



The coveted Thompson Trophy.

R WAS FOR RACE!

SAGA OF THE GEE BEE R-1 AND R-2 RACERS

BY TIM WEINSCHENKER

in the Gee Bee Model Z. Until that tragic day, everything had been going forward in a positive way despite the dire economic conditions of a Depression-era economy. The investors in SARA had realized a very favorable return on their investment with the Model Z and were ready to provide the necessary resources to the Granvilles to mount an effort in 1932 to retain their Thompson crown. The Granvilles intended to do this but there were

several organizational changes that had taken place within both SARA and the Granville Brothers Aircraft Company that would influence the 1932 efforts.

The make up of the company had changed when the primary designer of the Model Z, Bob Hall, resigned from his role as an engineer in November 1931, before the December 1931 record attempt. Bob was a brilliant engineer who had just grown

tired of disagreements with Grannie and, more likely, the number of payless paydays. Bob would go on to a long and productive career with Grumman Aircraft.

Howell W. "Pete" Miller was hired to take Bob Hall's place. Pete was a fine engineer with a good reputation. He had graduated from New York University with a degree in Aeronautical Engineering. In order to get new racers completed in time for Cleveland in September, along other commercial work Grannie had acquired, about five other engineers were added to the staff. Donald DeLackner and Allen Morse would be



The Granville Aircraft Company built a series of aircraft that bore the famous "Gee Bee" name. The Granville Brothers, led by Zantford "Grannie" Granville, had settled in Springfield, Massachusetts, and there, with the help of financing from the Tait Brothers and others, established an aircraft company with the reputation of building high-performance airplanes. Their early successes in events like the 1930 All American Cirrus Derby, where Lowell Bayles had flown the Gee Bee Model X to a second-place finish, led to the formation of the Springfield Air Racing Association (SARA), which provided the necessary financial resources for the

construction in the summer of 1931 of the Model Z. The success of Bayles and the Model Z in the 1931 National Air Races by winning the Thompson Trophy and other events led to a favorable financial return on investment for SARA. It also led to an ill-fated attempt to break the 3-km speed record in December 1931 at Wayne County Airport in Detroit. The Model Z crashed in spectacular fashion, taking pilot Bayles with it. A sad ending to what had been a very successful year for the Granvilles. This did not deter either SARA or the Granvilles from continuing to chase the prizes offered by air racing in the coming year. This led to a new series of racers that would again

provide trophies and speed records but also tragedy.

NEW YEAR, NEW BEGINNING

The Granville Brothers were probably ready for the start of a new year after the disastrous events of December 1931 when Lowell Bayles had lost his life pursuing the 3-km speed record

The man that mastered the Gee Bee. Jimmy Doolittle, possibly America's greatest pilot, poses with Race 11.

