



Memorial Cairn on rugged mountainside overlooking Skaha Lake.

Cairn Commemorates Death of Three Members of the RCMP in Plane Crash

THE early morning mists were dissipated by the warmth of a rising sun as day broke over Penticton in the rich and fertile fruit belt of the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia. It brought relief from fear into hundreds of Valley homes, its impartial warmth was felt by a desperate and hunted man and by members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who had spent a watchful night awaiting the dawn. It touched on a small clearing near Kaleden, where a young woman had died violently. It stirred the leaves of apple trees near Summerland, and warmed the dust on a lonely road where a corporal of the RCMP had been seriously wounded while questioning a man.

The day was Aug. 6, 1958. At high noon a light aircraft skimmed lightly over the waters of Skaha Lake, south of Penticton and became airborne. At the controls, veteran pilot S/Sgt. S. S. Rothwell, accompanied by engineer Spl. Cst. J. E. R. Cormier and guide Cst. R. W. Green of Penticton Detachment. The flight was routine and its primary function was to assist the land forces in locating the wanted man, John Morrison, who

was at large somewhere in the Valley. It was destined to be the last flight of Beaver Aircraft CF-FHW, for at 12.45 p.m. it crashed and burned on a mountainside six miles south of Penticton. What began as a routine patrol, ended as a rendezvous with death. The tragic accident gave added impetus to the search and it was only a matter of time before the suspected murderer was captured by an RCMP patrol near Tonasket, Washington.

The brown breath of Autumn had clothed the hills in a mantle of green and gold when a work party from Penticton Detachment, directed by S/Sgt. E. H. R. Nesbitt, in charge of Penticton Detachment, returned again to the scene of the fateful crash and began the arduous task of clearing the area and erecting a cairn in memory of the three men. The cairn surrounds a large white cross and is built from the natural shale and grey stone with which the area abounds. The white cross is built of four by four fir; it is four feet across and the upright visible portion stands six feet high. A fence consisting of six steel posts, joined by an ornamental chain, surrounds the cairn