



The diesel version of the OS 40 SF ABC. Three were made by the late Mick Male. Model Engines photo.

come, and we decked ourselves out in warm clothing, balaclavas and ski goggles, and Peter cranked up the diesel and signalled release. Peter was pretty tense, and over-ruddered the take-off, causing the model to get into the soft shoulder of the road, so he cut the motor. The next time the take-off was OK but, for some reason, Peter allowed the model to get too far away, and lost orientation. The model was seen to splutter a long way away, and the next hour was spent locating it.

Number two model was assembled, the fuelling and weighing process was gone through again, and all was ready for the second attempt. The OS 40 fired up, and final adjustments were made. After a good take-off and 3 or 4 circuits to trim out and gain height, we clambered aboard the F150 and, as the model came abreast of us, the journey began.

It took about 10 km to settle down and work out the best station for the model in relation to the ute. This was at an altitude of about 50 metres, just slightly ahead of the ute and approximately 120 metres to our right.

So there we were, Peter and I in the back of the ute, decked out like two terrorists, with Mike behind the wheel and John Weston next to him as one of the observers. Hooked on behind the ute was our tandem trailer full of food and camping gear. Next in line was a Ford Fairlane, driven by John Bentley, which was towing our model trailer, loaned by Ian Watts, and behind it again was a Holden, occupied by Brian and Lois Berg, towing a campervan, while flitting between us all was Johnno McGrane in a Falcon wagon. It reminded me of an army convoy, with Johnno as the Dispatch driver. We settled down and prepared ourselves for the long haul, during which concentration was the key word.

COMPANY IN THE AIR

We were about 90 minutes into the flight when Mike called us on the communication system we had set up from the cabin to the back of the ute to let us know that there were two wedgetail eagles just up ahead. We soon had them in sight, and as they were well above the model we stayed on course, but as the model flew under them one of them folded its wings back and dived down, putting itself right on the tail of the model. It was obvious that it was finding it hard to match our speed, but it hung in there for about 30 seconds and then, either because it had decided that we were no threat, or because we flew out of its territory, it peeled off and rejoined its mate. It was certainly a wonderful sight to see this majestic bird protecting

its partner and their hunting area.

The next 100 km or so must have been good hunting grounds for the big birds because the same thing happened on another four occasions. Thankfully no contact was made between the model and the birds.

ON THE ROAD

Those who have travelled across the Nullarbor will recall the road trains that one meets during the trip. These large semi trailers with high loads towing equally large trailers are a common sight, but sitting in the back of a ute controlling a model, the first one we met came as a bit of a shock. Although Mike had warned us of its approach, it still unnerved us. It actually blanketed out the model for a couple of seconds. To overcome this, Mike would give us a 30 second call before the arrival of any road train and we would gain height and have the model almost directly above us.

NATURE CALLS

Obviously the time came for a comfort stop so, pulling up at what seemed to be a good spot, we would put the model into a circuit pattern, and various bodies were seen scurrying for what meagre cover was available. Such a stop used up only 3 or 4 minutes so did little to hamper our efforts.

THE WEATHER AND ROAD CONDITIONS

If some authority had asked us to write down what we would have liked in the way of weather and what type of road would suit us best, we would have said: a fine mild day with the temperature reaching 26 degrees, a high cloud



John Weston checks the fuelled model for correct weight.