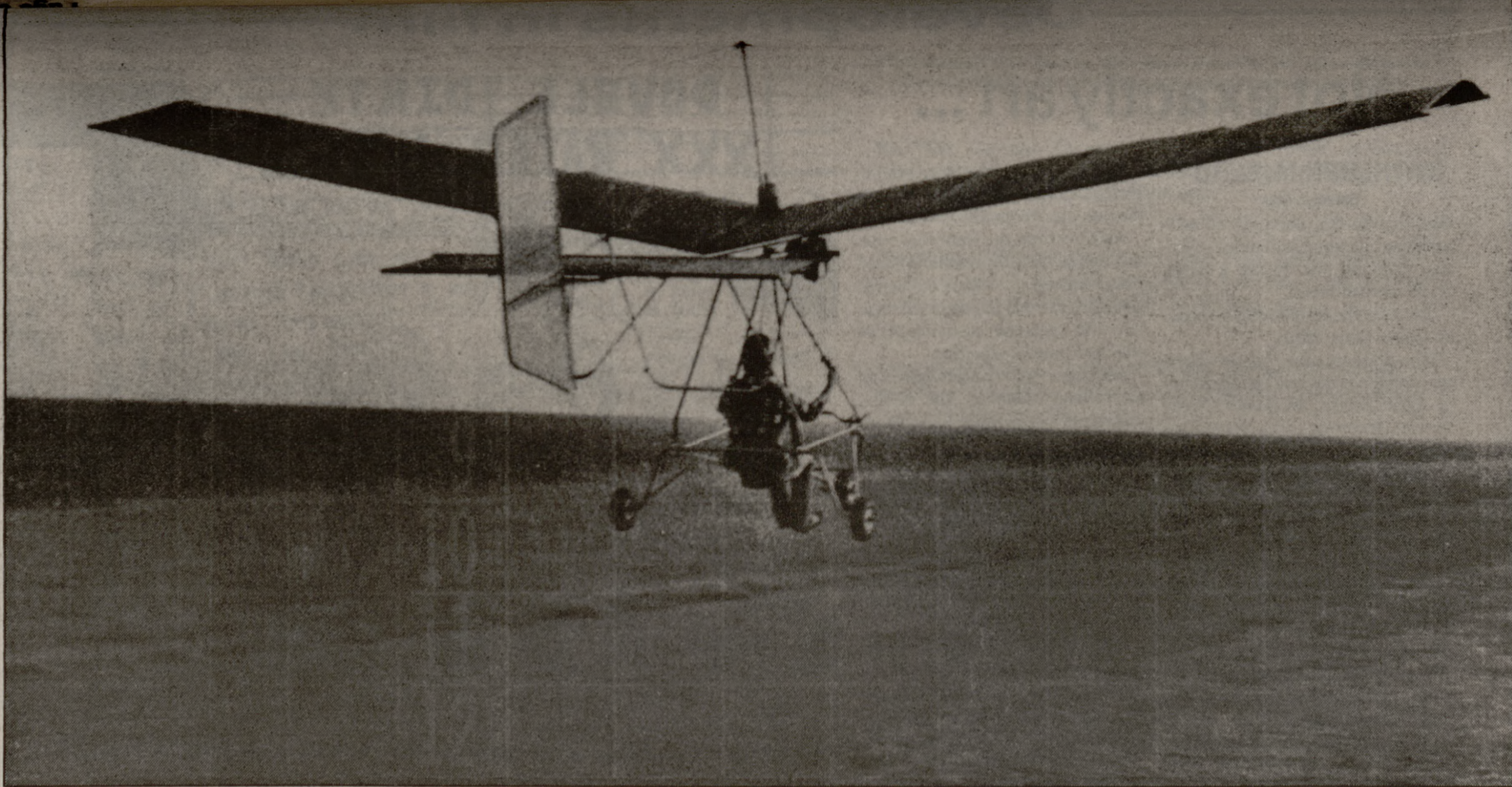


Inglis, a private pilot and World War II Navy fighter pilot, has tracked animal herds by air in Africa. He



Paul Shaffer demonstrates the performance of the Eipper "Quicksilver" at a small airstrip off Highway 21 near the Brazos River.

Hang gliding without a mountain

By WILEY GILMORE

Battalion Reporter

The Brazos Valley began its transition from darkness to light. The night's leftover chill made steam on the warmer waters of the river; a layer of fog fought a rear guard action against the invasion of the morning sun.

Heavy dew covered the maturing cotton and maize growing in the field.

The racket of a small gasoline engine seemed out of place.

A hundred feet in the air, Paul Shaffer, 23, seemed to be held captive in the talons of some great, roaring flying creature of another age.

The creature became silent and, in a series of descending turns, approached the small paved parking ramp of the rural crop-duster airport.

It glided slowly to earth and touched the asphalt with a rattle. Shaffer braked the machine to a stop by dragging his rubber sneakers along the pavement. He had an audience of about six or seven men and women.

"Well, what do you think?" he asked as he disengaged himself from the sling of canvas webbing which formed the cockpit beneath the wings. Everyone talked at once; and looked and touched and took pictures.

Shaffer is an entrepreneur, and the machine he was flying is a powered hang glider.

Shaffer works for a small local computer firm. He bills himself as the authorized factory dealer, repairman, instructor and promoter of the craft. It is called the Eipper "Quicksilver."

Shaffer explained that the principles involved in flying it are basically the same as for any hang glider, except that a high mountain or hill is not required; and, it has wheels.

"Where can you find a 5,000-foot mountain around here?" he asked. "The only way (to fly a glider) is with a motor. The highest hill around here is 400 feet."

The group watching Shaffer's demonstration flight included people with diverse motives; an aeronautical engineering graduate student, a student of wildlife and fisheries sciences, a professor of the same discipline and a woman friend of Shaffer's who was looking for adventure and an insight into a possible aeronautical career.

The red and blue hang glider has a wingspan of 32 feet, weighs 120 pounds, and costs \$3,500, Shaffer said, and will carry a person weighing up to 180 pounds.

Other machines of the type are available which will carry higher payloads, but they require larger engines.

The glider resembles something that could have been flown by Octave Chanute or the Wright brothers at the turn of the century.

It is powered by a 10-horsepower, one-cylinder en-

gine, mounted overhead between the pilot and the wing. The engine drives a pusher propeller.

The frame of the craft is of aluminum tubing and is covered with a lightweight synthetic fabric.

It is braced with a lattice of metal cables. The three wire wheels are about the size of the rear wheels of a large tricycle.

It can be put together and disassembled with simple tools, and transported in the bed of a pickup truck.

On this day Shaffer was giving ground and taxi instructions to three of the group. A fourth was to take his first flight.

Tim Morse, 26, an aeronautical engineering graduate student from Hawaii, was the one scheduled to fly.

"What do you think about your very first flight's being a solo?" someone in the group needed Morse. He shrugged and smiled.

Shaffer showed Morse, an experienced pilot of conventional hang gliders, how to taxi and maintain directional control. It involved shifting body weight and moving the center of gravity to turn, climb or descend.

Included were instructions on how to sit, how to manage the twist-grip throttle, and how to turn the vehicle on the ground.

There were also high-speed taxi runs up and down the short airstrip, which is normally used for agricultural planes.

Morse executed several of these to Shaffer's satisfaction, and got the go-ahead to take off. The first flight's objectives included getting airborne, maintaining directional control, and landing straight ahead; no turns in flight.

Morse then was to turn the glider around on the ground and repeat the maneuvers in the opposite direction.

The wind was calm. Shaffer had chosen the early morning for the flight because of the light winds.

Morse, in his trapeze-like harness, gunned the little engine and slowly gained speed. After a ground run of about 50 yards, Morse and the "Quicksilver" lurched tentatively into the air.

Just barely. Morse's feet dangled beneath the glider. Machine and pilot veered out over the cotton field, kicking up a spray of dew from the tops of the plants.

Morse corrected his flight path, maneuvered back over the strip, and set it down at the far end.

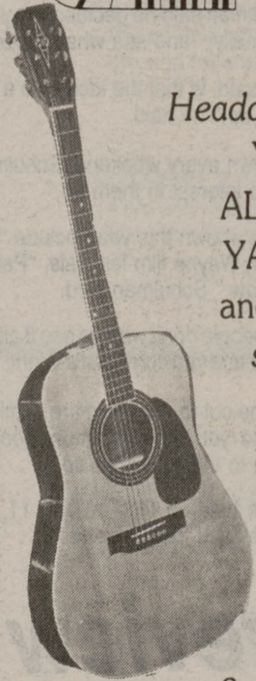
The return trip to the parking ramp, repeating the first flight, was much smoother. He came to a foot-dragging stop in front of the applauding group of spectators and the cheering, gesticulating Shaffer.

Morse grinned. "I was a little apprehensive when I went out over the cotton," he said.

Watching the flight were two people with a practical interest in the "Quicksilver". Dick Jordan, 25, is a graduate student in the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. Jack M. Inglis is a professor in the department.

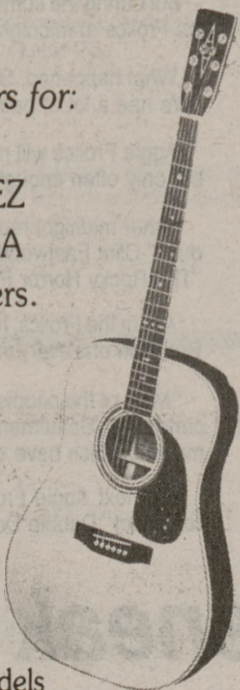


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