

FEATURE PAGE

Flying With the N.B. Aerial Forest Patrol

by W. E. JARRATT.

This summer saw the innovation in New Brunswick of the full time use of aircraft in the detection and control of forest fires. The idea of the use of aircraft in combating the menace of forest fires is, of course, not new. Other provinces have maintained provincial air services in previous years and the New Brunswick Government has employed aircraft on a part time basis in the past but this was the first year that regular patrols were carried out. The writer was fortunate in being employed as a pilot on the aerial patrols and spent a most interesting and profitable summer in this capacity.

Since this was a new venture, everything had to be organized almost from the ground up. No pun intended! A great deal had to be learned by the pilots and radio operators all of whom were suffering from hangovers of habits learned in the Air Force. The rules and regulations of Civil Aviation and Radio are very strict and are enforced by Government Inspectors. But, after a few fumbles, we got ourselves organized and settled down to the serious business of patrolling the forests.

Three aircraft were used for the patrols; two light landplanes and one amphibian. The aircraft were equipped with two-way radio and three radio stations were maintained at widely separated places in the province. Thus, no matter where an aircraft might happen to be, it was always able to contact at least one of the ground stations. Besides giving satisfactory service, this was most comforting from the pilot's point of view for, despite the gloomy forecasts that our forests are rapidly disappearing, there are still large areas of the province where a forced landing could be extremely hazardous.

The primary purpose of the aircraft was, of course, to spot fires before they attained major proportions. The whole province is generously sprinkled with fire towers and under normal conditions, the alert tower men are able to detect outbreaks that may occur. But the towers are, of course, static and depend on the weather for their visibility range. There are many days during the summer when the visibility becomes extremely hampered by haze, mist, etc. It is under such conditions that the aircraft prove to be very effective, being able to cover large areas that are blind to the fire towers. Therefore, after any serious electrical storms, special patrols were made by the aircraft over the paths travelled by the storms. This was not difficult because the storms generally travel from west to east and follow the valleys of our larger rivers. A study of the map of New Brunswick, will show that our larger rivers flow from west to east. A case in point may prove to be interesting.

A few days after a series of severe electrical storms, a patrol was carried out north of the Renous River. Two fires were located in dense woods which were so small, a close watch had to be kept on them or else they were lost from sight as the aircraft circled. The fire towers, of course, were not able to see these fires and, had not been detected,

they might have attained serious proportions before being discovered.

Although the primary purpose of the aircraft was to detect fires, they also played an important role in aiding and directing fire fighters in bringing a fire under control. Anyone who has fought a major fire knows of the confusion and lack of reliable information regarding the extent and location of the fire. From the air, the boundaries of a fire can be accurately mapped and, most important of all, the location of roads and streams relative to the fire can be pinpointed. This information, when passed on to the foresters, enables them to direct their men and equipment to the places where it will be most effective. The value of the aircraft in this respect can hardly be over-stressed.

After the initial novelty of the patrols had worn off, they became dull routine broken only now and then by the satisfaction of spotting a fire or of patrolling one which had already started. A forest fire seen from the air is a never-to-be-forgotten sight although its spectacularity is superseded by the pity of seeing acres of valuable forest going up in flames.

Navigation did not present any great difficulty. Careful map reading was used for the most part although, dead-reckoning was sometimes used in bad weather. It is still possible to fly 150 miles across New Brunswick without seeing a house and, although we carried accurate maps, there are numerous small lakes and rivers which were not marked. However, after a few trips over the province, the lakes and rivers became familiar landmarks and the country became as well known as the proverbial "palm of the hand."

One difficulty encountered in this respect was the accurate pin-pointing of small fires. The maps used were the regular air navigation eight miles to the inch charts. Since a pencil point on this scale might cover a couple of acres, it can be easily seen that an accurate pin-point of small bush fires could not be obtained. Anyone who has flown light aircraft knows that it is not practical to carry a stack of large scale maps. The cockpit soon becomes cluttered with a sea of paper and the right map can never be found when it is needed most. The problem might be solved by dividing the province into areas and carrying large scale maps of that area alone. Indexed catalogues of aerial photographs of each area might also be used. This was only one of the small problems that were encountered but none presents any difficulty which cannot be overcome.

The scope of the use of aircraft in forestry patrols is widening year by year. Paratroopers are now used in some parts of the country. They are dropped directly over the scene of fires and are equipped to combat it on the spot. Valuable time is thus saved which might make the difference between a fire becoming a disaster or merely a nuisance. The new field of creating artificial rain by means of dry ice may prove to be a most effective aid not only in fighting fires but also in reducing the fire hazard of drought dry forests. Ex-

PAINLESS PORTRAITS FOR POSTERITY

Sidney Carlson was a piker, I thought as I trudged the million paces betwixt University Avenue and Hut 4 Alexander College. Neither the rain nor the taxi which ruined a two buck dry cleaning job swerved me from my purpose. I had seen enough of Brunswickan editorials and screaming posters accusing me of (a) Varsity failure at rugby; (b) the fall of the F. C. M. (Free Canadian Movement) and (c) the export of cerebellums to Patagonia. Enough was enough. Nobody could accuse me of being a coward. I WOULD have my photo taken for the Year Book despite the fact that Karsh is still in Ottawa.

Much to my surprise, I found the photographic hut exactly where the posters had told me that I would find it, Hut 4 Alexander. With my hand on the door knob, I found myself undecided whether to knock or walk in. The door was suddenly opened by some Tarzan leaving in a hurry and I entered. . . . Recovering from my auspicious entrance I found myself confronted by a beaming co-ed stenog. "Hi, Frosh," she greeted me, "What's the word from Glocca Morra? And before you ask me, no, I don't think that I should be in pictures." I remembered the hurried exit of Tarzan and hastily swallowed the question which was popping up in my throat. My name and other pertinent details were painlessly extracted from me and I was directed along the next step of the photo assembly line.

I entered another room where I was immediately seized, parked in front of a camera and decorated with a hood and gown. "Held it" somebody cried, "That's no sensor. He's got a haircut and a clean shirt." After the hood had been removed and brushed off. . . . with a little too much care I thought. . . .

periments are also being carried out with the dropping of various aerial bombs on fires and the use of ultrared rays in detecting fires is being investigated.

However, despite all the elaborate precautions which are being taken and the new equipment which is being developed, the only real answer to the problem of forest fires lies in their prevention. Pleas, warnings, fire prevention weeks etc., seem to do little good. Year after year fires continue to take their toll of our most valuable asset and, outside of the occasional newspaper editorial, the public seems to be quite apathetic to the situation. New and vigorous steps must be taken to eradicate the chief cause of fires, man's carelessness. The youth in our High Schools, who will some day follow their fathers into the woods either for sport or livelihood, should be given lectures and practical demonstration by foresters on the selection of camp sites and the building and care of fires, it is not unreasonable to suggest that some sort of leak proof water container be carried by everyone entering the woods in which cigarettes and matches could be safely extinguished. They could be issued along with hunting and fishing licenses or by lumber camp operators to their employees. Fines could be levied for failure to carry them.

It takes 20 years to grow a tree and about 20 minutes to reduce it to ashes. Simple arithmetic shows us that, unless drastic steps are taken, our fabulous forests may some day be, like our once fabulous buffalo herds, only a memory.

The Mighty Minority

BY BETTY MacDONALD

Once upon a time there was an Indian Princess who lived far away from "white" people. Her tribe was very civilized however and they had some knowledge of the outside world. Their Princess sometimes felt a little disgusted when her tribe had their ceremonial dances; she felt that they were too wild and noisy and she began to wish she could visit the "white" people so that she could prove to herself and her Indians that they should change their way of life.

She pondered the matter for several weeks and at last decided to visit "civilization." After a long, long journey she came at last to the outskirts of a small city. As she wondered what she should do next, a wagon full of screaming characters, clad in strange garb went rattling past her. One of these characters,

seeing her dressed as she was, called out to her to jump on. Curiosity compelled her to do so and as the wagon jolted along the street more wild looking hilarious people were picked up. Finally, the wagon arrived in front of a red building, everyone jumped out and the princess followed suit. Inside the building she saw more strange looking humans, capering around the floor and acting very strangely. The Princess saw that some had their food pinned on them; she wondered if there was a famine in the city because these people were constantly snatching vegetables, etc. from one another.

The Princess watched the proceedings for quite some time, then puzzled she left the building and the city and began her journey home, resolved that "civilization" was not so civilized after all.

After

By FRED COGSWELL

With the sun's kiss to warm
My body there
And the wind's cool charm
To finger my hair,

Still shall I lie
And covet no lass—
Sky-loved, when I
Am sand and grass.

But, all kidding aside chums, why not get down to Alex. when your turn comes up? Remember, it costs you nothing but your time to be enshrined for posterity. You can show it to your grandchildren. What if you don't have any grandchildren? That's your problem, chum, not mine. . . .

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