

Ike, Mike and Pete

The most famous triplets in the history of American air racing were the trio of low wing, inline engined planes created and flown by Benjamin O. "Benny" Howard. First of these was the sleek and beautiful "Pete" in which Benny won five firsts at the National Air Races in Chicago, 1930 ("Pete" is shown below as it appeared at Chicago on 23 August 1930 and with Benny Howard beside the cockpit), with a closed course high speed of 163.01 miles per hour, and placed third in the Thompson Trophy Race. The next year, at the Nationals, "Pete" scored three seconds and two thirds, and it was clear that competition was catching up with the Gypsy-engined plane.

For the 1932 National Air Races, Benny came up with two nearly identical (except for the landing gear) racers, the Menasco powered "Mike" and "Ike". He won two firsts and a second to "Ike", William Ong flew to seventh in the Thompson (at 191.073 mph) and Gladys O'Donnell won the women's Aerol Trophy Race in "Ike". "Mike" had a second, a fourth and a fifth with a best closed course speed of 172.680 mph. At the 1933 Nationals, "Mike" came into its own with Roy Minor as pilot winning four firsts, two seconds and two thirds (one in the Thompson at 199.87 mph). "Pete" last appeared at the Nationals in 1935, "Mike" in 1936 and "Ike" in 1937.





Above, "Mike", Howard DGA-4, NR55Y, 38, is seen on 30 June 1933 prior to the National Air Races with small, painted wheels. Benny Howard is in the cockpit with wife, Maxine, standing beside the plane. Below, "Ike", Howard DGA-5, NR56Y, 39, ready for its first race at Cleveland, 31 August 1932, and equipped with unique, tandem wheels.

