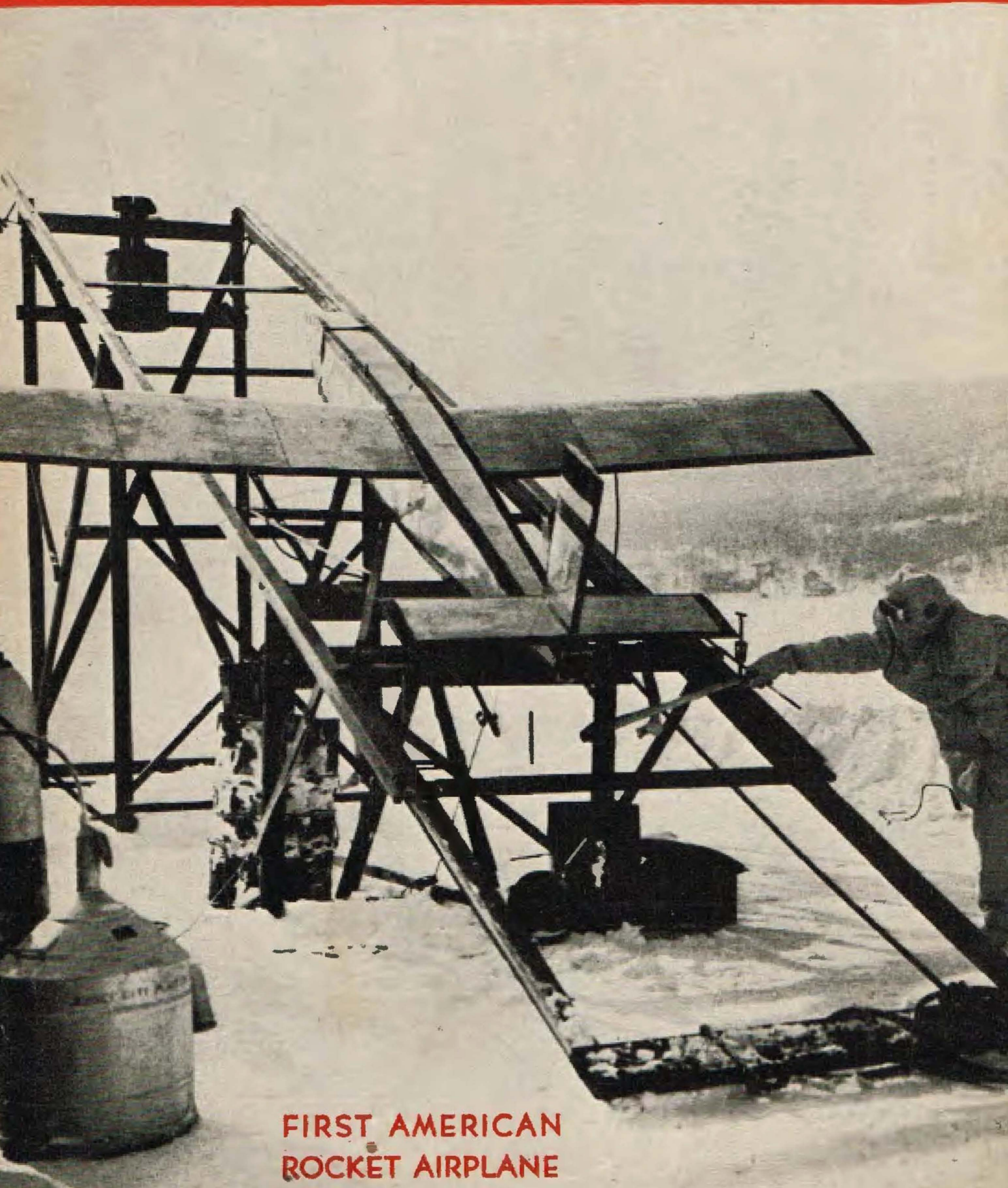


THE FEBRUARY 1936  
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**FIRST AMERICAN  
ROCKET AIRPLANE**



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# Successful Flight of First AMERICAN ROCKET AIRPLANE

THE ATTEMPTED FLIGHT  
OF FEBRUARY 9TH

**B**ECAUSE of a combination of circumstances beyond the control of the sponsor, the first attempted flight of a newly devised rocket airplane, which took place on Sunday afternoon, February 9, at Greenwood Lake, N.Y., was unsuccessful. The 6,148 pieces of mail which had accumulated for the event are being held intact until such time as the mechanism of the ships can be returned to proper order and weather conditions are more favorable.

Although it was clearly evident that all possible preparations for the success of the flight had been made by sponsor F. W. Kessler of New York City, misfortune seemed to scoff at the assured pioneering accomplishment when it was alleged that sabotage had been practiced by one of the trusted engineers in charge and the excessive humidity of the unusual Winter day made loading of the oxygen difficult. Nearly fifty moving picture news reel photographers, radio announcers and mechanics, sound recorders, photographers, representatives of national press associations and report-

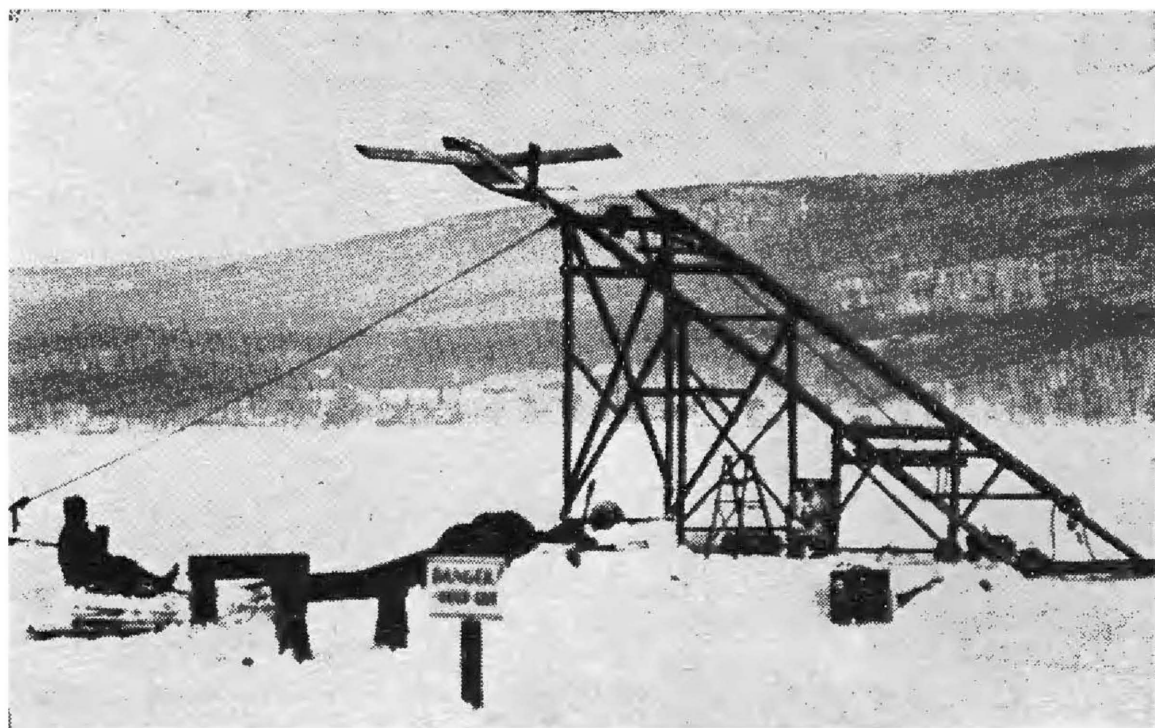
BULLETIN

Two highly successful flights of the rocket airplanes, loaded with the delayed mail, were held at Greenwood Lake, N.Y. on Sunday afternoon, February 23. Both firings definitely proved that Mr. Kessler's newly invented rocket motor was fully capable of propelling the airplane. Chas. P. Graddick, Supt. of Air Mail, was a spectator at the flights and said the planes had remarkable power.

Both rocket planes crossed the state line into New Jersey and the mail was cancelled at the Hewitt postoffice. Covers bear an attractive green rocket stamp with purple cachet. Photo post cards of the rocket airplane have a red stamp with green cachet. Additional details will be given in our next issue.

ers were present in addition to official witnesses and some five hundred spectators. This assemblage afforded evidence of the sound planning of the experiment and the wide publicity given the event.

Work on the plans and construction of the first American rocket airship was



● SECOND FIRING of the rocket airplane at Greenwood Lake, N. Y. The ship left the catapult, but the improperly fused fuel was prematurely spent.



undertaken by experienced designers nearly six months ago. Contrasted from the usual single explosion powder rockets, the new rocket airplane burns fuels such as liquid oxygen and denatured alcohol, giving a continuous propulsion when properly fused and burned in the rocket motor. Combustion chambers give a prolonged forward thrust after the ship is catapulted from the inclined runway through the use of a weight. The fuselage and wings are constructed of light duraluminum, the latter enabling the ship to glide and land on even keel without destruction to the plane or contents, after the propelling force has been expended.

Numerous tests of the rocket motors were run at Greenwood Lake before the actual experiment and definitely proved a pressure development of twenty pounds in excess of that necessary to carry the plane and mail load. The aero-dynamics and plans for the plane itself were executed by recognized scientists of the Guggenheim Foundation and no expense has been spared to make the projectile as mechanically correct as is today humanly possible.

Included in the assemblage of witnesses of the attempted flight of February 9, were Charles P. Graddick, superintendent of air mail service, who was an interested unofficial observer, Captain Tim Healy, of Ivory Soap Stamp Club fame, and his son, Tim, Jr., Bob Trout, who announced the event over a national CBS network, R. A. Barry, Harry M. Konwiser, F. L. Wilson, Ezra Cole, Justin Bachrach, Louis J. Heath, president of the Washington Air Mail Society, Francis B. Leech, president of the American Air Mail Society, L. B. Gatchell, Mr. and Mrs. George W. Angers, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Angers and Mr. and Mrs. Walter J. Conrath.

Shortly before two o'clock, amid the grinding of movie cameras, the quantity of mail was certified, packed in asbestos bags and loaded into the nose of the rocket, poised on the catapult. Daughter of Greenwood Lake's most prominent citizen, pretty little five-year-old, blue-eyed Gloria Schleick christened the rocket airships with a tin cup of native snow. Smilingly assisted by fatherly Captain Tim, they were given the name "Gloria." Following more poses and pictures, mechanics began their efforts at fueling the motor, which were later to prove fruitless.

After a struggle of nearly two hours with the transfer of the liquid oxygen, which solidified in the heavily laden air and allegedly distorted feed lines, the initial attempt was made. Willie Ley, German rocket scientist, dressed in specially designed asbestos suit and helmet, placed a torch to the fuse and withdrew. A thirty-foot column of orange red flame shot from the tail, but



● SPONSOR FRED W. KESSLER loading mail into the nose of the rocket airplane, assisted by official witness Henry Angers.

the ship remained on the runways. The catapult mechanism had not been released by the mechanic in charge. Only the alcohol chamber had been discharged.

The second plane was placed in position, fueled as well as similar circumstances would permit. A bolt of flame shot from the tail. The ship traveled up the catapult and was over the end, but the combustion was spent and the plane glided some thirty feet to the ice, landing without noticeable injury. As darkness was approaching, the attempt was temporarily abandoned until the tubing and other mechanism could be repaired and better weather conditions would certify.

At a dinner held for official witnesses and newspapermen shortly following the experiment, all expressed their confidence that the rocket airplane would negotiate a really successful flight when less severe weather was available in the future. Mr. Kessler announced he appreciated the trust collectors had placed in the experiment by ordering mail and that the letters and cards would not be released until they had been flown on an unquestionably satisfactory flight, which will be the first of its kind in history.