

RACE BETWEEN THE COMET AND THE SILVER FLASH

BY ARTHUR MORGAN LANGWORTHY

EXPERT aerial opinion was divided as to whose model aeroplane was the queen of the Prairieville air. Some held that Frank Williams' Wright model Comet should be awarded the palm, while others maintained that Jim Spencer's Blériot model Silver Flash was entitled to the glory of being the swiftest flier.

When Frank Williams learned of this state of the public's mind he was greatly nettled. He knew that the Comet, proper condition, was equal to the Silver Flash "any old time," and to settle the dispute forever he boldly challenged Jim Spencer, builder and owner of the Silver Flash, to a special match race.

The formal arrangements were conducted with pomp and solemnity, as befitted such an important occasion. The negotiations took place in Frank's aerial workshop down in the balloon park and aerial trial grounds in the cow pasture. The Prairieville Aero club attended in a body and watched the two principals gravely evolve the set of articles governing the contest.

The race was to be run off in ten flights, the aeroplane making the greatest total distance being the winner. When it came to pitching on the proper place to fly Frank had one of his inspirations.

"Such an important sporting event as this should be worth something to look at. Now, if we could only raise a little money for the benefit of the club for it," he suggested.

"But how are you going to make anything pay outdoors when all the fences around the big lots are barbed wire you can see through, and the roads are free," interrupted Jim contemptuously.

"We might get the track," went on Frank, alluding to the large trotting course at the fair grounds. "My dad belongs to the County Fair association and I guess he could get it for us for one day, before the fair opens, ten days from now."

"My father belongs, too," added Ned Wilson, "and mine also," cried Tom Kennedy.

"That's fine. With a 'pull' as big as this we ought to land it, and the track's a bully place to fly in," exclaimed Frank enthusiastically. His idea was quickly adopted. The meeting broke up and the various members went home to enlist their fathers in the plan to secure the track.

The next meeting of the Aero club was not quite so dignified, and most of the pomp had departed. For it developed that the boys' arch enemy, old John Turner, owned a majority of the fair association's stock and he "turned down" the request of the boys' fathers absolutely.

"Guess we'll have to hold the race in the balloon park here and give up charging anything," remarked Frank gloomily, which resolution was finally adopted, the date of the match being made subject to the weather and the anemometer. The anemometer was the club's latest acquisition—a little machine equipped with movable vanes, with cups attached to the ends, that measured the velocity of the wind. You can see just what it's like by looking in the dictionary for its picture.

And then the weather got cranky. It rained for the next few days, and then a strong hot blast set across the prairie that made a race impossible, and some of the oldest inhabitants began to keep a fatherly eye on their cyclone cellars, as it rolled blinding dust clouds over the plains. But nothing serious happened, though the anemometer registered some high marks. And what with Frank going to the city to visit his cousin Joe for a week end, nearly ten days elapsed before the great match was flown.

Everybody who was not helping to get exhibits ready for the county fair came to the balloon park that eventful afternoon. Ned Wilson acted as referee, and when he blew his whistle at 2 p. m. both rivals lined up at one end of the 36 foot starting platform of smooth boards laid at the edge of the field.

As both model aeroplanes had wheel bases they started themselves. They were set side by side at the starting point and their wound up propellers released at the same time. This caused them to glide along the smooth runway on their wheel bases until the propellers had speeded up fast enough to make the machines leave the ground and "take the air," with the cheering crowd after them.

While the efficient Aero club police force shoved the crowd back the official



Their Wound Up Propellers Were Released at the Same Time

measurer performed his duty. The result left no doubt that both airships had been brought to the limit of perfection. The Silver Flash was found to have made a scant two feet more than the Comet and took the honors for the first flight with 212 feet 1 inch.

The second flight reversed the standing, the Comet going to the front with a few feet lead. Flight No. 3, an unusually long one, brought the two aerial fliers "wing and wing" to the end of the field. As it had been agreed that the trial was to be straightaway instead of turning back down the other side of the balloon park the two rivals flew over the fence on flight No. 4 down the road that ran near the field.

So perfectly were the two aeroplanes handled that but a few feet separated them when the referee whistled for flight No. 5. It happened that Jim's machine had lit in the middle of the road in landing from the previous flight, while the Comet had come down in the grassy footpath. Now, according to the rules the machine must be started on the next flight from the exact spot where it lit at the end of the previous flight.

Jim wound up the single propeller the 110 revolutions to give its connecting rubber band motor the proper tautness, walked over to the spot marked by the official measurer in the center of the road and was about to release the propeller when a team appeared around a little curve ahead of him.

The clump of tall bushes growing along the curve hid the team's approach, and when the boys saw whose it was they all let out a surprised yell, which startled the big farm horses, already trotting at a smart pace down the slight grade. Old man Turner handled the reins and he was engaged in a very important proceeding—escorting his famous blue ribbon sow Empress and her seven young shoats over to the fair. The boys could see Empress' large pink nose sticking out over the side of the straw bedded farm wagon, and a chorus of derisive grunts followed up their yells.

And at that nothing would have happened if Jim Spencer had stepped out of the road as he should have done.

"Don't let 'er go! You'll scare the horses!" cried Frank warningly as he saw what Jim was about to do.

"Serve him right, the old kill-joy!" answered Jim, whose mischievous spirit was now fully aroused, and before Frank could stop him he launched the Silver Flash into the air almost in the faces of the approaching horses.

The whirring of the rising air craft's propeller was drowned by the frightened whinnies of the maddened horses. They reared in the air, then swerved violently to the right and bolted!

The heavy wagon wheels struck a big boulder by the roadside and catapulted old Turner right off his seat upon the soft turf, while the spectators stood paralyzed at this sudden disaster.

Turner scrambled to his feet unhurt and started after the runaway team, as did everybody else, although you may be sure the boys were mighty careful not to get within reach of the infuriated old farmer, whose pigs were the pride of his life.

And things looked tough for the Empress and her royal family, for the team traveled faster every minute as the grade increased. Turner groaned as he saw the flying horses approach the creek road and Frank heard the old man pant to himself, "That's what I get for not lettin' them young whelps have the track. It's all up with Emphy if they take the creek road."

Emphy was Turner's pet name for his illustrious pig, and a cry of horror rose from him when the team promptly turned into the creek road. Thence on it was downhill to the ford at Dutch creek, an ordinarily shallow stream knee deep, but now swollen by the unusual rainfall and annual summer freshet from the melting snows of the distant mountains.

"They'll drown! It's too deep to ford!" wailed the old man as the team approached the creek on a dead run, with the chasing crowd not far behind. Frank overheard Turner's cry of grief, and the boy's quick brain grasped a brand new idea.

Splash! The horses struck the water, dragging the wagonload of squealing freight in after them. A few feet from the water's edge they went over

their heads and began to swim, while the water poured into the cracks in the wagon box and the squeals echoed with the combined protests of those blue blooded porkers as the water rose.

The crowd reached the bank as the first pigs were washed out of the wagon. And then Frank proceeded to carry out his new idea. He turned to the old man, who was helplessly bewailing his loss, and spoke a few words. Turner looked at him in wonder—and then nodded. Frank called the boys around him and said:

"If those pigs have to swim any distance they'll cut their own throats with their sharp forehoofs! We're all good swimmers. Some of you chaps go after the shoats, while Jim, Ned and Gregg try to keep Empress from going overboard from the wagon body. Tom, you and I'll steer the horses ashore. Come on, now! Take my word, there's a mighty good reason, if you don't like Turner," and he pulled the club to one side while he whispered something to them.

No turning back after that! Frank dove into the creek, clothes and all, and struck out for the struggling horses. The others followed him, and the struggling piglets were all easily rescued before they'd harmed themselves. The "royal life savers" also managed to keep Empress from throwing her huge bulk out of the water filled wagon body, which still floated however. And finally Frank and Tom managed to steer the swimming horses back to shore, where they scrambled up on the bank. They came to a trembling halt, with the wet and squealing Empress still in the wagon behind them. Eight pigs, two horses and one wagon were thus restored to old man Turner, all safe and sound, and not a bit worse for their unexpected bath.

Frank now dispatched Bill to Turner's farm for another wagon and then the two rival fliers and the "gallery" that had witnessed these tremendous events walked back to the scene of the race. When the official measurer had procured the figures of that momentous fifth flight of Jim's Frank proceeded to take his own fifth flight.

Then he consulted earnestly with Jim and the other members, and turned to the "gallery" while he announced:

"The first section of the great match race has now been flown. The Silver Flash leads, with a total for the five flights of 1,161 feet 4 inches. The Comet has flown 1,148 feet flat." (Cheers at the announcement, which suddenly change to great cries of disappointment as Frank continues.) "I also wish to announce that the second section of the great match, which includes the remaining five flights, will be run off tomorrow at 2:30 p. m., at the County Fair trotting track. Admission, five cents."

That was three days before the fair opened and it would not interfere with the fair preparations, anyway, as the track had a direct entrance from the outside.

"Don't you worry," said Frank afterward. "Old Turner'll keep his word. Well, if he don't we'll only have to fly it off in the old place. I'm sure some of us would have tried to save the pigs, anyhow. I know I would, but it just struck me he might 'fall' for a bargain to save 'em—and it worked!"

You'll be glad to know that Turner did keep his word, the "second section" was flown at the track, and that \$11.65 was taken in at the gate for the benefit of the Aero club.

And who finally won? Why, the Comet, of course, but not until the last flight, when she succeeded in distancing her rival by just three feet.

AN OLD HUNGARIAN TALE

Once upon a time the creatures living with a farmer grew tired of serving him, and one and all deserted him. Cow and horse, cock and hen, duck and goose, left his dwelling. Only the dog remained behind, faithful to his master.

They wandered about all day long in company and when night came, finding a deserted hut in the forest, they entered in and took possession of it.

The cat laid herself down in the still warm ashes on the hearth. Horse and cow stretched themselves out on some loose straw in one corner. The duck waddled under a bench, the goose under a table, the hen flew up on top of a cupboard, the cock on the chimney piece. Just as they had comfortably settled themselves for the night a pack of wolves came prowling about the hut, and sent the oldest and strongest one among them into it to see who it was who had taken possession there.

When the wolf came in at the door he saw the cat's eyes glowing in the dark and took them for live coals on the hearth. But when he came up closer the cat flew at him, nearly scratching his eyes out. The horse got up from the straw and gave him a kick in the ribs. And when the wolf turned to flee from the hut the cow butted him

against the wall with her horns. The hen sprang, clucking loudly, on his back, while the duck and goose nipped his legs with their bills, and just as he, frightened and bewildered with the reception he had got, managed to escape out of the door, the cock on the chimney piece burst out with loud, jubilant crowing. Master Wolf came back to his comrades in a very sad plight.

"That was a nice task you gave me," he said reproachfully. "The hut is tenanted by witches. When I came in and went up to the hearth, where I saw some coals burning, the vixen of a cook flew at me and nearly scratched my eyes out, the groom got up from the corner where he had been lying and almost broke my ribs with a blow of his flail, while the farmer himself, seizing a pitchfork, thrust me rudely against the wall. His wife struck me on the back with her distaff, and two of her maids, crying 'Back, back,' stuck me again and again in the legs with their shears. And just as I was fleeing from the house, another maid, from a room under the roof, cried out in a terrible voice, 'Bring him to me—to me.'"

On hearing this tale of their scout the whole pack of wolves took to their heels and ran off as fast as they could.