

# THE 1952 ECONOMY RUN

**A**FTER THEIR EXCELLENT performance in 1951, Caltech engineering students were again offered the privilege of being deputized official American Automobile Association Contest Board Observers for the 1952 Mobilgas Economy Run. The purpose of the Run is to provide an impartial, practical test of 1952 model automobiles under all kinds of driving conditions. It is sponsored by the General Petroleum Corporation, and sanctioned by the Contest Board of the AAA.

An AAA observer must accompany each contest car from the time it is arbitrarily selected from the manufacturer's assembly line, broken in (2000 miles maximum), and driven in the official run. During this time the observer is responsible for the automobile's stock status, for preventing additives or special petroleum products from being used, and for seeing that normal and legal driving techniques are used. Caltech engineering students are selected for this job because they are impartial, have a technical background, and seriously believe in the honor system.

Over a hundred students rushed to sign up for the 1952 Run, and Dr. Peter Kyropoulos, Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering, who supervises this activity, appointed Craig Marks, M.E. graduate student, to assist him in the organizational task. The thirty observers used on the final run were chosen from the original applicants on the basis of performance demonstrated during the break-in runs, experience (some were in last year's run), and ability to spare the necessary time.

The 1952 Run covered 1415.4 miles, from Los Angeles to Sun Valley. The first contest car made its official start from Los Angeles at 3 A.M. Monday morning, April 14. The other cars followed at two-minute intervals. The caravan headed toward Pomona on Highway 99, passed through Palm Springs about 6 A.M. and went on to Blythe, the first official refueling station. At Blythe the local high school band, with majorettes and cheer leaders, was on hand to give the contestants a first-class welcome. After refueling, the procession crossed the Colorado River into Arizona and proceeded through Prescott to Williams, the second refueling station, and on to the Grand Canyon, the first overnight stop. Total elapsed time allowed from Los Angeles to the Grand Canyon was 12 hours and 53 minutes, which most of the entrants used to full advantage.

The second day of the Run started at 1 A.M. Tuesday morning for the observers. Car assignments were made after breakfast and preparations were made for the 3 A.M. start. The second day's journey skirted the south rim of the Grand Canyon to Cameron, and headed north to the Marble Canyon refueling station. From Marble Canyon the motorcade proceeded up to the 8010-foot

elevation of Jacob's Lake and down into Utah and Zion National Park, where there was a stopover for brunch.

From Zion the Run continued to Beaver, Utah, a refueling station, and on to Salt Lake City, where the cars were impounded on the grounds of the State Capitol for the second overnight stop. Elapsed time from the Grand Canyon on this leg of the trip was 14 hours. The observers refueled on steak dinners and hit the sack.

At 5:30 A.M. Wednesday morning activity began for the final leg of the Run. Observers were assigned and the first car started at 7:00 A.M. The route from Salt Lake City was through Ogden, across the Idaho border to Twin Falls for refueling, and then to Sun Valley. Elapsed time for this leg was 8 hours and 7 minutes, making a total elapsed time of 35 hours for the run, an average speed of 40.5 miles per hour for 1415.4 miles.

At Sun Valley the contest cars were leveled and their gas tanks filled to determine total fuel consumption for the Run. Results were computed on the basis of ton miles per gallon—or total weight of the automobile, plus payload in tons, times 1415.4 miles, divided by total fuel consumption in gallons. The sweepstakes winner was a Mercury Monterey driven by Bill Stroppe for a performance of 59.7 ton miles per gallon, or 25.4 miles per gallon. In addition, there were nine price-class winners and two special lightweight class winners.

After final refueling the observers were finished with their official duties on the Run. Wednesday evening and all day Thursday were spent sightseeing, skiing, swimming and generally having a good time. The General Petroleum Corporation generously provided the meals, the ski lift, and a banquet. Each observer received fifty dollars plus expenses for the official Run and additional salary for break-in activity.

On Friday the Techmen boarded a Pullman car for a 30-hour return trip to Los Angeles on—it was generally agreed—the slowest train in existence.

Dr. Peter Kyropoulos deserves a great deal of credit for his excellent organization of observers' activities during the Run. As a token of appreciation Kyo's charges presented him with a plaid sport shirt for his square dance appearances. The observers' performance was highly complimented by the entrants, the AAA, and General Petroleum. And Clarence Beesemeyer, Executive Vice President of General Petroleum, was so moved by Kyo's candid phraseology in his observers' instructions that he quoted from them during the awards ceremony.

All in all the Economy Run shapes up as such a stimulating activity for Caltech students that there seems no reason why Kyo shouldn't have half the student body on his application list for 1953.

—Bill Wright '51