

# God 'Like' Radar

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

The radio in the Cessna cracked to life. "Zero four Delta. This is Jacksonville tower. Cleared for radar departure to Melbourne. Taxi into position and hold."

The sun had already dropped below the western horizon as I pushed the throttle forward and moved the little plane out onto the end of the concrete runway and waited for final clearance. My landing lights barely picked up the form of the huge DC9 that roared away into the darkness across my runway on its way to some unknown destination.

**SUDDENLY THE** speaker in the ceiling of the cockpit came to life as the voice of the tower operator said, "Cessna zero four

## Perspective

delta, cleared for takeoff."

My right hand pushed the throttle all the way forward. As we gained speed I slowly pulled back on the wheel and the wheels left the ground. We were air-born.

Again the radio came to life. "Zero four delta, make a 90 dg. turn right. Climb to 3,000 feet, and pick up heading of 180 dg. Switch to receiving frequency one-on-niner-four. Over."

From that point on everything was almost automatic. Beneath me the twinkling lights of Jacksonville came into view as I climbed to 3,000 feet and crossed the St. John's river, which shimmered in the

moonlight below. Ahead of me I could see the headlights of many automobiles as they moved south on U. S. 1 and Interstate 95.

**MY THOUGHTS** were that I would be there in an hour and it would take them almost four hours. Above me the stars glittered brightly in the soft summer sky. To the east the ocean stretched away towards the horizon glittering in the silver moonlight. The only noise was the steady roar of the engine in front of me.

Occasionally the radio would come to life as the radar operator would correct my heading or warn of approaching aircraft. "Zero-four-delta, Eastern Electra descending from 4,500 feet at 11 o'clock, 3 miles" . . . "Zero-four-delta, Air Force jet 15 miles out, approaching from 9 o'clock. Fast!" And finally, "Zero-four-delta. You're over St. Augustine. Radar service terminating. Have a nice flight." And I was on my own — heading home.

**AHEAD I** could see the lights of Daytona. Later on, the shadow of the Cape extending far out into the Atlantic warned me to steer right to keep out of the restricted area. Below were the lights of Titusville and far ahead I could see the rotating beacon flashing at Melbourne.

**IN A** few moments I had called the Melbourne tower and received clearance to enter the landing pattern. And in a matter of minutes I was cutting my power and settling down on the familiar two mile runway at the airport. I was home.

Radar flying is the ultimate. The radar operator sits in front of his scope and watches my every move. I appear as a "blip" on his screen. If I wander off course, he corrects me. If he sees another aircraft approaching on a collision course, he warns me. If I had gotten lost or had engine trouble, I could have called him for help.

**DRIVING HOME**, after tying down at Marty's, I thought, "You know, a pilot's a fool not to use the available help. If there were only some way to get this message across to the human race as well. From above and from within our Heavenly Father stands ready to help us. He warns. He corrects. He beckons us back on course. He guides us home. Why won't we listen? Why won't we submit to His guidance?"