Captain Michael Gitt Papers - Mrs. Cornelia K. Gitt - Wives Safety Petition, 1952

approach altitude. However, for some reason, before descending he switched frequency and requested a VHF DF fix from the Air Force net in the area. This fix showed his true position to be 75 miles from the station, over mountainous terrain. If he had let down, on what was apparently sufficient proof of his position, there is little doubt that he would have become a statistic in the "pilot error" computations.
The point to be made here is that, unlike a mountain which always knows where it is, a pilot may at times mistake his position or else, as in the above case, receive erroneous indications of his position, and, acting on his best judgement, letdown into a hill or mountainside. This has been amply demonstrated over the years, but little had been done to provide a positive answer to the problem, except for the abortive effort several years ago by the CAB to make a terrain warning device mandatory. Perhaps the order was premature, due to the unreliability of the popular device, but it appeared to the pilots that more effort went into proving that the device was unreliable than in improving it to a practical and useful point. One airline, however, TWA, did work on its terrain warning indicator and now has installed it on a voluntary basis. The author has talked to many TWA pilots concerning this and finds an almost unanimous

approval of it.
Perhaps cockpit radar is a more sure and versatile answer, but a practical terrain warning device would eliminate 20% of the fatal accidents causing 25% of the fatalities, and would reduce "pilot error" accidents by 65%. We feel that this is an important area to which industry attention and action should be focused.
In planning design and operations, the average level of competence of the pilot group should be carefully kept in mind. Too often, it seems operations are planned which require an exceptionally high level of skill and are not realistic in that, while average skill is adequate under normal conditions, trouble is invited under abnormal conditions of airplane malfunction coupled with unfavorable weather. That this is true is easily understood because the executives who do the planning are usually superior in intelligence and experience and have better access to information and naturally plan operations through their own eyes and capabilities. It is, however, a condition which should be guarded against.
TRAINING
An integral part of operations and safety is training. it is obvious that constant training and checking in both old and new procedures is one of the cornerstones of flight