

## **HOME-MADE AIRPLANE, 'CLINT FLY' MADE FIRST FLIGHT 41 YEARS AGO**

By Art Leibson  
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Forty-one years ago the "Clint Fly" made the front page of The El Paso Times when the monoplane took off from a field cleared of boulders, soared to an altitude of about 1,000 feet, and stayed aloft for nearly a half hour before making a crash landing.

"The same month, not long after the stock market crash, Miriam A, "Ma" Ferguson, whose husband had been impeached as Texas governor, announced her candidacy to succeed him, was drawing headlines as she called on all public officials to take an oath that they were total abstainers from any taint of liquor.

There was much more real news to make headlines. And aviation was solidly established by then, well out of its barnstorming years. What made the Clint Fly front page news was that it was the first airplane put together in El Paso County that could fly.

### **WORK OF THREE**

"Three men worked on the plane, W.J. "Cap" White, who became its only pilot, his brother, David F. White, and the mechanic who worked in their garage, Ray Malone. Today David White still lives in Clint where he is in the insurance business and has been justice of the peace since 1956. He still remembers how reporters called him sometimes early in the morning, wanting to be on hand for the epic takeoff.

The Clint Fly had flown long before May 31, 1930, the day of Clint's Kitty Hawk. It had reached an altitude of 20 feet, slipped and crashed. That was in December, 1929, before any of the three men knew anything

about flying. They knew so little, White remembers, that his brother took off with a wind instead of into it. The crash soon taught them that they had better learn something about aerodynamics and while they were building it Cap White took lessons from R&L Airways and was a qualified pilot by the time the plane was ready for another takeoff.



*THE CLINT FLY--D.F. White, Lower Valley insurance man and justice of the peace, ran a garage at Clint when he and his brother, together with a mechanic working for them, assembled the above plane from a kit, the first to be put together in El Paso County. It cracked up the first time White's brother flew in but was repaired and flown all around the valley, known as "The Clint Fly," until burglars stole the engine and ended the Fly's operations.*

There were big crowds on hand to cheer it on and the Clint Fly moved gracefully into the air. Reporters said it reached a point about 10 miles away before coming in for another crash landing, due to motor trouble. It was Cap White who finally located the trouble and improvised a gadget for getting air to the cylinders so they wouldn't keep blowing out plugs on the tiny craft.

The brothers bought the parts in a kit, much like today's model planes, with everything packed in one box except the engine and the "dope" they had to use in gluing it together. It cost \$199 and was advertised as the Heath-Henderson Parasol. By the time they

had bought their motorcycle engine the cost was run up to somewhere between \$700 and \$800. The engine had to be specially adapted with larger cylinders before it really worked. From then on it was a familiar sight all over the valley as spectators cheered it on.

"We were really fond of the little 'Fly,'" White remembers. "We had it for about two years and opened the side of an old barn to provide a hangar. In our Highway Garage we also had a machine shop where we would make our own parts as we needed replacements. But after the engine was stolen, and El Paso was well into the depression, we gave up and turned the body of the plane over to a pair of mechanics. In all the forced landings my brother was never seriously hurt, nothing more than shaking up."

So ended the saga of El Paso County's first home-made airplane.

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