

# Air Services Planes Through The Years

## 50 Years Flying for the Force

by Daniel Hall



RCMP/GRC Pilots' wings

Apart from the human heroes and the human drama which have been integral to Air Services operations during the last 50 years. The unsung, faithful companions of our winged Mounties have been their aircraft. In March, 1921, Sgt. H. Thorne was the first RCMP member to fly back to his base, Fort Simpson, N.W.T., as a passenger on an Imperial Oil Company Junkers aircraft. The return trip took four days, compared to an eight-week trek by dog sled, escorting a prisoner from Fort Providence to Edmonton.

### First Air Patrol

Seven years later, the first official RCMP request was made for an air patrol, using an RCAF aircraft from Sioux Lookout, Ont. The trip to Fort Albany on James Bay, was to bring out an insane Indian.

In September, 1928, the services of S/Sgt. M. A. Joyce, who was a coroner, were required to investigate several deaths by starvation in the

Arctic Barrens. It was suggested that Joyce lease a plane at Baker Lake, N.W.T., but following a series of unfortunate incidents, the plan had to be abandoned.

Former Commissioner James H. MacBrien was instrumental in establishing the RCMP Aviation Section. His interest in flying and his previous involvement with the RCAF and Canadian Airways, made him a natural proponent of the fledgling RCMP airborne section. Even before its inception in April, 1937, Commissioner MacBrien made an 11,000 mile inspection tour by aircraft in a month, spending only five days on the ground.

The need to rely on RCAF aircraft and personnel ended in May, 1937, with the delivery of four de Havilland Dragonflies to the Force. The designation "MP" in the registration numbers of RCMP aircraft has been reserved by the Department of Transport since 1937. Initially, each aircraft was named for a flower, the first let-