



# RUNWAY 35



## A FLIGHT TO BE REMEMBERED

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*"When once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been and there you will always long to return."*

— Leonardo da Vinci

### By Norris Warner

About 20 miles Northwest of San Geronimo Airpark sits a little grass airport—the Medina River Ranch Airport. Some of us chapter members—Jack Ridgway, John Latour, and my son Norris Warner II and I base our open-air "Breezy" there. The airplane is horribly draggy, but seems to handle the 2000-foot rough grass airfield with some margin for error.

For the flight I'll describe, my passenger was my new neighbor, Jack Holm, Colonel USAF (Ret.) who wanted to photograph his just-purchased acreage from the air to help him locate the new dream house he wanted to build. Well, the Breezy is a great camera platform with unlimited visibility, so I was anxious to help my new friend. The one "fly in the ointment" was Jack's physical dimensions. Seems he still carried most of the weight he needed to play tackle for Texas A&M back in the 50's—over 250 pounds!

Now the Breezy instrumentation is minimal, to overstate the situation. The only instruments reasonably easy to spot are the mag compass and the airspeed indicator just below that—both between the pilot's feet. I explained the various features of the airplane to Jack (or the lack thereof) and I think he

readily grasped the wide chasm between this ungainly craft and the sleek fighters he last flew in the Air Force. I strapped him in, with the admonition against dropping his camera (which could go through the prop). We cranked up, checked the brakes, which are none too effective, and then taxied down the main runway past the seldom-used diagonal strip and on to the south end of the North-South runway and performed the obligatory pre-takeoff checks. I checked with Jack by intercom to see that he was prepared, and then brought up the power—all 90 horses.

The airplane seemed a little sluggish, but we do have an uphill grade to climb for a few hundred feet, and I knew Jack's weight was not helping. I rarely actually check the airspeed on takeoff roll, but this time I did as we passed the intersection, and I was quite surprised to see 15 mph registered! Now I knew we were a lot faster than that, and the prospect of chopping power and getting stopped in the runway remaining seemed unlikely, so I instantly made the decision to continue the takeoff.

The airplane lifted off with room to spare and climbed out quite

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