How to Run an Airport

by Kurt Rand

Dudley Steele, manager of Union Air Terminal, has definite ideas about making an airport attractive. Take a look at them for yourself.

The Union Air Terminal, fourth busiest field in U. S., now is owned by Lockheed.

In the bustle and hustle and general expansion of the aviation industry, another job is coming of age. It opens one more professional avenue for the young man who is casting about for something to do in "this flying business" and, as private and commercial transportation increases, it is destined to have further growth. It's the kind of a job, too, that a genuine aviation enthusiast would welcome, because it gives the holder a chance to be of real service in winning and holding good will for the industry.

There are few men today who understand the operation of a leading airport. Fields are increasing in number so rapidly, passenger traffic is leaping ahead with such speed and problems are coming up with such startling suddenness that men haven't been found to cope with the situation.

What would you do if abruptly you were notified that effective tomorrow you had such a job? In modern airport operation here are some of the problems: Maintenance of field, lighting systems, runways and buildings; control of police force; in charge of the granting of concessions; supervisor of gardening and landscaping; supervision of control tower; handling rental of offices for various flying services; supervision of ticket office; control of operations of garage facilities, parking, restaurant and bars; regulation of the procedure in handling baggage; adjusting complaints; handling legal and insurance phases of operation, building and holding good will and in general getting more people to fly by making flying convenient.

Rating America's leading airports from a standpoint of traffic, one lists LaGuardia at New York City, Chicago Municipal Airport, Cleveland Municipal Airport and Union Air Terminal at Burbank, Cal. In each city, these airports serve as "introductions" to the areas which they serve. Of the four, none of the others can compare with the downright hospitality and friendliness, combined with efficiency that is Union Air Terminal, serving Los Angeles and Southern California. The man responsible for the conduct of the affairs for the past three years is Dudley Steele. Steele, former World War pilot, is peculiarly qualified by experience for his job. His career is a tip-off to anyone who'd like to have a job like his as they start opening up in the near future.

Union Air Terminal now is rated as the fourth busiest field in America. Lockheed which has just purchased the field from United Air Lines Transport Corp tests its Hudsons, its Lodestars and the XP-38 on it, together with other experimental ships and products; Pacific Airmotive Corporation fills a huge hangar with a repair base; Vega Airplane Company, Lockheed subsidiary, is building a plant on the field. Also operating from the field are private pilots and three flying services.
And to top all this, American Airlines, TWA, United Air Lines and Western Air express now operate 62 flights per day, maintain maintenance and repair bases in some cases and soon Catalina Airlines will use it as a base. Add Army and Navy planes, visiting ships from all parts of the world, an average of 5000 visitors a day and you have something.

Your approach to the field from the air is one you'll never forget. Your pilot lets down over the rugged Sierra Madres. You see the long macadam runways, the administration building with its Spanish architecture, the hangars, the shining planes at six gates, and the next thing you know you're on the ground. A few minutes later you find yourself bundled into a limousine, baggage stowed and you are on your way into Los Angeles, some 15 miles away.

It's "streamlined," that business of landing and leaving. You've gone under a canopy, if the weather is wet; you've found an immaculate waiting room, any accommodations which you might have wanted from a pack of cigarettes to a six course dinner. Going out is even smoother. A uniformed attendant takes your bag. You never see it again until you've reached your destination. One Steele innovation is calling attention to a large garage. If you've driven out to the field alone, you may leave your car, knowing that it will be taken care of safely until you return. There's no fuss and bustle, no loss of time and baggage.

"The main thought in the mind of an airport manager," Steele says, "is to sell air transportation. Someone has talked the potential passenger into flying. At this point, the airport manager picks up. He must make all ground facilities as near perfect as possible. After that it is up to the airlines.

"It must be remembered always that airports and air transportation must be merchandised. Attendants must be neat and clean and well uniformed. Every building must be spick and span. Questions must be answered intelligently. And not only must air transport be sold but the airport must itself be put on a paying basis."

If you are thinking of being an airport manager, that must be one of your objectives—to make the airport pay. The airlines will want space for storage and operations; private pilots will want a good hangar; all plane operators will want gasoline. There'll be rental receipts all right. But what of public convenience?

First of all, you have to make the passenger like your "shop." What do you sell in addition to service? Plenty. For instance, there's one airport in the east which is beside a highway over which pass 60,000 automobiles a day. This airport, believe it or not, has no service station to supply automobiles with gasoline. If there was one, what does that suggest to the motorist? A chance to eat, now that he's stopped. And where does he want to eat? Well, at Union Air Terminal, he eats overlooking the runways, where he can see everything from Boeing Stratoliners to 40 h.p. trainers take off and land. At most of the major airports, so-called cafes are so constructed and placed that runways are not visible to patrons.

(Continued on page 76)
and began practicing it in 1925. As the
world now knows, the famous German
Stukas showed the efficiency of the tech-
nique in the recent Nazi conquests.
"Dive bombing is practically impossible to
stop once it gets going," says McDon-
nough. "I personally feel that if any good
test pilots get within 30 miles of their
target, nothing can stop him. There are so
many ways of attacking. You can dive
down with the sun at your back or you
can use clouds as detection shields and
suddenly attack from them. Horizontal
bombing can't be nearly as effective, de-
spite bomb-sights. Anti-aircraft defenses
keep big bombers up so high a zig-zagging
world now knows of the famous German
spite bombsights. Anti-aircraft defenses
suddenly attack from them. Horizontal
bombers can be that bad as long as
it is open. It's becoming internationally
famous and is winning airport fame and
airline customers at the same time.
When Steele came to Union Air Ter-
minal in December, 1937, the second floor
of the administration building was a
wind-swept deck. There was a small
bar and a coffee shop. The garage was
designed in an unattractive olive drab
and was pumping 4,400 gallons a month. Now
it pumps four times that amount and
will have to be doubled in size to take
care of the storage of cars by passengers.
Steele has only started. He sees in the
future a need for an airport which will
serve the private pilot. In a year or so-
perhaps longer—all of the airlines will
go over to the Los Angeles Municipal
Airport. Landings will be made only at
Union when weather conditions make
them necessary.
"Our main objective when the airlines
move," says Steele, "will be long range
and will be to make Union the finest air-
port in the United States for the private
flyer. To accomplish this we must have
facilities which are second to none."
Steele has in the back of his mind an
expanded restaurant, a swimming pool,
badminton and tennis courts and other
amusements.
Another problem which Steele has
been battling is parking. This is a major
issue in airport operation. Steele has
thought only of the public and has had
all employees in the terminal move their
cars to specially designated parking places so that
the public may park close to the ad-
ministration building.
Green lawns, ample opportunity for the
public to view operations, shaded trees,
dustless surroundings and a general
open door policy which runs from
benches on which spectators can sit to
excellently maintained rest rooms have all been a part of Steele's campaign to
make the public feel welcome.
Anyone who has stumbled into the
average airport can appreciate the con-
veniences which Steele has afforded—

Airport... (Continued from page 47)

People watching planes take off safely
and land safely are coming back to fly
during what may be business, maybe for
pleasure, maybe because of an emergen-
city. But, however you figure it,
they've been sold transportation.
So famous has the Skye Room—a res-
taurant specializing in sea foods flown
from Seattle, and southern fried chicken
—become that it is packed as long as
it is open. It's becoming internationally
famous and is winning airport fame and
airline customers at the same time.

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hey, Seaplane Owners!

A F[ire] recently occurred in which the pontoon of a plane—being used as a landplane at the time—was
destroyed. According to Aero Insurance Under-
writers, the owner found to his dismay that he had insured his ship as a landplane and had neglected to add coverage
for the pontoons. So pilots are cautioned to insure both wheels and pontoons if they have them. There is a different rate
for seaplane insurance and insurance poli-
cies must be properly endorsed when shifting from landplane to seaplane.