



Prue 160

model business organizations, certain smaller wheels got stuck sometimes, a few never got into motion, but for the most part, the paid staff ground out a tremendous job at a mighty small expense considering the show that was put on. Weak spots showed up even before the curtain went up; the size of the undertaking loomed like a skyscraper against a cottage budget, but the operations didn't suffer. Everything for getting the ships into the air safely and with dispatch was there. The Field Technical Committee, a team of old timers whose judgment couldn't be questioned, was set-up with almost supreme authority to pass on airworthiness of equipment and behavior of contestants. Supreme, that is, in the Contest organization. They of course operated under CAA's CAR( but were empowered to hold even higher standards than that government body. Their word was law. They had to pass on ships and pilot competency before either could go into the air. They needed to exercise their disciplinary powers but very infrequently, happily, but when they did, they got results. This group was purposely kept clear of those in other authority, and embraced those whose personal acquaintance with the pilots was close to none at all. The idea worked.

Radio equipment rightfully takes a top place in contest flying considerations. The splendid and effective system used by Fritz Compton leaves no doubt as to its importance in contests. It is said that only once did Compton land after cross-country (goal or straight-away) that his charming crew—Mrs. Compton—was not out on the field he chose for landing waiting to grab his wing tip! The hours saved for pilot rest can be a determining factor in a gruelling test such as the 14th was. His equipment was of course two-way with his automobile-retrieving crew. He picked the road for it to follow, directed it around traffic impediments, saw to it that it never lost sight of him except while he was in clouds. Herman Stiglmeier had two-way radio, proved it beyond doubt as an important factor in championship soaring. Team flying was done by Herman and Dick Lyons who also had radio. It worked. Actually the thermals were generally so plentiful that team flying was not practiced as widely as many predicted. However, the question of "thermal pointer-outers"—that is, in other than com-



AIR-100



Eon Olympia

peting sailplanes, came in for a brief storm and a hearty laugh. Someone reported an airplane dropping paper out ahead of one of the contestants—"for hire!" It turned out that the airplane was being flown by a soaring pilot who was trying to mark thermals for himself to use in soaring his own puddle-jumper, and could he help it if there was a sailplane near? Some of the myriad gadgets and instruments on Dr. "Gus" Raspet's Kirby Kite might well have benefited many of the pilots.

#### WEAK SPOTS AND SHORTCOMINGS

A considered criticism from within should be in order. For what help it may be, here are some punches in our own direction. There are to be a lot more big Nationals we hope. Let the chips fall where they may.

The budget was quite inadequate. The point award fund was so small that checks actually in their teens went to some of the country's top soaring pilots. And they had put in some mighty high calibre performances, too. The Champion's check was only slightly over a hundred dollars. So many who had counted on some help toward their expenses went away with eight or nine dollars after working their anatomies to a nub putting on the greatest show Soaring in America had ever seen. As one observer put it, "In spite of the fact that they enjoyed good soaring, the only ones who really laid out the dough for the Contest were the guys who *were* the Contest. We wonder if any donors of point award money, trophies, or prizes, or expense money, put up as individuals as much as the apparent average cost per contestant to himself—something like \$700.00, not counting the cost of his equipment."

The trophies were mighty lean. The Governor of Texas should be spared the intimate knowledge of the value of the check given in his name. Texas perhaps needs a little longer to gear for this activity. In all fairness, the 14th was a new thing to the Southwest, but somehow, even the country as a whole wasn't in on the thing from an incentive standpoint. It will always be a mystery why with all the oil oozing from the local sands, not a gallon was offered toward helping a mighty well-proven worthy phase of American aviation, or toward the good will and downright sales-amplifying advertising a little free petrol would have brought its donor. (The Standard Oil Company and the Texas Company were competitors for the honor of donating gasoline for the German Contest before the war.)

The gate was poor. Soaring, at least the version put out by the greatest Contest in American history, didn't pull at Wichita Falls. The exhibitions should have been much better for crowd-pulling. They dragged, but even the best we had left the public cold. True again, the total population in the area was not big. Perhaps not big enough for an event of this size. When a new car had to be offered to get some souls