

PETER Riedel was born on August 24, 1905 at Dehlitz, near Weibenfels, Germany. His interest in aviation was keen from a very early age; when he was only 14 years old, and still a high school student, he built his first airplane, a hang glider. His second glider, the PR-2, he entered in the first Rhoen Soaring Contest in 1920 (at which he was the youngest competitor). This was a modern glider with enclosed cockpit, moveable surfaces and a landing gear. (See accompanying photos.)

In 1923, when he was 19 years old, Peter entered the Rhoen event with a design by Willy Pelzner, the *Simplex*. He obtained his "A" with this glider and made a valiant stab at gaining altitude in it in order to acquire the "B" badge. The method used in this instance was pulling back on the stick at takeoff—and the result was a crash which pretty well destroyed the *Simplex* but left the pilot with no major damage. The most successful glider of this epoch was another Riedel design, the PR-4, with which Peter flew in the 1924 Rhoen competitions. The lesson of the *Simplex* was well learned, for Peter earned his "B" in this ship without crashing and subsequently sold it to the Kassell Gliding School where it put in years of service.

During 1924 and 1925 Mr. Riedel learned power flying at the Sportflug GmbH Magdeburg (a town approximately 100 miles southwest of Berlin, now in East Germany). Until 1932 his time was split between engineering and aircraft construction courses at the Darmstadt Technical High School and the Flight Department of the Rhoen-Rositten-Gesellschaft where he eventually became Chief Flight Instructor.

Riedel was a pioneer at aero towing, making his first tows (with Gunther Groenhoff in the *Fafnir*) in 1930. The pair also demonstrated aero towing throughout Germany and abroad. Peter became International Silver badge pilot number seven on May 19, 1932, when he soared the notably unstable *D-Professor* 165 kilometers from Waku Rhoen. He rebuilt the *Fafnir* following Groenhoff's death in the ship and, in June, 1933, flew it from Darmstadt to Vomecourt, France, thus establishing an unofficial World Distance Record of 228 kilometers. The same year he won the 14th Rhoen Soaring Contest and received the Hindenburg Cup (and a substantial cash prize) as the best German soaring pilot of the year.



When Peter Riedel was very young, and very inexperienced, it was his impression that one could gain height in a glider by pulling back on the stick. The consequence of this folly, the wrecked *Simplex*, is shown above. Peter (behind glider, in dark suit) escaped unhurt. The second Riedel glider, the PR-11, shown below.

