

# L. RON HUBBARD



Sky Birds  
Dare!

GALAXY  
P R E S E N T S

## While Other Men Scoff

**B**REEZE CALLAHAN came into the hangar. He saw two things in the gloom, each one representing an entirely different emotion.

One was his soaring ship, ready for the trial flights.

The other was Badger O'Dowell.

Breeze Callahan swung six feet of brawn into action behind two sets of ferocity-hardened knuckles.

Badger O'Dowell had not been expecting this. He heard the rush of feet behind him. He heard a snarl which reminded him of a mother bear about to protect a foolish cub. And then Badger O'Dowell took off backwards, catapulted by the impact of meeting. Badger O'Dowell did a neat outside loop and then crashed.

For a man built on the proportions of a stuffed sausage, Badger O'Dowell moved very quickly. Dust swirled and he was on his feet. His two protruding eyes searched for the door. When he had oriented himself sufficiently and had directed his footsteps in that direction, Badger O'Dowell discovered too late that Breeze Callahan had all the skyway in that direction.

It was all very unfortunate for Badger O'Dowell. He tried to stop his rush before Breeze Callahan misconstrued his intention, but he could not.

It appeared to the lank tower of shivering, awe-inspiring rage that Badger was charging back to the fray.

Breeze Callahan was very obliging. He set himself. He let go one from the knees and did a spot landing on Badger's chin. Badger completed a wingless soaring record, skidded to a stop in the corner of the hangar and screamed.

"Don't hit me! For God's sake don't hit me!"

But Breeze wasn't a man to enquire deeply into things when his new soaring plane was in question, and he suspected, with very great reason, that Badger O'Dowell had been discovered in the act of sabotage. Breeze advanced and Badger screamed.

Breeze snatched at O'Dowell's collar, and then it became apparent that he had walked into a trap. A six-inch spanner soared up out of the dust, came down and laid open the side of Callahan's face.

Breeze staggered, spouting blood and nerve-shaking oaths. Badger O'Dowell threw the spanner away, leaped to his feet and sprinted for the exit.

Callahan cleared the red film from his eyes. Everything was suddenly zero-zero to him, and he had no beam to guide a blind pilot. He heard a motor snarl into life. He heard gears clash. He heard Badger O'Dowell leave there at about seventy miles an hour.

Which was just as well.

Breeze swabbed his face with some dirty cotton waste, and his curses simmered down to ineffectual, "Dirty so-and-so, lousy bum, good-for-nothing . . ."

Another silhouette appeared in the hangar door. "Hey,

what's going on in here?" said Pop Donegan. "I thought I heard . . . Hell, you're all cut up, Breeze. What happened?"

"That little sawed-off, mangy . . . That guy Badger O'Dowell was in here fooling with the *Chinook*."

Pop Donegan looked up at Breeze. Everybody had to look up at Breeze, and almost anybody had a good chance of looking through him.

Pop Donegan was all concern for the soaring plane, but he smiled—he always smiled—and said optimistically, "Well, he didn't have time to do anything, no matter how much he wanted to."

"Is that so," said Breeze. "Don't stand there looking helpless. Get busy and inspect the thing. My God, the wings are torn off and he's kicked holes in the fuselage, and he's jimmied the controls. . . ."

This was not altogether true, and Breeze was not exactly qualified to pass upon it, as he could not see through the blood which kept coming out of the cut. But he was very certain that these things had happened, and anybody who knew Badger O'Dowell, and who knew just why he hated Breeze Callahan, would have agreed with Breeze without further remark.

Pop Donegan looked at the soaring ship, with his hands in his pockets. To inspect it thoroughly a man would have to crawl under it and somehow—because of rheumatism, Pop said—he never crawled under anything that looked like work. Pop shifted a healthy chew, spat so that a small geyser leaped out of the dust, and cocked his head on one side.

“She looks all right, Breeze. Perfectly all right.”

By this time Breeze had gotten to a water faucet and had thrust his head into the tub beneath, and by buckling his helmet tight, he managed to keep his sight clear. He rambled over to the *Chinook* and began to run practiced fingers over the sleek wings and frail body of the motorless plane.

After a little he was satisfied that Badger O’Dowell had done nothing wrong. Breeze stood up straight, lighted a cigarette and leaned on the cockpit.

“Have they come yet?”

“Patty came a little while ago. She’s trying to start the tow car for you. Oh, don’t you worry, Breeze. They’ll be along directly. We’ve waited and worked for months over this thing, and they won’t stay away now. And we can’t fail this time. No sir, we can’t fail. Why with you at the *Chinook’s* controls, them Navy fellers will see that a soaring plane can do things a power plane never thought of doing, and then we’ll be all set.”

“Hmph,” said Breeze, dragging smoke into his lungs. “I haven’t had her off for a week and there’s plenty of wind today. I wish they’d get here. I’m nervous.”

“Now you just calm yourself, Breeze. They can’t help but think that this is the finest thing which has happened in the way of training. I’m willing to bet you . . .”

Voices came from outside. Breeze stood up straight and rambled toward the door.

A somewhat harsh voice, roughened by fine cigars in quantity, said, “I know, I know, the boy may be right, but this fellow O’Dowell has a mighty fine proposition in training ships, you know. They’ll do all this work and more.”

“We’ll watch it anyway,” said another.

“Yeah,” said the harsh voice. “We’ll watch it. I like to get out on days like these anyway. Too much office. But I still say that gliding is a sport and nothing more. Kid stuff, in fact. No possible use in training whatever. Where’s the man in charge here?”

Breeze came out of the hangar. He looked over his three visitors. They were Naval officers, but they were not in uniform. They had a lean, spray-whipped look about them. Even in felt hats they looked seagoing. Two of them were young. The third was elderly and fatherly. He offered Breeze a cigar.

“I’m Captain Daniels, young man. This is Lieutenant Sweeney and this is Lieutenant Maynard, both of the Bureau of Aeronautics. Who’s in charge around here?”

“I am,” said Breeze.

Captain Daniels looked at him for several seconds. Captain Daniels was not impressed. Breeze was dressed in greasy coveralls and a helmet without goggles. Breeze looked rather southern and lazy and he drawled a little. Definitely not a military man, this Callahan. But a nice looking boy.

Captain Daniels was hearty. “Well, son, you’ve got us out here, now what are you going to do with us?”

“I want to show you how the *Chinook* can fly,” said Breeze. “She’s the last word in motorless aircraft, gentlemen. She’s a smooth ship. Fifty-five-foot spread, with a wing loading of—”

“How do you do?” said Captain Daniels over Breeze’s shoulder.

Patty Donegan had come up. The interest of the two lieutenants quickened instantly. Patty looked very fresh and

young. The wind was getting under her small brown hat and pulling at her corn-colored hair, and she was having some trouble keeping it out of her very large, clear blue eyes.

“Are you all ready?” said Patty, smiling at the lieutenants.

Breeze looked at Patty and frowned. He looked at the lieutenants and frowned.

“Yes, indeed,” said Captain Daniels. The lieutenants beamed, as Navy pilots will do when they see a girl who impresses them.

In spite of his annoyance, Breeze said, “I wanted to tell you about this first, gentlemen. I understand that the Navy is not satisfied with its present training routine at Pensacola. It’s an opinion of mine that power pilots are likely to be improved when they are given training on soaring planes. Now it happens that I have designed this *Chinook* ruggedly enough for a training ship without impairing its capabilities in soaring, and I would like—”

“By the way,” said Captain Daniels, “do you know a fellow named O’Dowell? Yes? Well, he was over to see us this morning and he spoke very highly of you. Fine chap, this fellow O’Dowell. He has a small trainer which we were thinking of using on our next contract. He says it gives you the feel of the air.”

“Is that so?” said Breeze.

“Yes, and he was most sympathetic toward your gliders. Said they were the finest of their kind. But of course gliders are limited. He told us—”

“Shall I run her out?” yelled Pop Donegan from the hangar.

Breeze went down, too angry at O’Dowell to be surprised

at Pop's offer. Together they trundled the soaring ship out into the sunshine.

She was a beautiful thing, that plane. Her wings were so thin that you could see the sunlight through them, and yet they were strong. The body was graceful and tapering. She was silver. Breeze, with his clever hands, had built a certain swagger into her lines, and although at first glance the *Chinook* appeared to be just one more monoplane, motorless plane, any bystander was instantly impressed.

Captain Daniels was very polite. He looked into the small cockpit and he felt of the fabric. The two lieutenants were interested only because Patty began to point things out to them.

Patty smiled and laughed with them. "Yes, I've flown it and it's wonderful. Balances perfectly. Picks up lift from the most amazing places. Breeze stayed up over an hour in her about a week ago when he was setting the . . ."

They were not interested in Breeze, those lieutenants. They changed the subject.

Breeze alone showed any strain. He knew how much this meant. If he could put on a fine flight for them and show them something about soaring, he had a chance of convincing them of the possibilities of such a thing, and if he did, they might use sailplanes at Pensacola for regular training, and if they did that, then Breeze Callahan would pinch pennies no more. And Patty Donegan's rather passive interest in him would quicken until . . .

Breeze eased his length into the cockpit and pulled the hood down. Other than its lack of a motor, this might have been any monoplane. But the lack was a gain in Breeze's



eyes. He could see nothing but soaring and motors were so much racket in his ears. He liked the silent, delicate flight of a glider, and above them all, he loved the way *Chinook* whispered down the skies.

Pop Donegan excitedly connected the towrope to the back of the old rattletrap car, and then hooked the other end to the release on the *Chinook's* nose. The plane was headed into the strong wind and Pop began to take up the slack by moving the car away.

The rope was about six hundred feet long. When it was stretched, Pop looked back. Breeze glanced at Patty and saw she was still talking with the lieutenants. Captain Daniels was sitting on the ground, chewing a straw and watching without any great interest. Pop Donegan caught Breeze's signal, spat and shoved the car into low.

The *Chinook* gave a lurch and rolled ahead on its one wheel. Breeze shifted the stick, picked up the down wing and balanced the plane. Pop began to roll faster. The *Chinook* scuttled along the ground, controls getting stiffer as the wind sucked up against the wings.

Pop had the automobile in high, grinding out forty miles an hour over the bumpy field. The *Chinook* took the air.

Breeze hauled back on the stick. The rope was taut, pulling hard. The ship went up the invisible staircase to the clouds.

Wind whispered through the struts and sang over Breeze's head. He forgot about Patty and the lieutenants. He was thinking about what he could do with soaring planes, if they would let him.

Swiftly he completed the climb. The motive power furnished by the car was no longer needed now. The car and Pop were six hundred feet straight down and the rope was still tight. Pop was looking up and hitting the bumps hard.

Breeze pulled the rope release. The long snake whipped out of sight to the rear, falling in loose coils. Pop stopped the car and looked up, watching the wings, through which he could see the sun.

Twenty feet forward to one foot down. That was the gliding angle of the *Chinook*. You could coast down twenty miles, if you started a mile high. Something like a kid's wagon on the hill, and the air under the wings was as solid as concrete.

Breeze looked back at the hangar. He could hear cars traveling along the road. He could hear voices far off. He was above it all, and away from it. He was a solitary eagle in the clouds.

He was free from the earth and all the man-made woes. He felt exultant. He looked down again and saw that a car was parked along a woods road behind the field. With a start, he knew that it was Badger O'Dowell's.

Well, let the so-and-so watch if it would do him any good. Let him watch a good flight.

Breeze knew that the wind struck the side of the hill and shot upwards. He knew that these bumps in the air, so annoying to the power pilot, were the breath of life of motorless aircraft. The air hit the under side of the spreading wings and boosted the ship bodily.

He banked gracefully. He could be nothing but graceful up

there. He was part of the plane. The wings were not attached to the fuselage but to his own shoulders. The wind which caressed his face was his own, personal, untainted property.

He hit a bump. He felt heavy in the pit as the plane rose suddenly. He was back to six hundred feet. He banked again and rode along the crest of the hill. Again he went up. He was showing them what a power pilot had to learn.

Back he went along the crest, sighing through space—flying as great birds have flown since the beginning of time. Flying without moving a wing or using any power, merely relying upon the lift of the wind on wings.

He came back over the field. He had plenty of time. He dived steeply and did a quick bank which made the earth spin. He pulled the stick back toward neutral. And then—

Then his whole being felt empty.

The *Chinook* was not answering. The stick was stuck hard over. His wings were dipped to five o'clock and he could look straight ahead and see the earth which rushed at him.

He was spinning and he could do nothing about it. He had only a few hundred feet to recover and that was not enough. The *Chinook*, that fragile thing of linen and spruce which he had been months in building, was about to smash out his life against the hard earth.

Gliding was dangerous. Yes, he knew that. But he didn't expect that *his* ship, *his Chinook* would hurt him.

In a mounting crescendo, the wind shrilled by the wings. The fabric began to shiver under this great speed.

But it took a long, long time to fall. He had a lot of time. Lots of time.

O'Dowell. That was it. Badger O'Dowell. There were stories about that man. He had once owned a large aircraft factory, but that was gone. He was trying to make a comeback by selling the Navy light training planes powered with small motors.

O'Dowell was doing this to him.

There were ugly things said. In his war days, O'Dowell had worked with the first chutes. After the war O'Dowell had packed another man's parachute and sewn the rip cord with safety wire. When the other man had jumped, his chute never left the bag. That other man had fallen six thousand feet, had fallen free, and had been smashed into a self-dug grave all because O'Dowell . . .

And now the *Chinook* . . .

He hit and did not know that he had hit. His ears rang and he sat feebly up, dizzy and stunned. The wings of the silver *Chinook* were crumpled like paper about him.

Patty and Pop were coming.

Breeze lifted himself up and then remembered his safety belt. He unbuckled it and crawled out, but he could not stand.

"What happened?" yelled Pop.

Patty lifted Breeze to his feet. There was pity in her clear blue eyes.

"I'll . . . I'll build another," said Breeze. "O'Dowell must have jammed an aileron. I'll . . . I'll build another and then we'll show . . ."

Captain Daniels came up and saw that Breeze was not hurt. Captain Daniels looked over the wreck and looked back at his lieutenants who were somewhat envious of Breeze's sudden limelight.



*O'Dowell was doing this to him.*

“Young man,” said Captain Daniels to Breeze, “young man, when you learn how to fly that thing, write me another letter. I like to get away from the office afternoons. Come on, gentlemen.”

Breeze stared after them. His lean jaw set.

One of the lieutenants looked back and smiled at Patty. The other one looked back at the *Chinook*.

“Kid stuff,” somebody said.

“We’ll see,” muttered Breeze.