FLIGHT OF "THE ARTICLE"

AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE FLIGHT OF THE FIRST LOCKHEED "ARTICLE" — THE AIRCRAFT THAT BECAME THE U-2 — VIA FORMERLY CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following document consists of the personal flight test comments from the small cadre of individuals who actually performed the first flights with the plane that would become the U-2. Like all flight test documentation, these initial Lockheed flights also had a reporting structure that followed this outline for each flight:

1) A description of the flight test being performed.
2) The aircraft configuration for the test.
3) Radio comments from ground observers and chase pilots as well as from Kelly Shimmy of landing gear control stick feel.
4) Lastly, a post-flight synopsis of the completed flight test.

So, strap into one of the world’s most exotic — and most classified — aircraft and travel back to 1955 at a secret location for the first flights of a design that would change the history of the world.

1 AUGUST 1955

TAXI TEST

1) Evaluate the following:
   - Wheel brakes
   - Tail wheel steering
   - Wing balance ability
   - Action of out-rigger pogos

   (NOTE: Pogos are the small "outrigger" wheel struts that support the wing tips but are jettisoned as the aircraft gains speed)

2) Gradually work up speed using auto power. Pacer will observe action of all landing gear, etc.
3) Make slight liftoffs if desired. Do not drop pogos.
4) Have camera on five-second interval.

CONFIGURATION

1) JP-6 fuel all-around. Sumps 85-gallons. Forward 950-gallons. Aft 100-gallons. Total 1135-gallons (NOTE: This gives an idea of the "flying fuel tank" configuration of the aircraft).
2) Strong pogo fittings.

RADIO OBSERVER

11:30 LeVier, “Rolling.”
11:35 LeVier, “Brakes got too hot!”
11:45 LeVier, “Start of fast run.”

HIGH-SPEED AUTO NOTES — FAST RUN

0.0-miles: Start.
0.2-miles: Off and back on the ground.
0.25-miles: Right pogo off the ground.
0.26-miles: Airplane off the ground.
0.55-miles: Initial contact, left tip, left pogo, main and tail gear.