

watching their dives and scoring the hits of their little practice bombs. The most disconcerting thing about the SBC #1 was its tendency to head for the ground at a steep angle when the landing flaps were lowered, something, however, that could be easily checked if one just rolled a little back elevator tab and then used a nose as was needed after the flaps went down.

Chasing navigation flights was another job and much more routine. Such flights crossed the river and heading east and a little south for St. Augustine, where the problems began. We used SS2V land planes for shorter flights; SNJ for medium flights and SBC for longer flights. About the only incident I seem to remember in this connection is returning to land one day and finding an almost 100% overcast right down to the ground, but to my great relief I found a con-

HOLE
IN
OVERCAST

venient hole almost directly above the field at St. Augustine and proudly led the boys down to "safety". The wind was taken out of my sails a bit, when I called up Lee Field and found that there was no such overcast there and no one was the least bit worried about us.

About the only other things practiced were "tactics", which consisted of flying around in formation and going into occasional tail chase or "Lufbery circles", the latter being a maneuver whereby the leading plane, the instructor, started a steep turn, with everyone else in column, and eventually caught up to the last plane, everyone thus chasing the guy in front of him and supposedly "protecting his tail". Since we usually used the SBC for tactics, and it was capable of amazingly steep and sharp flippers turns, this was considerable fun.

TACTICS

FUN

MARCH, 1943

We were at Lee Field from late December of 42 to early March of 43, and altogether it was a grand experience, especially compared with what some of us had gone through there less than a year before. The students no longer commuted from Jacksonville, but lived in barracks right on the enlarged base, while we instructors lived in a very comfortable B.O.Q. right by the river, a pleasant spot shaded by live oaks, sweet gum and magnolias. The St. Johns is over two miles wide there, really too big for ideal scenery, especially with such low, flat shoalines, but mostly just for the stunt I borrowed a rowboat and rowed across and back one afternoon. More often I walked, or occasionally ran with a friend by the name of John Woods, south along the St. Augustine road and part way across the bridge, which is a little way upstream from the

QUARTERS
BY THE ST.
JOHN'S RIVER

birds

93
Not many birds of water birds seemed to frequent the river, though once I encountered a flock of coots I estimated at ~~at least~~ at least 1000 birds. There were usually a few scaup and pie-billed grebs about, and one time I spied the only pinktail (a pair) I saw the whole time I was in Florida.

others

base. A particularly memorable little incident happened one afternoon during a short walk. Just after crossing the little bridge that carries the road south over a creek, right near the end of east runway, I spotted something moving on the far bank where the creek swings back about parallel to the road. Through the binoculars I could see that it was two animals that appeared to be fighting, but upon creeping close I saw that it was two otters. The first wild one I had ever seen, nearly playing with each other. They were literally tumbling all over the place and one another and obviously having as much fun as two animals possibly could. After a while they got tired and stopped, still apparently quite unaware of me, who was by this time less than 100 feet away. One of them casually slipped into the water and returned with a fish. Eventually, as if now a little suspicious of something, they left