

PROTOTYPES

"LET'S TAKE THE PLANE-MOBILE!"

DANIEL R. ZUCK HAD A VISION FOR AMERICAN POST-WORLD WAR TWO FAMILIES AND THAT VISION WOULD ENCOMPASS "A PLANE IN EVERY GARAGE!" WE FOLLOW MR. ZUCK'S PLAN TO CREATE A FLYING AUTOMOBILE ALONG WITH THE NUMEROUS PROBLEMS HE ENCOUNTERED

BY ADAM STANTON



Plane-Mobile on the Rosamond Dry Lake near Edwards AFB. It is not known if any serious attempt was made to get the creation into the air.



Surviving specifications indicate the Plane-Mobile had a fuselage/car length of some 16 feet while the wing, when fully spread, spanned 35 feet. When the wing was folded, the contraption would sort of scuttle down the road and, as one spectator put it, the Plane-Mobile "had all the grace of a hermit crab."

While recently spending some time researching through the voluminous *Air Classics* files, I came across some clippings and photographs regarding an enterprising fellow working in 1940s' America and like so many men of his time, he had a dream. Growing up in Pennsylvania during the 1930s, Daniel R. Zuck was a young man besotted with anything and everything to do with aviation. A dedicated reader of the many "pulp" magazines of the time period that catered to those enamored with aviation, young Zuck had a burning desire to somehow make a living in the aeronautical world and to also leave his own personal stamp on aviation.

Zuck got a slot at the Casey Jones School of Aeronautics where he hoped to further his education to such a degree

that he would be able to find full-time employment in the aviation industry. The school, founded in 1932 by WWI pilots Lt. Col. George A. Vaughn, Casey Jones, and aeronautical engineer Lee D. Warrender, was an important stepping stone in the world of aviation education. At the time, numerous such schools were being established that could take students and form them into vital employees for the growing industry. The school started at Newark but was soon lured to LaGuardia Field.

After obtaining his education, Zuck headed to the golden land of California where the aviation industry was booming. He obtained a position at Consolidated Aircraft in San Diego and worked on the PBY Catalina before moving on to light aircraft builder Interstate where he became a project engineer. In 1944, he went to Lockheed under Kelly Johnson and would stay with that firm until he retired — working on an amazing variety of air and space craft.

However, a full-time job in aviation simply was not enough. Zuck and his pals quite often worked on numerous projects during their off-hours and during the Second World War, Zuck began solidifying a dream. That dream involved the construction of a successful flying car. Certainly, the "flying car" concept was not new and it basically could be traced back to the creation of the flying machine. With Zuck, the idea started to become an obsession.

Zuck would write, "Your automobile is a low-flying airplane. Let's take the car off the road and fly where flying is safe — in the wide blue yonder! Since the modern car slavishly imitated the plane in everything except the wings, let's put the wings on it and make it fully functional." Brave words but during the war years Zuck apparently did a lot of thinking on the design concept. Earlier, Waldo Waterman designed and built a car/plane creation called the Arrowbile. It was one of the more successful of such creations in the fact that six were built in conjunction with Studebaker Motors.

The Arrowbile was a pretty dreadful creation but two of them were on display at the 1937 National Air

Staged photo showing Waterman and the Arrowbile pulled over for "speeding."



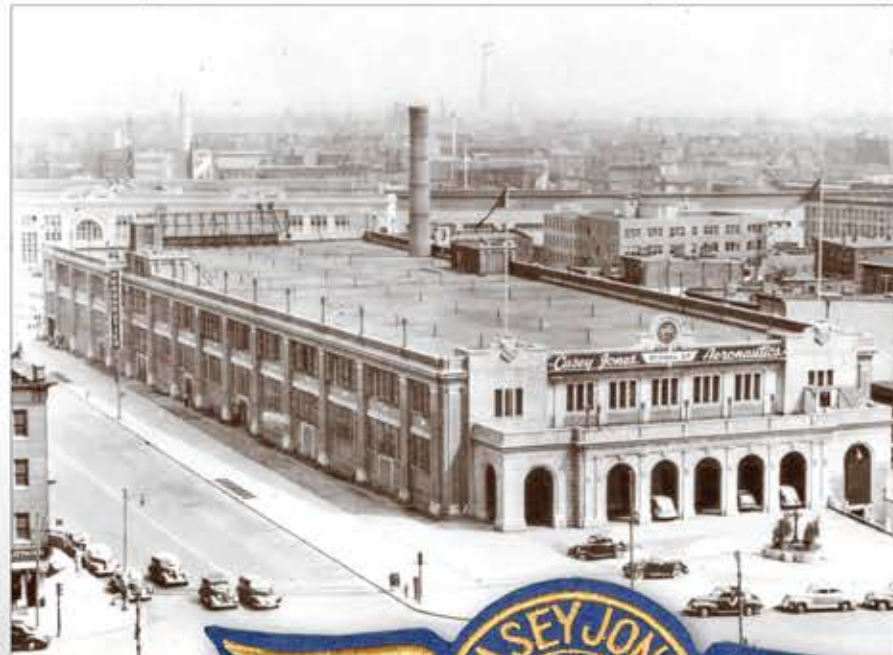
"I BELIEVE THAT THE FLYING AUTOMOBILE IS A DREAM FOREVER DOOMED"

- Waldo Waterman, 1939

Races in Cleveland. One had flown from Clover Field in Santa Monica to Cleveland and the pilot claimed a top speed of 100-mph at an altitude of 6000-ft. Both claims were doubtful and the Arrowbile had a range of just 300 miles, basically like one of today's electric cars. Waterman would later reconsider his design and call it "too much of a compromise." He stated that it simply did not work as a car or as a plane. "I believe that the

flying automobile is a dream forever doomed," wrote Waterman. Zuck should have listened.

This did not slow down Zuck. During the war, he partnered with Stanley D. Whitaker and in their off-hours the men sketched out ideas for a flying car design. They believed that after the war was over, the Free World would become a never-ending market for the flying car. Every returning pilot would desire a flying car, wouldn't they?



Daniel Zuck took his aeronautical training at the Casey Jones School of Aeronautics prior to moving into jobs in the industry.

