Henry King named this Waco "Martha Ellen V." A flyer since 1928, he's had several ships.

FLYING DIRECTOR

by FRANK CUNNINGHAM

When a needed location is hard to find, this movie executive searches for—and finds—it by airplane.

AIRPLANES put him to sleep! Henry King, long one of Hollywood's famed directors, is one of the better flyers in moviedom's executive circles and probably puts his Waco cabin plane to more use than any other cinema flyer. Yet Henry King told the writer on the set of "Little Old New York" that airplanes "put me to sleep."

This is a queer admission for a man who flew 45,000 miles last year; who covered the skyways and byways of the United States in search of locations for motion pictures he directed; who flew in the army and who talks about aviation with the same enthusiasm that other film big-wigs discuss race horses.

There is no catch to this. Henry King became vitally interested in private flying because he wanted a good night's rest!

Let's go back to 1928. The locale is the Aero Corporation field outside Los Angeles. This was the field run by a group of young men, many of whom became leaders in west coast flying.

A tall, well-proportioned man walked out on the field, looked over one of the planes. He ran his hand over the trim ship. One of the pilots on the field eyed the visitor. Here was a man who might want to take a flying course. He certainly looked both interested and prosperous. The flyer walked over to the visitor, said after a moment "Nice looking baby, mister, and as easy to handle as a millionaire's bankroll."

"Does look pretty good," the visitor admitted.

"How about a hop in her? I'm Lee Flannigan. I'd be glad to take you for a ride."

The visitor smiled, "Thanks, Mr. Flannigan. My name's Henry King. Going up might not be such a bad idea after all."

The pilot looked surprised. "Henry King? Not the Henry King who directs all those motion pictures?"

"I'm afraid you're right. Well, what about taking off?"

"Okay," grinned Flannigan. "I'll let you in on one thing right now. When I get you up about 10,000 feet, I absolutely will not ask you for a screen test!" Both men laughed.

Up in the air Flannigan gave his passenger, who said he had never flown before, "the works." The amiable flyer described his plane with the glamour of a movie beauty and related a short history of aviation as best he could over the roar of the motor. To Flannigan's amazement, the passenger caught on to his "plane talk" surprisingly quickly.

"Say, Mr. King," the pilot said enthusiastically, "bet I could solo you in three hours!"

The director smiled. "I wouldn't doubt it. But I don't want to *solo*. I want to *sleep!*"

Then King explained to the amazed pilot why he wanted to ride in the plane. Because of the strain and nerve stress of the picture business, the director had found he wasn't able to sleep at nights. A few hours of restless turning about and tossing was all the night meant to him. Shortly before the visit to the Aero Corporation field, King had flown from Florida to Havana. That night he had slept well for the first time in months. He attributed this change to the new atmosphere. Back in California King was called hurriedly to San Francisco. To save time he flew in a tri-motored Ford. For several nights, as the wind swept through the Golden Gate, the director slept so well he must have recalled Cuba. But Cuba's atmosphere and San Francisco's atmosphere aren't similar.

(Continued on page 78)

Flying Director

(Continued from page 52)

But when King got back to Los Angeles, he had as much trouble sleeping as he'd ever had. Suddenly the thought came to him—airplanes. That was the solution. A ride in the clouds and then, he hoped, eight hours of sleep. So it was that King went to the southern California field and took that joy ride.

Because he didn't want to evince too great an enthusiasm for flying, he told a "white lie" to Lee Flannigan when he said he had never flown. Back in 1918, King was learning to fly for the United States Army. When the Armistice was signed, King was ready to go abroad as an Army flyer. With the return of peace King left the Army and rejoined the motion picture industry. He had been a director for the American Film Company at San Diego when he had enlisted.

King made an occasional flight up until 1921. After that, for seven years, flying disappeared from his schedule. Then came a couple of chance flights and the discovery that flying was better than a sleeping powder.

The director kept up his joy rides with Flannigan, but with the attitude "I don't give a darn about soloing. All I want is a joy ride and don't want the additional worry brought on by flying the ship myself."

But King found that he soon was landing the ship for Flannigan—just to show Flannigan he could do it, of course. Then one day Flannigan couldn't keep his regular appointment for a flight. King calmly took the plane up himself!

From then on King was "back" in aviation. Lesson piled on lesson. Straight flying was augmented by aerobatics. "I wanted to fly the plane under all conditions," King explained. "I wanted to handle a plane with the same confidence I handled a car on the highway." And he did. Enthusiastic about flying, King bought himself a Travel Air, then swapped it for a Waco and, each year or so, trades it for a new Waco.

Flying isn't just a pleasure for King; it is a business too. A business conducted in a manner that brings the greatest pleasure. After all, King can't direct such hits as "Lloyds of London," "In Old Chicago," "Jesse James," "Alexander's Ragtime Band" and "Stanley and Livingstone" while trying to think separately of aviation. Wisely, he has fused aviation with motion pictures.

When the Fox studios were hunting locations for "Lightning," the studio was stymied for the right setting. Scouts scoured the countryside like almanac salesmen. The late Will Rogers twirled his lariat and waited for the cameras to turn. Impatient at the delay, King said he'd find the location himself. He climbed into his plane and headed northeast. He was back in a few days with the location selected. From the air he had found the ideal spot near Lake Tahoe.

Since then King has been using his ship to find locations for his pictures. When Phil Stong's great story of the midwest, "State Fair," was to be transferred to the screen, King flew over the Sacramento Valley, along the creeks and up the Sacramento river. It wasn't long before he found the setting he wanted for "State Fair."

In "Over the Hill" King learned that the airplane is the greatest medium for finding unusual locations. For this film he had flown up in the Sonora country. Peering out of the cockpit he noted the dirt roads and details of the countryside. This information was transferred to paper and when he went into the town of Sonora, King found he knew more about the physical layout of the surrounding territory than the local druggist or the town editor.

"From a plane I get a scope of the country's appearance that lets me see its entire photographic possibilities," King said as we lunched on the 20th Century-Fox lot. "Almost as important as this is the fact that I can tell how the supplies have to be transported. I make a regular chart for the truck and equipment men so that they can minimize the effort, time and expense in getting to the right spot.

"In 'Carolina' we needed scenes of tobacco fields. I took off from Charleston, S. C., and, in an hour and a half, located the fields that would serve our purpose. It saved days of scouting over two states."

Incidentally, King should know something about tobacco himself, as he was born in Virginia, near Christiansburg, not far from Roanoke. His father was a railroad attorney and owned a large plantation. His grandfather was an officer in General Robert E. Lee's army. Although most of King's ancestors had been planters and politicians, he had other plans. The big show at Richmond and Washington wasn't the type in which he was interested. In stock companies, circuses, burlesque and vaudeville he gained experience that finally led him to a place in motion pictures in the days before the United States entered the war.

Among his early screen accomplishments was the discovery of Baby Marie Osborne. With her King acted in half a dozen films. Then, many readers will recall his "23½ Hours Leave," the film that brought to Douglas MacLean a national comedy reputation. King also helped make famous Richard Barthelmess and David Torrence in "Tol'able David" and Ronald Colman in "The White Sister."

As important as his star discoveries have been, his discovery of aviation for location use has been of vast value to the screen. "Jesse James" would have not had its authentic ring of the Ozarks if King hadn't covered the Ozark country in his plane. "I did three weeks' work on that picture in three days," King commented.

For "Little Old New York" King flew over practically the entire United States. An air survey of the Sacramento River showed that the stream was not suited as a substitute for the Hudson in this film. While a river location was being debated, King and Darryl Zanuck, in charge of production, had been trying to find a certain type of river boat. The director, recalling a boat he had seen on the Savannah river, walked out of Zanuck's office one afternoon, flew off to the south and found the very boat he had been discussing with Zanuck. Incidentally, his companion on this flight—as on many—was Bob Webb, his first assistant director. Bob didn't

fly himself, but King—by the simple process of letting go the controls—soon had Bob handling them. Two days after returning from the southern flight Bob was taking flying lessons and now flies himself.

Not long back at the studio, King learned that no location had been set for "Little Old New York." Fulton's steamboat had to be floated in something else besides a studio bath tub. Back across the continent King flew. As he headed for Manhattan on a brisk tail wind, King noted the Susquehanna river as he came out of a cloud bank near Allentown, Pa. Landing at Harrisburg for a good night's sleep, King the next morning surveyed the river as far as Havre de Grace, Maryland, then switched over to the Delaware and flew along it. Then he headed across Staten Island and up past Bear Mountain Bridge. After a time he went down to 1,000 feet over the water and loafed through the air as he kept an eager eye groundward. Suddenly he spotted New Baltimore. He circled the town and as he spiraled his elation soared. Here was the spot! Here was the place he had flown across the continent to find. Here was "Little Old New York!"

It isn't hard to see how King combines his business and his pleasure. The director doesn't make many short hops. About his only brief jumps are down to Gus Parrish's airport at Palm Springs where in the mountain-shaded desert he likes to spend a few days' rest.

Yet he has more uses for his airplane. He is a member of the sheriff's Los Angeles County air patrol. Also, he uses his craft for "pep" talks to motion picture exchanges.

King isn't one-sided in his knowledge of the picture business. Actor-writer-director-executive, he also knows the technical end. He knows, too, the business side of the industry; the box office. To keep in touch with the studio's sales offices over the nation, King often makes an air hop around the nation. If it were not for his plane he wouldn't have time to visit all the exchanges, as even airline travel would be too slow. By using his own ship, he is able to get around.

Oddly enough, King doesn't make airplane movies. He used a seaplane in a 1919 picture and a plane in "The Country Doctor," but that about sums up his work with aircraft in photoplays. He thinks airplanes have been misused often in screenplays, with the story too much about a plane and not enough about the human characters themselves.

Maybe some aviation epics—like airplanes—put him to sleep!

END

The Home Builder

(Continued from page 28)

strongly in favor of less restraint, arguing that much good would come through private research. In the early '30s this writer collaborated with Mr. Rathbun in forming the now-defunct Amateur Aircraft League, an organization for the furtherance of amateur airplane construction work.

It would be useless to go deeply into the issues involved. However, there were two principal points of contention on each side. The amateurs held that every American citizen has the right to work for his own advancement and that he has the right to work for the cause in which he believes. They pointed out that nearly all great discoveries came through the work of non-professional workers.

That argument is sound. The invention of the airplane itself came through the tinkering of a couple of bicycle-shop operators. Thousands of such cases could be pointed out. It is a fact that if laws, such as we now have, always had been in effect, we would have no airplanes.

On the Government's side the claims were simply that the boys were not capable of building safe aircraft and that they would have such a bad safety record they would hurt public faith in flying. Most of the commercial manufacturers took the same view and it all added up to considerable weight on the side of the anti-amateurs.

As mentioned before, some of the states declined to adopt Federal requirements and amateurs were allowed to continue with their work. The results on the whole, were good. A typical example was the development of the Yates geodetic system of construction, a strictly amateur scheme that now is being prepared for military and commercial production. There were a number of similar ideas worked out that have proved valuable.

But the Government wanted complete control and eventually worked out a method that did the trick. Basing their action on the fact that commercial airlines are engaged in interstate commerce, the officials decided they had jurisdiction over everything pertaining to them. They thereupon issued regulations forbidding the flying of unlicensed aircraft on or within specified distances of established airways.

Considering that the country is covered with a network of such airways, there was practically no place left where an unlicensed ship could fly, state laws or no state laws. That regulation is only about two years old, but it has done all that was expected of it. There simply is no way around it.

There is no use denying facts. Sandlot aviation has run its course and something else will have to take its place. Under very similar conditions, the radio amateurs a generation ago went on to the heights. They worked around restraining laws and were soon ahead of the lawmakers. They became today's big names in radio. But history didn't repeat itself this time and what *might* have happened, no one will ever know.

The only sensible thing to do is to admit we have lost and let it go at that. With the nation trying frantically to arm itself, we are only in the way. We only would get stepped on. Maybe some day, when the world returns to normal, things will be different.

To do any more home building now is to waste our time and money and risk our liberty. The law doesn't like us and we can't afford stress analyses, so let's call the whole thing off. It is hard to say it, but we must rinse out the glue can and hang up the old rib-jig for keeps. It was a lot of fun and no doubt we had our money's worth.

END

Lockheed via Douglas

SHIPPING time on duralumin tubing was slashed from 10 days to 14 hours and 33 minutes recently by Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, Burbank, Cal. Badly needing the metal for experimental work, Lockheed chartered a Douglas commercial transport to bring 2,500 pounds of it from the New Kensington, Pa., plant where it is manufactured.