



A typical farm community. Polo is a cluster of homes and shops around the broad Main Street, bisected by a State highway and railroad tracks.



Polo's airport is located a mile and a half northeast of the town.



Polo

By C. L. HAMILTON

If any community in the United States could be said to personify embattled civilian America, it is Polo, Illinois. Located 100 miles west of Chicago, Polo is a farm community of some 2,200 population. It will never be bombed or invaded for its military significance, but all aggressor nations should take warning. For Polo is grass roots America.

As *Flyer's* editor pointed out in a recent editorial, the time has long passed when a farmer could take down his long rifle from over the mantle to defend his country. Today he stands on a hilltop observation post, part of the Air Force's vast Ground Observer Corps warning net-

Polo Squadron, shows as they returned from two-week CAP encampment at Easton Air Force Base, are Charles Miller, Paul Willingham and Carl Linkenker. Trip was made in Polo Squadron's Stinson.



Above: Farmer-lawyer Arch Hamilton is CAP Squadron Executive Officer, Observation Post volunteer, and owner of the airport.



Below: Mrs. Gena Landis phones her aircraft observation report to the Chicago Filter Center. She is Supervisor of the Polo Post, was responsible for recruiting volunteers.



Above: Farmer Ernest Schmidt is the very active Chief Observer of the Polo Post. Born in Germany, he has been in the U. S. 45 years, welcomes opportunity to serve the country. Mrs. Schmidt is also an observer.

defends America

A FLYING Staff member pays the hometown a visit—and finds there "the embattled civilian"

work. Or he flies his plane in the Civil Air Patrol.

If anyone thinks that the American civilian takes these volunteer activities lightly, then he should stand watch some night in the wind and the rain at one of the thousands of observation posts that civilians were mobilized to man round-the-clock starting last July 14. Or he should donate his airplane, as well as his time and flying skill, in the CAP's search and rescue work and its practice evacuation and medical aid flights.

The farmers, shopkeepers and housewives of Polo do not take their civil air defense activities lightly. They enjoy doing them for there is something infinitely satisfying

about actively defending your country. But they do it in the full knowledge that they and thousands like them personally to all potential aggressors the old American fighting motto: "Don't tread on me!"

Historians often have commented upon the rifle possessed by every colonial farmer as the keystone of the American revolution. It may be that the farm airport someday will take its place beside the pioneer rifle as a bulwark of our freedom.

Polo has an airport. A postwar development, it is owned and operated by farmer-lawyer Arch Hamilton and is located on the Hamilton farm. (Continued on page 53)

Below, left to right: Farmer Robert Coppenhaver is an observer at the Polo Post; Bamberger's Garage is well represented at the post by Jim Sarber, Evan Reck, Beecher Bamberger and Bryant Bamberger; Opera-

tors of a Polo gas station, Ken Brown and Harry Van Oosten are both observers and Brown also serves as Drill Sergeant for CAP Cadets. Almost every business in Polo has members in CAP or Observation Post.



Polo Defends America

(Continued from page 27)

a mile and a half northeast of town. There are 16 planes based at the field: 3 Cubs, 1 Stinson, 3 Super Cruisers, 1 Vagabond, 1 Swift, 1 Howard, 1 Cessna 140, 2 Aeromca Chiefs, 1 Fairchild PT-19, and 2 Taylorcrafts. An old B-17 has rested its war-weary ribs in a corner of the field for several years, a constant reminder to the community of airpower's easy obsolescence.

In the Polo area there are some 200 men and women who have had varying amounts of flight training. Seventy-five of these are active licensed pilots of whom 46 received their training in the G.I. program at Hamilton Field.

A year and a half ago a group of these local pilots organized a Civil Air Patrol Squadron. Today there are 63 senior members and 22 teen-age Cadets. They have taken part in two SARCAP missions to look for lost planes, and several practice missions. All 16 planes based at the field are available for CAP work. One, the Howard, is equipped with a stretcher. A Link Trainer is being installed and the Squadron will soon have a CAP radio station in operation.

While 200 people with an active interest in flying represent something less than 10 per cent of Polo's population, and a great deal less than that of the surrounding farm community, the airport and its activities have put Polo literally on the air map and have made the community air conscious.

Biggest dividend to date of Polo's air consciousness is the manning of the Polo Observation Post. Two years ago the Illinois State Civil Defense Commission asked Mrs. Cora Landis to organize and supervise an observation post as part of the Air Force's Ground Observer Corps network. All Polo agrees that the choice of Mrs. Landis for this task was a wise one. Party lines being what they are, and Mrs. Landis being an "up and at 'em" organizer, in no time at all Polo was well on the way to having the necessary number of volunteers.

All kinds of folks signed up. The mayor and his wife, the high school principal and his wife, the plumber and his wife, farmers, mechanics, lumbermen, the shoe store manager, the druggist, grocery clerks, insurance agents, the hardware store manager, and the president of a

local engineering firm. Dan Terry, editor of the local weekly, the Tri-County Press, not only volunteered but has filled many editorial columns with news and comment on the post.

In some cases, volunteers were also members of the CAP. Arch Hamilton, CAP Executive Officer, is an observer. Observer Ken Brown serves as Drill Sergeant for the CAP Cadets. For the most part, however, volunteers had never taken part in local aviation activities. But they did understand the need for the Ground Observer Corps. They had a fundamental, grass roots concept of airpower. This was the dividend.

Enough men and women in Polo understood that radar cannot do the job alone, that warning must come hundreds of miles away from big cities and industrial targets if interception is to succeed, and that air attack on the United States not only is possible but could happen today.

Big Cities Please Copy

There are now 168 volunteers. For a community of 2,300 this compares well with New York City's three posts which have recruited a total of less than 400 volunteers out of a population of eight million. Furthermore, the Polo Post is one of the very few, in the 27 states where the Ground Observer Corps is on active duty, that have remained constantly in operation round-the-clock since the July 14 mobilization.

Working together for mutual benefit, the CAP and the Observation Post have raised funds for incidental expenses by giving two hangar dances. CAP also has flown training maneuvers for the Post, helping observers to judge distance and altitude of aircraft flying within the Post's 4-mile radius reporting area.

Only time will tell whether the Air Force can recruit, organize and train enough volunteers to man the 20,000 observation posts that are deemed necessary to defend the United States against enemy air attack. The task is gigantic and without precedent in our national history.

In studying the difficulties of their undertaking, it would seem to this writer that Air Force and Civil Defense officials would do well to study the Polo story and that of other grass roots communities. Here is embattled civilian America, ready and able to make common cause against aggression.

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