

## THE SAGA OF THE ROARING ROAD

The more one learns of Eddie's boyhood, the more one wonders at his continued tireless energy and uncurbed ambition.

Like a typical Horatio Alger hero, Eddie quit school at the age of 12 to take care of the mother he idolized and one younger sister. His Dad had just died, and the family finances were at low ebb. True, he had an older brother, but he felt that the responsibility of the family rested upon his shoulders, and he bore his burden without realizing it was such.

The day after his father's funeral, he was at work in the hottest part of a Columbus, Ohio, glass concern's factory, carrying bottles from the fiery furnaces to the cooling tables twelve hours a night for \$3.50 per week.

Leaving the glass plant at 3 o'clock one morning, he trudged weary blocks to a Columbus foundry, and when he applied for a new job, he was told to take off his coat and go to work making cores at \$1.00 a day. He had toiled for twelve hours, and was sleepy and dead tired, but the youngster was the same Rickenbacker who later jockeyed in the air against a German plane until he forced it to turn and fly, although his own machine gun was jammed and he was really as harmless to an enemy as a mosquito. The Rickenbacker spirit that was later to make him a world-acclaimed hero carried him through the balance of the night and morning in the foundry. He was earning \$6.00 per week instead of \$3.50.

He was doing it for his mother! The passing of his other parent had converted this 12-year-old into a man, and all he asked was that he be permitted to do a man's work!

Burning within Eddie at this time was a desire to become an artist. After leaving the classroom, he kept

## THE SAGA OF THE ROARING ROAD

up his art studies and worked all the harder, hopeful that some day he could join a drawing class. Just as this dream was fulfilled he found an opportunity for the first time as a workman to link liking and labor. A monument works offered him a dollar a day to carve letters and designs in marble—a wage that was soon boosted to \$1.50.

Above his father's grave in a Columbus cemetery there stands a monument carved and lettered by Eddie, and there is nothing he has ever done of which he is prouder.

It was a conversation he overheard between his mother and his employer that suddenly shifted him out of monument making.

"Marble dust in the lungs—it gets them all," said his boss. "All marble cutters get consumption. I hate to see your boy go that way!"

Nor was he going to see himself go that way. Eddie couldn't bear to think of his mother without his shoulder to lean upon!

He was then 15, and shortly before had witnessed a sight that had inspired him. He had watched an automobile race, thrilled as he had never before been thrilled.

He took the path to the automobile industry while he was still putting in twelve hours daily at the monument works, he signed up for a correspondence course in mechanical engineering, specializing in automotive work.

Eddie tried time and time again without success to get into the shop of Lee Frayer, manufacturer of an air-cooled motor car. They were not taking on any more help, Frayer always told him.

"But, I'm working here," Eddie announced one day.