



Paul Tuntland

*Caudill*

and that black top runway did a mighty efficient job of frying them from below. But they took it. Everyone agreed that he could take it as long as the thermals kept virtually every ship launched up there; and they did! Imagine a national event with 70—odd ships on the line, zipping them *all* up and away by 13:00 or 13:30 and then consistently folding up operations for lack of gliders to work on! By the late middle of the afternoon there were always enough back on the field to put on the daily exhibition for the public—at least a fair try at a show. The fact that nothing but airplane tow was used was a matter for some concern as the plans were formulated, but after the first day's smooth operations the stand-by winches were forgotten. Oh, yes, there were other methods of launching used; horse launchings and two auto-tows made for fun on the big exhibition days. You should have seen John Nowak in the Schweizer 1-19 stagger up behind a couple of Texas' best cow ponies—yes, he whistled that famous canary tune the while. And Steve Bennis gave the folks a thrill by launching behind a car, waiting on the line while it turned around, climbing again as it picked up the slack, and went back on down the runway in the opposite direction!

It is not an overstatement that the Field Operations under Nowak was one of the keystones to the success of the Contest. Many believe that the technique learned about volume and speed of launching by airplane tow exclusively will set the rule henceforth where runways are long enough to permit. They also believe that it would take but little extra effort to handle even a greater number of ships in a like short space of time, granted double runway operation. The fabulous runways at Sheppard of course allowed the tow planes to land with ropes still attached, taxi with them still on to the front of the line, pause a moment while one or two took off, taxi from the grass edge of the runway where they waited to position to be hooked on, and up and around again. Tow-planes caused virtually not a minute's delay. On the average there were from four to six going all the time and of course, the absence of the rope-dropping pattern made for speed and for safety. The big public address system on the operations truck kept things moving—rather John Nowak's highly audible voice kept them moving. Just let a pilot or crew come up to the front and delay as much as a few



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Valette, Jarlaud, designer of the AIR-100, and Marbleu.

seconds! "Take him off!"—and off to the side he went. The system of drawing takeoff order numbers by lot and rotating the sequence starting number daily seemed to be entirely satisfactory to everyone. Confusion was almost non-existent and everyone knew exactly where he stood at all times. Penalties for not being ready were just severe enough, according to most, and in general the starting line was nearly always graced by a group of happy (but tired) boys and girls—which is more than a lot of soaring contests could say!

There were some airplane-towed retrievings. This deal got a little complicated, and all agree that the matter needs some study before putting it into regular use. You see, the one most anxious to get back quick were those who had made abortive starts, landed a mere 40 miles out (mere!) and wanted to get off again while the day was still young. But of course they had usually covered that 40 miles in a part of an hour and there were still launchings going on so it ran into a question of load factor on the tow-plane fleet. Besides it cost money, and there is a strong feeling against letting wealth enter into the formula of winning a contest—that is, after the bills for super-duper ships, radio, special instruments, et al, are paid. At the 14th it was not banned, but it was, shall we say, frowned on.



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