



Top: Asa Culver and his "Piper Aztec." Bottom: Msgr. Roche explains the instrument panel to his student Terry Kenney.



Monsignor, The Pilot

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We joked with Msgr. William Roche about wanting to be nearer the "home office." Sitting inside what seemed to be a bright mechanical canary at an altitude of 9,300 feet, that was easy to believe.

It was our seventh attempt, literally, to get this project off the ground. Finally the weather, flight schedules and personal obligations were cleared and the story of the "Flying Padre" was airborne.

A veteran flyer, with 30 years to his credit, Msgr. Roche, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena in Ithaca, deftly set the yellow, single-engine American Traveler down at the Monroe County Airport, gathered up his two passengers and headed back to the Southern Tier.

"This is where you really appreciate God's beautiful world," he remarked as we picked our way through the white cotton candy that floats high in the earth's atmosphere. At first the scenery had to take a back seat as I tried to steady the see-sawing plane. Once we had climbed above the air turbulence, we could enjoy a miniature model of the entire diocese, spread out below.

The plane is one of six owned by the East Hill Flying Club, adjacent to the Tompkins County Airport. Its manager, John Lloyd, pointed out the problems of having a rural airfield.

The night before, one of the small planes had hit a deer on the runway. Other four-footed creatures also stroll where the planes are supposed to land. One tiny aviator, a killdeer, has claimed part of the field and is busy hatching eggs in the gravel next to the runway.

Inside the flying club are posted some of the rules of the airways:

- *Don't take a machine into the air unless you are satisfied that it will fly.
- *Pilots will not wear spurs while flying.
- *Riding on steps, wings or tail of machine is prohibited.
- *Don't turn sharply when taxiing. Instead of turning sharp, have someone lift the tail around.

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