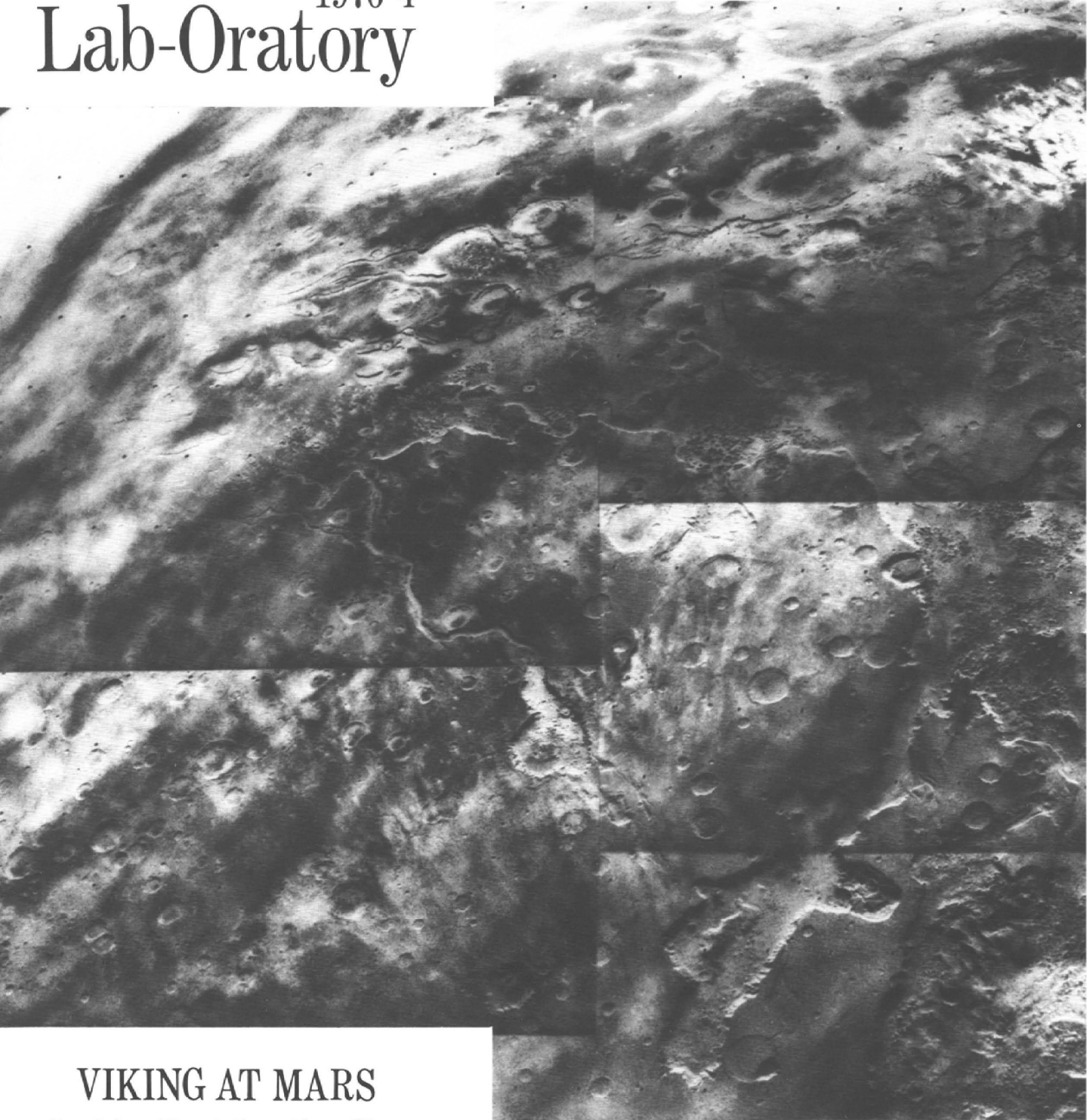


1976-4
Lab-Oratory



VIKING AT MARS
Looking For A Landing Site

Wouldn't You Like To Fly...

"I always thought anybody who was into flying had holes in his head. Who'd ever think of getting into an airplane and flying around in circles only to land again half an hour later? — Well, then I bought some property in San Diego in 1968 and ..."

This is how Bill McCord of Caltech's Data Processing Center begins his story about joining the Aero Association of Caltech. The drive to and from San Diego once or twice each week simply became too time-consuming and Bill decided to learn to fly with the two-year-old flying club at Caltech.

Others joined because they had flown before and enjoyed it; some thought it would be a different, interesting hobby, some liked the idea of a night in San Francisco unrestricted by scheduled airline flights and at half the transportation costs.

But none of these reasons had prompted the founding of the club in 1966. The people, who for two years had planned the Aero Association of Caltech, looked at flying as a logical education component of the institute's aeronautics curriculum. Flying an airplane would enable aeronautics students to actually experience the theories they had learned. The main focus of the association, therefore, was to be on the students; other



WASH 'N WAX — Periodically the members of the Association get together with buckets, ladders and wax to give the three planes a good shine.

to function as advisors and provide the necessary level of stability that cannot be maintained with a continuously changing student body.

In March, 1966, the club signed ownership papers for a used, but immaculate Cessna 150, N3027J, a popular two-place trainer-touring aircraft. Twenty pilots put 900 flight hours on the aircraft in the first year of the association's operation, followed by about 600 hours each of the following two years.

In the fall of 1968 the association moved its operation from Brackett Field in La Verne (27 miles from Caltech) to the El Monte Airport (8 miles from Caltech). By early 1970 membership had climbed to 27 and yearly flight time exceeded 900 hours.

The association bought its second plane in May, 1971, a 1969 Piper Cherokee 140, N8810N. Later the same year the 1965 Cessna 150 was replaced with a 1968 Cessna 150, N6643S. Last year, in September, the club bought its newest and most elaborate plane, a 1972 Cessna 172 Skyhawk, N3852Q. This gives the club's members three instrument-flight-equipped planes to choose from. They have been taking advantage of the planes with recent family vacations in Omaha and Seattle and weekends in Santa Barbara and San Diego.

The majority of the membership, which is open to all Caltech students, alumni and staff as well as their spouses, has recently shifted from the campus to JPL. But this year's association president, Dr. Ed. Sherry of Section 291, hopes to again increase the number of Caltech students active in the club. "I'd really like to see the club sponsor a student, give him a scholarship to get his pilot's license. Eight-hundred dollars for a private license can definitely be prohibitive for a college student."

In addition to the monthly membership fee of \$15 (\$12 for student pilots), the association requires a refundable share deposit of \$300 (\$100 for Caltech students) and an initiation fee of \$100 (\$10 for Caltech students). Each flight hour in the Cessna 150 costs \$11, and the Cherokee 140, \$14, and the Cessna 172, \$15.

Flying is not an inexpensive hobby, but, as the members of the Aero Association of Caltech will tell anyone who is willing to listen, flying is addictive. Bill McCord is a good example. His property in San Diego has long been sold, but Bill still pays his monthly dues. In fact, he has gotten to like flying so much that he no longer thinks flying an airplane around in circles is only for people with holes in their heads.

6



NOSE TO NOSE — The Aero Association's Cessna 150 (left) and Piper Cherokee 140 are showing off on the runway of the El Monte Airport.