

The deHavilland DHC2 Mk. III Turbo-Beaver C-FMPA

by Insp. J.M. Van Norman (retired)
Kamloops, British Columbia

Before ceasing production in 1961, 1,691 Beaver light utility transports were built, the first flying in 1947. Carrying either seven passengers or freight, the Beaver proved capable of operating in very rough, remote areas and could be fitted with floats, wheel/skis or amphibious floats.

In 1961, the original Pratt & Whitney "Wasp" engine, which produced 450 horsepower, was replaced with the lighter and more powerful Pratt & Whitney PT6-A Turbine engine, which produced 550 horsepower. The fuselage was extended, the tailplane modified and the aircraft was given the designation DHC2 Mk. III "Turbo-Beaver" — 60 of which were produced — carrying Serial Numbers from 1661 to 1691. The fact that 55 of the 60 Turbo-Beavers are still in service attests to the durability and reliability of this rugged little aircraft.

The RCMP's "Air" Division acquired Serial No. 1685 (TB53) and registered it as C-FMPA, taking delivery on January 31, 1968. This was the first turbine-powered, bush-utility aircraft used by the Force. After a brief stop at "Air" Division Headquarters, in Ottawa, to install a police radio and a compulsory paint job, it was posted to Peace River, Alberta.

The first crew on the Turbo-Beaver was S/Sgt. John Demerez (pilot) and S/Cst. Don McNab (engineer) who became, in a sense, pioneers in the operation of turbine-powered,

bush-utility aircraft for the Force. Operating procedures developed by this team would later be applied to the operation of Twin Otters.

During its service in Peace River, C-FMPA became a familiar sight in Alberta skies. It was used to transport prisoners, investigators and inspection teams as well as carry out aerial surveillance, searches and medi-vacs, and a wide variety of other police-oriented functions. It also rendered assistance in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. Using "high-floatation" tires, it was capable of operating out of unprepared strips, providing police service to remote native settlements such as Wabasca, Janvier, Jean D'Or Prairie and Fox Lake. It was used in the apprehension of a murderer along the Alaska Highway as well as numerous occasions locating lost trappers and hunters.

This Turbo-Beaver remained in Peace River until it was replaced with a DHC6 Twin Otter in 1982. C-FMPA was then posted to Calgary "Air" Section, until the Section's closure in 1993, at which time it became a relief aircraft based at Air Services (West) in Edmonton, Alberta. Its last operational posting was Prince Rupert, British Columbia, where it filled in for the retired Grumman Goose. Two other Turbo-Beavers were acquired by the Force and posted to British Columbia, at Kamloops and Prince George, respectively.

C-FMPA, the last (and first) Turbo-Beaver to