

# Ark-La-Tex Skylines-- City's 'Flying Priest' Honored

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Recently, Shreveport's "Flying Padre," the Rev. Victor J. Sepsi, assistant pastor at St. Catherine's Church, was invited to be guest of honor at the New Orleans premiere of the film, "The Sound of Music." The series of events leading up to this invitation are inspiring, to say the least.

The invitation was extended by 20th Century Fox in recognition of Father Sepsi's interest in the film which he calls "preferred viewing for youth of today."



**R. Ward Sr.** Cleveland, Ohio. While visiting his father and friends, he learned that the film was playing at one of the theaters in Cleveland.

**HE SAW** the movie and was so impressed by it that he made a special effort to see the film a second time when it opened in Dallas several months later.

Convinced that it was every bit as good as he remembered it, he later invited some of his friends and parishioners to fly to Dallas with him for lunch and a viewing of the film. He was so delighted to see how much his friends enjoyed the experience that he decided to extend the offer to other small groups over a period of time.

**IN ALL,** about 10 flights were made in his single en-

in their surveillance of public entertainment.

"Clergymen are always against bad movies and bad television, but rarely, if ever, do they promote what they think is really worthwhile," he said. "It's not enough to be against something; you have to be for something."

As a result of these feelings, he wrote a letter to the manager of the Dallas theater, telling of his frequent flights and made a few observations about the film. Eventually, both 20th Century Fox and the film's producer, Robert Wise, replied to the priest's letter and it was not long until the invitation to be guest of honor at the New Orleans premiere was extended.

**WHEN NOT** occupied with movies and entertainment, Father Sepsi has been promoting the National Association of Priest Pilots, which is an association of pilot priests from all over the United States. Paid membership of the organization now exceeds 125 and efforts are still being extended to bring some 200 more known priest pilots into the organization.

Since a group of this type has never before existed, work is understandably slow. Great distances and busy schedules add to the burden. But some outstanding progress has been made.

**RIGHT FROM** the start the Priest Pilots Association wanted to be something more than merely a social organization. It was hoped that, in some way, the airplane could be used to help missionaries in distant lands.

Previously, there had been only a few isolated attempts by missionaries to use the airplane, each one feeling that he was engaged in a pioneer's task and bucking some strong headwinds from ecclesiastical

gine, four-seat airplane. Leaving after his last Mass on Sunday, there would be just enough time to get to Dallas, catch a hasty snack and arrive at the theater in time for the opening of the feature.

The flying clergyman finds the first three to five minutes of the picture of special interest since that portion was filmed from the air, partly under instrument flight conditions over mountainous terrain.

In addition to holding commercial license, he is a rated flight instructor, instrument pilot and instrument instructor.

**FATHER SEPSI** said the flight to New Orleans with Joe Gianforte, manager of the Don and Broadmoor Theaters in Shreveport, as a passenger, was without incident due to his instrument rating and well-equipped Cessna. The Skylane is one of the best-equipped single-engine planes in the area. It has the Wilcox 814B ATC transponder, two Narco Mark 12 transceivers with VOA-4 navigation heads, Narco UDI 2 distance measuring equipment (DME), marker beacon receiver, Automatic Direction Finder (ADF), and Mitchell autopilot with OMNI coupler, among other gadgets designed to make flying easier and safer.

**ALTHOUGH THE** weather in Shreveport was almost clear, an instrument flight plan was filed. Just outside Alexandria, the clouds lowered and light, hazy rain hid the earth from view. Early morning low ceilings in New Orleans kept many businessmen grounded until later that day, but on instruments, Father Sepsi's flight proceeded as planned and he and Joe arrived at Lakefront Airport in time to be greeted by two 20th Century Fox executives, Jerry Kennedy, branch manager for the firm in New Orleans, and Jimmy Gillespie,

authorities. The days of the pioneer in this field are not over, but the pioneers now have a central agency which understands their problems—tries to do something about them.

**THE MOST** recent achievement of the association was to foster another agency called UMATT, United Missionary Air Training and Transport. UMATT differs from its parent organization in that it can and does accept individuals and groups of laymen and women for the specific purpose of promoting flight in missionary areas.

Nuns, who for ages have been seen, but rarely heard, are now flying! Some of them are pilots! And this past summer UMATT delivered its first airplane to Sister M. Therese, the "Flying Nun" with the Medical Missionaries of Mary in Kenya, Africa. The Cessna Super Skywagon was ferried to Africa by Max Conrad, who holds several distance records and is one of the most famous ferry pilots in the world.

**KNOWING THAT** only some 14 per cent of the world's population has ever been up in an airplane, Father Sepsi has made a standing offer . . . to anyone who catches him on a free Saturday or Sunday afternoon at the Downtown Airport . . . of a brief ride over the city for only a penny a pound. He will take your word about your weight, but teen-agers must have a note from their parents.

As for his interest in "The Sound of Music," Father Sepsi insisted that I remind everyone that the film will open in Shreveport on Christmas Day.

"I want all the high school kids to see it," he said. "And right now I'm trying to get some special matinee prices for the schools."

And you know what? He's just likely to do it, too!

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regional manager with offices  
in Dallas, Tex.