



AIR FEEL

by WILLIAM E. BARRETT

*It takes more than dude clothes and a shiny helmet to make a pilot—
but some people don't know it.*

THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS about flying that ain't in the book. I've seen a crate do her stuff when she was oil soaked from prop boss to th' frayed ends of her rudder covering and when her flying and landing wires were filled with wet rust, and I've seen a shined-up, tuned-to-the-minute crate get up in the air and act like a flat-bottomed scow.

The difference, Modocs, is in the pilot, and the difference in pilots is principally "air feel." I know. I haven't been assistant chief instructor for too long without learning a few things, and don't forget it!

Wally Minter, the millionaire, and Sam Hazard, the

hobo, taught me lots. There was a prize pair to draw in one week. Both ends of the old social ladder with me in the middle, or away below that. Just depends on how you look at it.

Wally came out to the field in a big, five-grand roadster that he used for knocking around; a clean-cut chap, built like one of his several million dollars, and he was in a big rush to be waited on. He never heard of our downtown office and he had no time to waste in enrolling. He wanted to fly right now.

The chief wasn't around, so I put on one of my winning smiles that I always turn loose when I sniff the pleasant aroma of beaucoup cash.

"Fine!" I say. "We take in instructing to do and we'll be glad to fix you right up. You'll have to see the doc, though, and get his O.K."

This handsome representative of the privileged classes nearly blows a cylinder head.

"Tosh and nonsense!" he says. "I'm in perfect physical condition. I was stroke on the Cornell crew two years ago and I have regular physical examinations by my own physician."

"Very good," says I, "you'll probably pass. It's one of our silly rules, though, that we have to know a man is fit to fly before we start teaching him how."

He snaps his fingers impatiently. "All right. All right. Where do I go? If we have to unwind red tape, let's unwind it."

I give him the dope, and while I'm doing it, I learn that he is in the oil business and wants his own plane for speed and that he can't be bothered with pilots. He wants to jump in and go places by himself.

I almost kiss him when I hear that. Boy! Cash on the barrel head, a full transport course and a sale for a cabin job! A couple of those every day would do the cause of aviation a lot of good. Maybe it wouldn't.

I'M STILL in a good humor when I turn around and find a guy who looks like an old country fair Jenny after a hard season; a lean-fuselage bloke with his linen in shreds and his undercarriage completely wiped out.

For the benefit of you two fellows in the back that ain't learned sky talk yet, the hombre was a typical tramp with his clothes in rags and his shoes flapping round his feet.

"'N' what do you want?" I growls. "Talk to me some different from what you talk to Percy, don't you?" The guy's jaw juts out like the bumper on a truck and his eyes, even when they're blazing mad, are nice eyes; clean and level and as blue as the Berryloided fuselage of the Boss' sport Waco. Nice teeth, too, gleaming white through the black tan of his face. I come out of it quick.

"Sorry, Buddy. The sky's just full o' stowaways these days, and I thought maybe you were 'Red' Terhune."

He grins real good-natured. "Naw! My head's red enough, but I ain't ridin' the rods outta your depot I gotta pass."

He fishes in his pocket while I do a job o' lookin' polite and incredulous. Lots of 'em godunk, but there ain't any passes around our place. The next instant he gives a grunt that is an introduction to another wide grin.

"Believe it or not," he says.

I take the slip of paper that he holds in his hand and I blink through it twice. It says that Sam Hazard has won the slogan contest conducted by our airport and air college and that he is to receive a limited commercial course or its equivalent in ground instruction.

I puts on one of my most severe you're-a-liar expressions. "'N' you're a professional contest winner, eh?" I says. He grins.

"Naw. I won it all right. Just one o' them things. I went to school three days and one o' them days was when they were teachin' all about slogans."

He was too sure of himself to be a fake and he wasn't an ignorant guy either, so I sat down and fanned with him a while. He was just off the road and had heard our announcement several weeks ago over a flop house radio. He wasn't an ordinary tramp; just a bird with the itch to travel and no funds. He'd been around the Unittd States and had entered our contest as a joke.

"But I'm interested now," he says. "Flyin' is something I think I could work at and like. 'N' maybe that ain't a big giggle, comin' from me."

"Good stuff," I tells him. "Stay with it and it may he th' makin' of you, but you have to have a few more clothes and some coveralls and you've got to live and eat while you're learnin'."

He shrugs and, even though he is a tough-lookin' egg, he looks embarrassed and starts kickin' rocks around. "Aw, hell!" he says. "I thought flop and board was included. Well, that leaves me out. I haven't got a dime nor a job. I walked out to this dump."

That brings my ears up like a jack rabbit's. It's a long walk out from town, my countrymen, and for a bloke with shoes like his it must have been hell with vinegar. 'N' don't forget, he had a hockable scholarship worth nearly five hundred good American dollars.

"You'll do," I says, real toughlike, to hide the fact that I don't feel that way. "I've got a ten-spot that I don't need and a guy like you can buy a whole wardrobe with that. Come back tonight and I'll fix you up in the barracks and show you a job you can work at. Now, beat it. I'm busy."

He kicks a rock for a second, then he grabs the ten-spot. "I'll be back," he said, "but don't wear yourself out on your hard job."

Kinda sassy, that one, but you can't expect a bo to admit he's embarrassed, can you? You can not; not any more than you can believe an assistant chief instructor

who claims he has a spare ten-spot. This world, fellow yokels, is full o' deceit and hypocrisy.

SAM came back. He got in about the same time as my friend the millionaire—and what a difference! I'll bet some secondhand dealer is still wailing over what that guy got for ten dollars, with enough left over for a hair cut and shave. He'd pass for the average student when he got back, and, though that may not be saying a whole lot, it was an improvement. Wally is something else.

Honest, that boy doesn't look like anything in the book. He's rigged out in something that I always thought was a little joke of the catalogue artist; one of these soup-to-nuts outfits that the well-dressed pilot is supposed to wear and never does. His helmet must have cost three times as much as Sam's whole outfit and below it he has a gray-green whipcord suit and shiny officer's boots, an imported pair of goggles that ain't worth a hoot, and fur-lined gloves.

I gag a little, but comments ain't in order from me, so I let it pass. Sam doesn't.

"Mister, you must be one of those ay-vee-ay-tors I been hearing about," he says, real nastylike. Wally lifts his eyebrows.

"Have I met you before?" he asks quietly, "or are you looking for trouble?"

I jump into the breach. "Mr. Minter is taking the course, too." I says to Sam; then I turns to Wally. "This is Mr. Hazard who just enrolled."

They exchanged hostile glances and Sam sneers. "I'm also going to be a sort of janitor around here," he says, "so it's going to be awful tough on you to have to associate with me."

Wally shrugs. "I don't intend to," he says.

I can see the start of a good old skirmish in the war o' the classes, so I clears my perfectly clear throat.

"Gentlemen," I says, "it is too late today to start in on anything. I'll take you both at seven o'clock in the morning for ground instruction. Right after lunch. Mr. Minter will go up with me for a hop, and at three thirty, Mr. Hazard will go up."

Wally frowns. "We're wasting a lot of time. Suppose you start the ground instructions now?" I am fumbling for a diplomatic way of turning this heavy-money customer aside, when Sam turns on his heel. "It won't be dark for an hour," he says. "Teach him to fly."

With that he strides away. Wally looks after him with an annoyed look. "The man is quarrelsome," he said. "If he keeps it up, I'll have to take him down a peg."

The idea of this fashion plate taking down a boy from the whistling rods was funny to me, but I let it pass.

"I'll go over the fundamentals with you now if you like," I said indifferently. I expected him to say: "No." I didn't know Wally Minter.

FOR three days that guy runs me ragged. You think that he was the only student around the place and that the whole aviation industry would blow up if he didn't become a transport pilot in a week. He was a pest; one of these executives who burn themselves up and burn everybody else up getting things done in a hurry that would be done a whole lot better if they got the Mexican treatment of one siesta between spurts. Finally, I blow up.

I've got him up two thousand feet and he's got the phones strapped on while I'm barking into the Gossport. 'N' for the benefit o' you two guys in back, it is a one-way conversation. That's the gift o' God to downtrodden instructors; a one-way phone with the mouthpiece in the front cockpit and the ear phones in back.

"You're stiff as a board," I barks. "You do just what I tell you, but you don't put any feel in it. Throw the stick over, kick the rudder again and try a bank."

This is rougher than it sounds. He's been on banks for two days and is hollering for take-offs and landings on the theory that he's mastered banks.

Whoooooosh!

We bank. Nothing wrong with it at all, but the feel isn't there. I can't explain that any more than I can explain fancy clothes for flyers, but if you've seen a picture that was so perfect that it didn't have any life in it you know what I mean. I wag the stick and take him down.

Sam is waiting around for me to take him up, but Wally doesn't even see him. He piles out of the cockpit and shakes a finger under my nose.

"I came out here to learn to fly," he said. "If you can't teach me, say so. You admit that I do what you say is right and yet you're not satisfied. How do you explain that?"

That's a hard one, but I'm not thin shelled myself. "If I was teaching you to swim," I says, "I wouldn't be satisfied if you knew the strokes. I'd kinda like to see you keep afloat."

We might have smoothed that out O.K. right then, only Sam is standing there with his hands on his hips. "Why don't you give him a book and send him up wit'

it," he says. "He can read what to do and it'll save you a lot of time."

Wally spins around and walks over with his shoulders quivering a little. He's about the same size as Sam, but not as hard or as lean looking. Kinda like a de-luxe sport cabin job taxiing into an old Canuck, I thought; both of 'em would get hurt, but it wouldn't make much difference to the Canuck.

Wally's jaw is stuck forward and his little black mustache is quivering a bit. "I've stood a lot from you, my man," he says, "but there's a limit. You refrain from comments around me hereafter or, by the Lord Harry, you're going to wish you did."

Sam's got a poker face on. He doesn't look scared or mad or quarrelsome; he just don't look. His eyes are meeting Wally's easily and then he turns his head and spits a big splash of dirty tobacco on our clean field.

"Yeah," he says. "Well, I ain't your man and I ain't much good at refraining since my voice changed, and—" He looked up suddenly with a mug on him that'd make a gorilla look like a baby-kisser. "Yuh can go to hell!" he says, just like that.

Wally's fist whips out so fast that I scarcely see it. The bo turns with it and takes it high on his cheek. He sprawls for a second, though, at that; then he's up with a snarling rush that threatens to clutter up the field with a lot of fancy flying rags. I jump in, then, and grab his collar. No, Modocs, I'm not bad myself.

While Wally is standing waiting with a grim look on his pan, I wheel this bo around.

"Listen, you," I tells him. "You asked for what you got by spinnin' your prop in some one else's air. Now cut it. There ain't nobody fighting around this field unless it's me."

Without waiting for him to tell me about my ancestors and get me sore, I step over to this Wally. "If you're in such a gosh-fired hurry to learn to fly," I tells him, "you haven't got time for brawling. Get back in that ship and I'll try you on take-offs."

Millionaires or hobos, you've got to be the boss when you set out to teach this flying business. I knew Sam was too mad to get any good out of the practice and that Wally would settle down. 'N' I was right.

HE TOOK to the take-offs fast, and I hardly ever had to tell him anything twice; not even about left rudder to offset the torque of the motor. Most of them have a hard time with that, but he got it right away. The trouble, though, was that same woodenness. He did things too well; like a man who learns something

he isn't very interested in because he feels he can use the knowhow. You know. The way a pitcher takes his batting practice.

Sam is next and he is a different kind of a customer. He is slow and dumb and awkward and all feet, but when he gets the hang of the thing the ship feels different and acts different than it does with Wally doing the same things. There's that something in Sam's touch that Wally will never have, and I've turned out enough of them to know.

When we land, my ex-bo doesn't hang around to chat and ask questions. He just growls and meanders over toward the barracks. 'N' you don't need a map for that one. It puts two problems up to me; first, not to let the fight happen where it is my business to stop it, and, second, to manage somehow to get a ringside seat where I won't be seen wherever the fight is.

I dislike brawls, Modocs, but every once in a while there's a natural one that you'd pay for if you couldn't get it free. This was one of those, 'N' all I'm hopin' is that when the smoke clears away I'll have enough of my million-dollar customer to sell a cabin job to. They don't raise 'em delicate in the jungles, and that's where Sam's diploma comes from.

Anyway, I miss the preliminaries. The boys must have exchanged calling cards or something in the barracks because in a few minutes Wally comes out with the set expression of a young man going solo for the first time and trying to like it. Sam strolls out after him with an expression that is—well, hungry, if you know what I mean.

Across the end of the field there's a bunch of trees that is a curse to safe flying, and to-night I found out for the first time why Nature provided 'em. Allah had Wally and Sam written in his book when the trees were planted. Whether he had me in mind or not, Modocs, I was there. I certainly was; a slightly gray assistant chief pilot trying to look like a scrub oak.

The disguise must have been perfect, because neither of those guys gave me a rumble. Wally took off his pretty whipcord jacket and folded it before he laid it down; then, his silk shirt was laid delicately on top of the neat stack while he emerged in a pink-and-yellow piece of underwear that would have lighted the way through a Lake Erie fog.

On the other side of the clearing, Sam has just kicked himself out of his secondhand khaki shirt and is standing with his hands on his hips and with a mean sneer on his face as he looks over the little pile of gentlemen's delight that Wally is sloughing off.

Sam's arms are lean and as tanned as his face, with long, rippling muscles under the skin. His chest pushes hard against the front of his union suit and a little patch of hair shows above the buttons. A man's man and no foolin'.

MY EYE travels back to Wally, and now that my eyes are accustomed to the glare of his shirt, or his teddy, or whatever they call underwear like that, I have to hand him something, too. His arms are bigger than Sam's; bunchier looking, but hanging from a real pair of shoulders. His chest displacement is nothing to be sneezed at, either.

Just then he steps forward. "You've been asking for a lot," he says softly. "Now come and take it."

I don't know why I think of "Young" Corbett getting the "Terrible" Terry's goat just before the push-over, but I do. Then, Sam comes in. He comes like Dempsey used to in the days when fourteen seconds didn't mean any more to his opponents than ten; a low-to-the-ground, bobbing bunch of two-fisted murder.

His left hooks high over Wally's guard and the right comes up from somewhere around his belt and takes the pride of the oil industry under the heart.

Wally grunts, backs up and pushes out his left. Pushes is the right word. It looked as weak as a baby waving away the second bottle of milk. But, my eyes must be getting blurry or something!

Sam's head snaps back on his shoulders so hard that all of my teeth start aching. His right hand makes a funny little circle and his left hangs out in space; then Wally shifts and pats him with the right. "Pats" is the right word again if you'll take it from my seat. It looked like that.

There was a crack like a prop hitting a monkey wrench and Sam lights square on top of Wally's nice clothes. I'll swear that Wally said: "Tut. Tut." Anyway, he got annoyed. When Sam came up groggily, the big boy is all over him; a crazy-quilt flash of funny-looking shirt that moves with the speed of light behind two hands that would have made swell pistons for anybody's ship.

I didn't believe it. but there it was. Sam gulps in a load of air and comes outta the flat spin he's been in. His left takes Wally in the middle and the well-known oil magnate knows that he's been tagged. For a moment he sags like an old Standard and Sam is all over him. Left. Right. Left. Right, and then—

Sam gets pushed in the face once more. His head

goes back and is slapped back into line. Wally speeds up like he's beginning to enjoy things and after that, the deluge.

I'LL spare you the horrible details. For two minutes and a half, Wally shows this knight of the roaring road more fists than he'd see in the jungles in a year. He's all over him like a rubber cow at a two-bit airport.

The boy is so good that he could open your mouth with a left and take a filling out of your tooth with the right that he sent after it. Yeah, and let you call the filling. Half the time, Sam is in the air from a right cross when a left uppercut does an Immelman and throws him over in a loop. At last he goes into a nose dive and washes out complete. Not a quiver!

Wally stands looking at him for a minute and I'm expecting him to slap his chest and roar like Tarzan of the Apes when he seems to go to pieces all of a sudden. He flops down on his knees and starts working on the crack-up like he'd suddenly found a long-lost relative in an embarrassing predicament. Five minutes, or maybe less—us assistants never get ahead the price of a watch—of this and he gets exactly no results. He stands up then, and his face looks kinda balmy in the moonlight.

That puts it up to me. I'm beginning to worry about Sam myself, and, much as I hate to admit spying on a private mess, it looks like it's my play to meander in and help get the write-off out o' th' trees.

Just as I take a step forward, Wally seems to make up his mind about something. He drops to one knee, gets a couple of grips and comes up with a heave. He has Sam's body across his shoulders before I can unblink myself and he is hiking out for the barracks over a half a mile away.

That's too much for one man even if he doesn't seem to mind it, so I step out after him to help with the load. Just then, Sam comes to sudden and profane life and squirms around so much that Wally drops him into a mess of bushes and steps track. Sam comes to his feet on a wabby undercarriage, but with his jaw out as far as a grease-ball's shirt. Wally takes out a handkerchief and wipes his hands.

"Got enough?" he says coldly, just like he hadn't been trying to carry this guy back to his bunk.

Sam starts forward and then stops. His eyes roam around and he finds that he is considerable off the battle ground; also he seems to remember a few things. With Wally waiting and watching him like a hawk, he sways back and forth for several seconds and doesn't

say a word. Then he turns and makes his way back to his shirt like a stude taxiing for the first time.

"You go ta hell," he says gruffly. 'N' somehow, I can't help thinking o' the time he kidded my job and took my ten dollars. His voice sounded just like that. Funny about people!

THE next week was peaceable; plenty peaceable. I never kidded anybody about the court plaster and the liniment, and those two eggs avoided contact altogether. Sam soloed. He did a nice job, too, and set her down like a vet. That burned Wally up, especially when I refused point-blank to turn him loose after he practically demanded it and threatened my job. I was afraid of him. He handled the ship too mechanically, and I still had hopes of teaching him the feel of it.

"I don't understand," he began. "I've had more time than that other man, and, I hope, at least, that I'm as intelligent." He had a nasty way of saying that and he climaxed it nastier. "I think you've got something personal in this. You've been wasting time for me ever since I enrolled and I've reached the limit of patience. You solo me, tell me what I've got to learn, or you'll explain it to your boss. That's final."

For the benefit of you two guys in back, that's an all wrong way to talk to an assistant chief instructor. We just naturally don't take it from studes; our union don't let us. I sticks my chin in his Adam's apple pronto.

"I'll take th' last," I says. "You may scare some people a lot, but you ain't bluffin' th' earth outta producin' oil faster'n it wants to, nor you ain't bluffin' me neither. You'll solo when I think you're safe."

For a long look he turns his eyes on me; just like he did a few times on Sam. "I'm not so sure of that," he says quietly. Then he turns away. For some reason, I feel darned uneasy. He's bought and paid for his cabin job and I've spent the commission. He'd sure sew me right if be turned it back. 'N' he had enough influence to get away with it. I ain't kiddin' myself there either.

I take it out on Sam. I have him up for advanced instruction and I sure pour tough wordage into the Gossport. I'll bet his ear got hot under the phones. Suddenly, I stops.

There's a new Whirlwind Travelair cabin job taxiing around into the wind down there on the field; the only one of its kind around our place. You guessed it—Wally's.

I had an agonised moment when I thought all kinds of things. Some of the boys might have borrowed it,

Steve might be taking it up for a test—but no go. It couldn't be anything else but Wally. Wally, taking my challenge and starting out to solo in his own ship!

To make it worse he was going up behind a Wright Whirlwind in a cabin job with a delicate wheel control after taking instructions with stick control on an OX 5 Travelair open cockpit which, except for you two guys in back, everybody knows isn't half as sensitive.

I watch, shuddering, as he picks up speed. Of course he's had a couple of hops in this plane of his and I've explained the main features—but—

HE TAKES the air with the left wing low, but he comes up with a pretty creditable bank, and I breathe a little easier. He didn't ground loop anyway. If only he didn't have to land it! Those monoplanes are fine ships, but they've got a lot of blind spots, and, well, they just ain't anything for your kid to play with, if you get what I mean.

I snaps the plot into the Gossport, and as I turn around, Sam has a wide grin on his pan. I don't know whether he's grinning at me and admiring the dude's guts, or whether he's hoping the guy ends up with the motor in his lap.

"Grin, you ape," I tells him. "It may be funny, but the boy is ordering a pine box for himself."

I don't look around after that one, but I wiggle the stick and take over the controls. Then I start after altitude. Down below us, Wally is trying himself out on a few banks. Not so bad. He skids a few times and once he sideslips, but he is getting the hang of it all right and he keeps out of spins.

My heart is wabbling around fierce—about like the time I took up my first Nieuport at Issoudan and felt the damn thing running away on me and trying hard to spin into the ground.

Blooie!

Wally evidently thinks that he has had enough of air practice, and he starts to glide in for a landing. My hair starts turning white and I follow around with that helpless feeling that has to be experienced to be appreciated.

He gauges his gliding angle just right and comes on down; then, just as I expect him to set her down or crack her, he guns the motor and shoots across over the field and back up into the air.

That's one that you won't find the answer for in any book, and I cuss softly, fervently and fluently as I go after a little more altitude and prepare to follow around and see what he does. Honestly, I don't know

why I didn't go down and watch him from the ground. I guess I felt closer to him in the air, and, after all, he was my stude.

Into another glide he goes. He is coming down perfectly again; right into the wind. 'N' darned if he don't gun her again just as he is going to set her down. "Ground shy!"

Without realising it, I have barked my opinion into the Gossport, and as I turn around, Sam's face is a little grim. He is realizing that this isn't exactly comedy that we're watching. A boy is circling around up there in the air who has lost confidence and can't land.

FIVE more times, Wally goes around and up. He just can't seem to reach the point of letting the wheels touch. I jockey over close to him and wave him down. I have an idea that a command from me may bring back some of his confidence. He has a sturdy ship, and if he doesn't crack too bad, he'll probably come out of it without anything fatal.

No good. He sticks his head out and he's a panicky mortal. In that one moment, I know that he'll never be able to land it. He never did have the air feel and now his rules have deserted him and he's gone to pieces.

His signal is a hopeless appeal for help, and there isn't anything I can do unless I can go down and get a pilot to transfer to that ship in mid-air.

I have a crazy impulse to ask Sam to take the controls and try it myself, but there's two good arguments against that. Sam isn't good enough to hold his ship steady against that other ship and I'm not so spry any more for the acrobatics that it'd take to get inside that cabin. An open cockpit biplane—maybe! This job; no, sir.

There's a wiggle from the stick and I look around. Sam is climbing out of the cockpit onto the wing. He has the same idea that I had with none of the fears. For a second I'm speechless in the face of the raw nerve of the cub; then I let out a roar and wave him back.

I can almost hear his "Go to hell," over the roar of the motor and his hand waves contemptuously. He is putting me in my place as the pilot. He's doing the wing-walking.

I have half a hunch not to make wing contact with that helpless plane, but I get over it. Something's got to be done, and if that boy has the guts to try what he is trying, I'll go through with my end.

Wally is piloting in wide circles now and I edge over and signal to him to fly straight. He sees Sam on the wing, too, and he must have got the idea. Anyway, he

levels off and I jockey into position. Sam is crouched on the wing, holding onto a strut and waiting, with his whole body tense. I get a feeling that I'm watching him do something that he's done often before—a roaring locomotive thundering down the rail, a flash of red and green tights, the clatter of box cars and a quick, clutching leap!

Only to-day he has a monoplane to grab and two thousand feet of terribly empty space below him!

OUR wings almost touch. Then he leaps. One horrible moment when I am tense and tight at the controls, and then I feel the wing lighten and I know he has gone.

I shoot a quick glance at the wing of the monoplane. Sam is clutching at the slippery surface and pulling himself up. Carefully I swing away and get above him. He's a cool customer.

Moving around on top of that plane as though he was on the ground, he suddenly makes up his mind how to go about it and slides over the leading edge into the path of the slip stream.

His clothes are flapping about him as the wind grabs for him; then he clutches the strut; a thin bar that stretches from close to the wing tip down to the body. Swaying with the motion of the plane and the pull of the air, he makes his way along that strut and pulls himself up for a rest in the shadow of the fuselage,

"He'll never get the door open against the wind," I mutter worriedly.

My face is so white it glares in the wind shield and I can hardly hear the motor the way my heart is thumping. It is one thing to do stunts yourself and another thing to watch two rooks do them. You bet it is.

Sam doesn't worry about the door. As soon as he has got his grip, he swings up to a standing position on the strut and then heaves his body through one of the tiny side windows; squeezing and squirming, but making it just the same.

My breath comes out in a great burst and my heart starts to beat once more. Not that my worries were over. Far from it. That ship had to get down to ground yet.

Sam had soloed just once and in a different kind of a ship. He had never even had a ride in the kind he was undertaking to land. Yet somehow I tried to worry and couldn't.

He evidently didn't either. He wagged the thing

around the sky a while, got the feel of it and leveled off. I followed him down and he came in with field to spare. One tense moment as the wheels touched and she bounced; once, twice, three times. She was in!

I WAS on the ground almost as fast as they were and there was a whole crowd running out across the field. Wally's face is grim and pale, but he doesn't say anything, except,

"Let's get away from this bunch."

I checked with that idea and Sam, a wide grin on his face, shrugged his shoulders. Waving the curiosity hounds away with one of my dainty hamlike hands, I trotted my two studes to the office.

Wally shoves the door closed and stands against it. He is as straight as a West-Pointer and changed somehow from what he was. He is breathing a bit heavily, but he turns to Sam and puts out his hand.

"First," he says, "I want to shake the hand of the bravest man I ever met." Sam starts and fidgets a bit. His foot is moving like he'd like a pebble or a rock to kick. "Aw, hell!" he says and sticks out his hand.

They shake, hearty, and then Wally turns to me. "I'm not saying anything about the fool thing I did to-day. You'll understand how I feel when you hear the

rest. But, would you think me lacking in courage if I gave up the idea of flying? Piloting, I mean."

I swallowed a bit, but he was so earnest that he needed an earnest answer. "No," I says. "Piloting planes is a business just the same as drilling oil wells or running an oil business is. A guy can fly for sport, of course, but he's got to put time in on it."

Wally nods. "Thanks. I realise now what you meant by air feels. I was trying to learn another man's business quicker than he could learn mine, and I wasn't interested enough to put myself into it. I've learned something."

Sam edges toward the door and Wally stops him. "Sam," he says, "I want you to finish out all the tuition I've paid for, and when you're finished I—well, I'd like to have you do my piloting." The ex-bo almost passes out. He has a look like the one he had when Wally pushed him with that straight left.

"You mean—" His foot stretched for a rock to kick, then his chin came up. "Sure," he said, "but I won't wear a monkey outfit like that one of yours." He slipped out of the door and was gone. Wally grinned. A regular fellow, Wally Minter, and a guy that can appreciate the fact that you can't expect a hobo to admit he's embarrassed.