The Record

of

No. 7 A.O.S.

R.C.A.F.

Portage la Prairie, Man.

1941-45

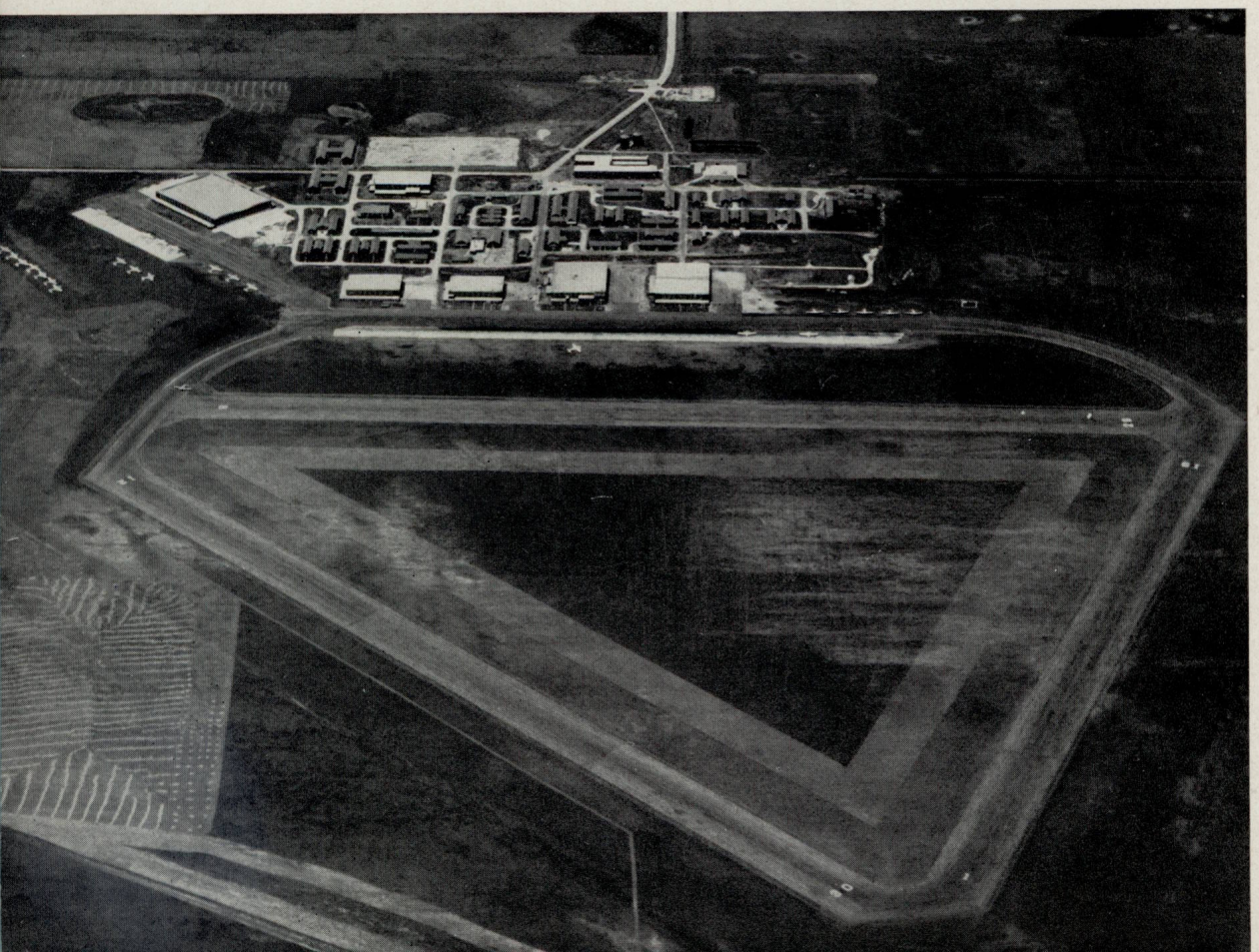
To the young men trained at our School, who offered their lives in defence of their country, that freedom might live;

To the Service instructors and permanent staff, enlisted for overseas, but assigned the less appealing duty of training others, at home;

To the civilian staff, most of them not eligible for active service, who found in No. 7 A.O.S. an outlet for their desire to serve;

This book is dedicated.

1941



No. 7
A.O.S.

1945

The Record

A SOUVENIR

OF

NO. 7 AIR OBSERVER SCHOOL

R.C.A.F.

PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE

MANITOBA

OPERATED BY

PORTAGE AIR OBSERVER SCHOOL LTD.

1941 - 1945



Greetings

My dear Mr. Parr,

During the years in which I was associated with the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan there was no part of that Plan, or no activity, which was a greater source of pride than the work of the Civilian Flying Schools.

When the full story of the Plan comes to be written it will be found that it owed its undoubted success, in a large measure, to the organization, experience and the unselfish sacrifices of the men and women who went to make up the Elementary Flying Training Schools and the Air Observer Schools.

To all your staff I offer my best and most sincere good wishes.

Yours very sincerely,
CHARLES G. POWER,
Minister for Air, 1940-44.

Dear Mr. Parr,

The disbanding of an Organization, which was so well selected and balanced as yours and whose Members have served for over 4½ years so loyally and efficiently, can only be carried out with mixed feelings; regret at its necessary disintegration, and satisfaction derived from an important job brought to a commendably fine conclusion.

Permit me to express to you all my hearty congratulation and deep gratitude for your very kind co-operation.

My best wishes and the best of luck to each one of you on returning to your normal spheres of activity.

Sincerely,
J. L. APEDAILE,
Financial Adviser, C.F.S.



The Civilian-operated Schools have made an enviable record and contributed much to the success of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

Inspired by the able leadership of the Manager, Mr. W. L. Parr, the organization at No. 7 A.O.S., Portage la Prairie, attained a high state of efficiency. The earnest collaboration between Service and Civilian personnel made it a happy Station.

It is with deep gratitude and much regret that I bid you all farewell. And I wish each and every one of you the best of luck and every success on returning to your normal activities.

ROBERT LECKIE, Air Marshal,
Chief of the Air Staff.





To No. 7 Air Observer School, my warm appreciation of associations past and best wishes for days to be.

The school's career closes only as the Air Training Plan closes; and that is high tribute to the calibre of the work done. That work has been made possible and carried through chiefly by the unfaltering effort of civilians and servicemen who have pulled together toward a glorious, mutual goal.

This book should be regarded as more than a souvenir. It is a monument to the fighting spirit that overcame early difficulties to achieve magnificent results in terms of air-crew on the Empire's battlefronts in every continent and over practically every sea of the world. It stands as a record of men who came forward to give to a great cause their experience and best efforts at a time when they were needed most. Summed, their story will always be the short, familiar phrase—"Per Ardua Ad Astra."

Yours sincerely,
K. M. GUTHRIE, Air Vice-Marshal,
A.O.C., No. 2 Training Command,
R.C.A.F. 1944-



I should like to convey to all officers and staff of No. 7 A.O.S. the appreciation and thanks of myself and the directors of Canadian Pacific Air Lines for the gratifying results that have been achieved during the period of its operation.

The greatest single contribution made by Canada toward the war effort has been the administration of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. And we are indeed proud of the part played by No. 7 A.O.S. in helping to make it such a complete success.

My best wishes to you all for happiness and success in your future endeavors.

L. B. UNWIN, President,
Canadian Pacific Air Lines,
1942-45

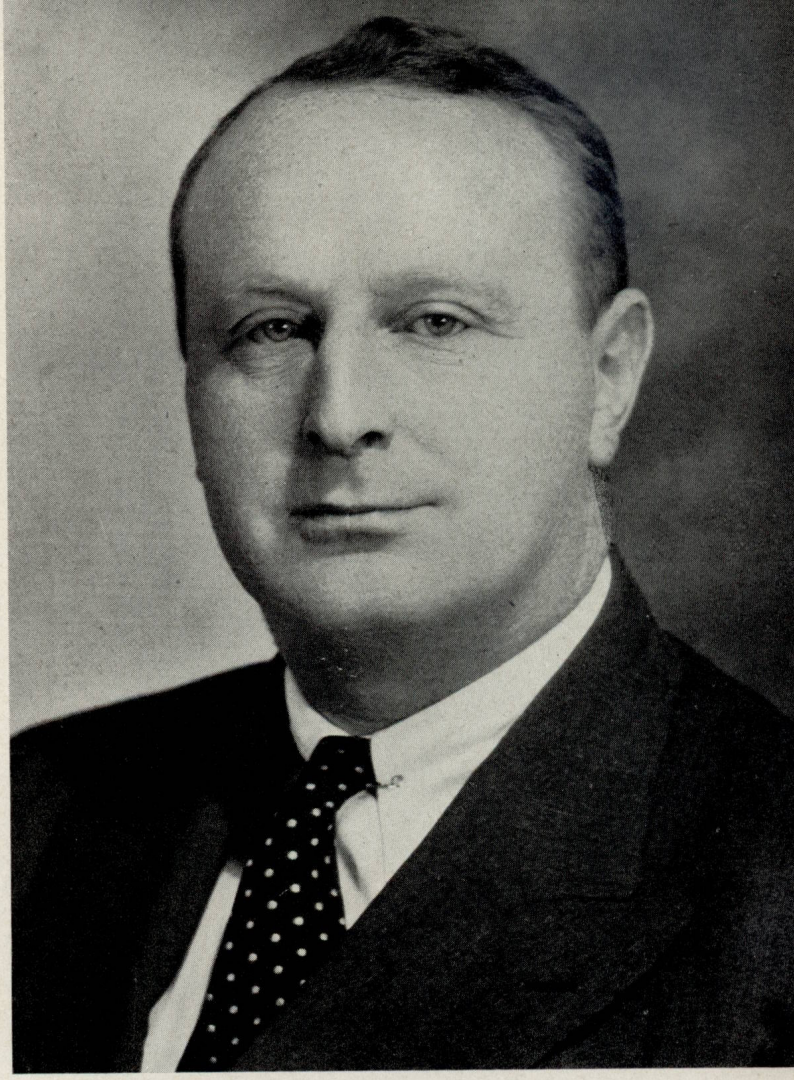


Every one who has taken part in the fine job of work that has been done at No. 7 A.O.S. can take pride in this outstandingly successful war effort. It has been achieved by hard work and co-operation—by team-work between the R.C.A.F. and the Company, between management and staff, pilots, mechanics, drivers, cooks, clerks, guards—between all the many classifications and trades that are required in the every-day operation of the School. Each has taken his share of the responsibility and work, and has carried it through so that the other fellow could do his bit.

The accomplishments of the School have brought credit to Canada, and should be a source of satisfaction to you who have been part of No. 7.

Please accept my personal thanks and appreciation for your conscientious application to the job; and take with you my best wishes for Success, Health, and Happiness, in the future.

C. H. DICKINS,
Vice-President and General Manager,
C.P.A.L.



To the staff of No. 7 A.O.S., my sincere congratulations on your achievements during the past four and one-half years.

During this period well over 20,000 Navigators and Bomb Aimers have been graduated from the C.P.A.L. Air Observer Schools, and the work that these men and the other graduates of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan have carried out overseas—without decrying the great efforts of the other Canadian Armed Forces or the tremendous contribution of Canadian Industry generally—is recognized throughout the world as Canada's greatest single contribution to eventual Victory.

Again, congratulations for your untiring efforts. And thank you for the co-operation which has so greatly assisted your manager and myself in our small parts in this giant operation.

C. R. TROUP,
General Supervisor of Schools,
Canadian Pacific Air Lines



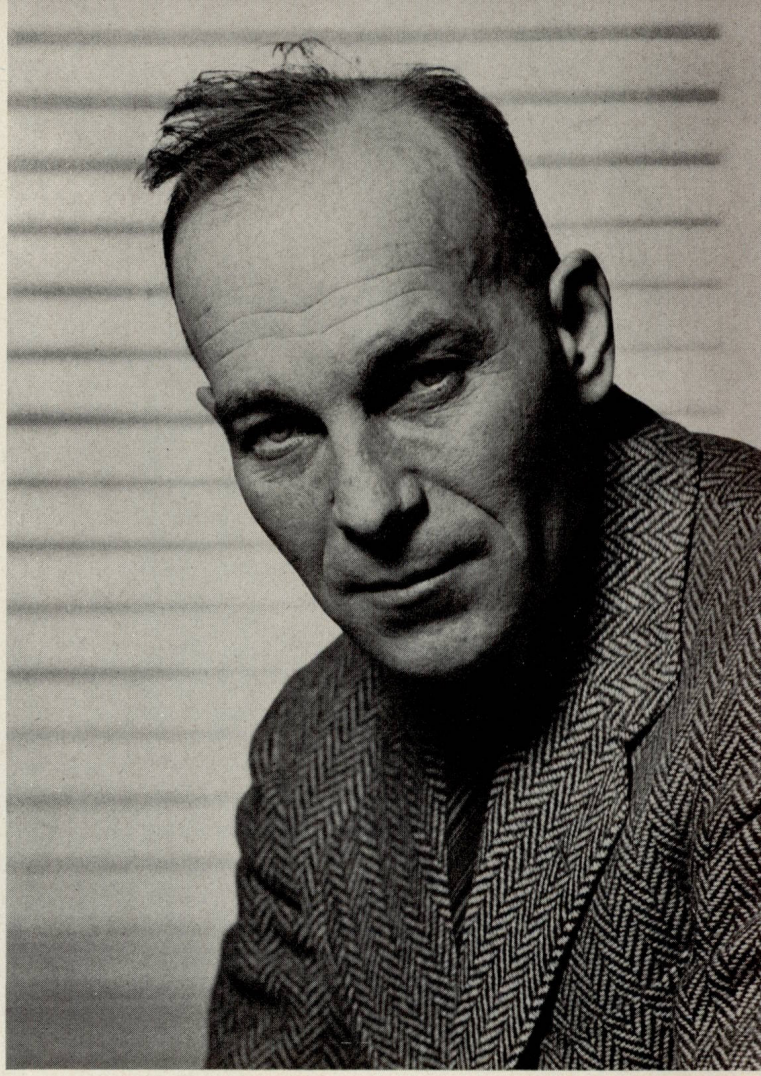
Civilian participation in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan has been one of Canada's outstanding war contributions. I am sure that on the closing of No. 7 Air Observer School, all employees are as proud as I am to have taken an active part in this Training Plan.

The Management and yourselves are to be congratulated on building up the splendid record that your School has achieved.

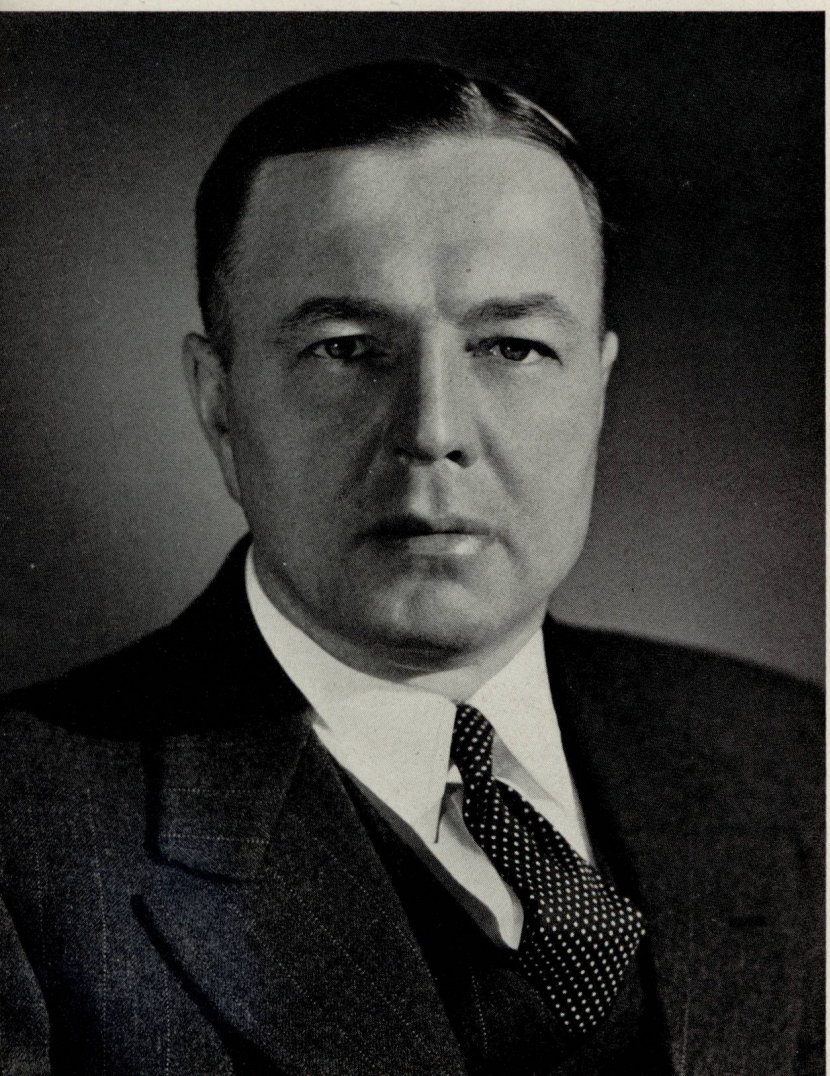
I am happy to have been associated with you all, and I wish you success and all the best in your future endeavors.

W. R. MAY,
Western Supervisor of Schools,
C.P.A.L.

THE MANAGERS



C. W. BECKER,
1941



The accomplishments of the Air Force have been a major factor in Victory. To have had a share in building up that magnificent Force will always be a source of great pride and sense of achievement.

The efficiency and esprit de corps which we attained at No. 7 A.O.S. were due to the enthusiasm and combined efforts of every member of the staff, both Air Force and civilian.

We knew that the students in training were preparing themselves, devotedly, to face danger and death for loved ones and for those principles which we hold dear. With such an example before us, it was our simple duty to discharge our obligation to them as far as lay within our power. The spirit and record of the Station suggest how this duty was recognized.

To you all, I wish to express my sincere thanks for your efforts and co-operation in making No. 7 A.O.S. a unit which fulfilled its assignments, and of which we were proud to be members. In years to come, I feel sure we will look back with lasting satisfaction to the record of 7 A.O.S.—"Our School."

W. L. PARR,
1942-45

THE C.S.O.'S

S/L K. J. McDONALD, April 1941-May 1942.

S/L L. E. ELLIS, D.F.C., May-November 1942.



No. 7 A.O.S. has a record and a place in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan that is definitely outstanding. And all personnel, both R.C.A.F. and Civilian, can feel justly proud of the part they played in achieving that record.

I feel that, during my term at the Station, I not only helped train Navigators and Air Bombers, but also gained friends who will remain with me for years to come. It was a pleasure and a privilege to work with the type of men and women connected with the School.

I would like to thank all Civilian and R.C.A.F. Personnel for their splendid help and co-operation, and to wish to all the privileges of health and wealth in the future.

G. H. MALCOLMSON, W/C,
Chief Supervisory Officer,
November 1942-July 1944



No. 7 A.O.S. has been a School built on efficiency and close co-operation of Civilian and Service personnel. No trainee left this Station unaffected by civilians, whether in the barracks, in the mess, in the canteen, in the hangars or in the aircraft. Students and civilians had much in common. So had all the Station staff. And that common purpose made the School the success it has been.

To all personnel, it is my sincere hope that you and yours will enjoy Peace, Happiness and Prosperity throughout the future.

R. H. BATTY, S/L,
July 1944-January 1945



During the nine brief weeks that I have spent with No. 7 A.O.S. there is one impression that will remain with me always. That is the friendly and cheerful spirit of co-operation and tolerance that is felt everywhere on the Station, both between the Civilian Company and the R.C.A.F., and also within these two organizations. To call 7 A.O.S. one happy family is no exaggeration.

This spirit of team work has intimately affected all phases of life on this Unit. It has lightened the not inconsiderable burden of the students in their arduous aircrew courses, and has resulted in a standard of training second to that of no similar school, and it has been responsible for cementing many firm and lasting friendships among the Civilian and Service staffs.

M. S. LAYTON, S/L,
January-March 31, 1945

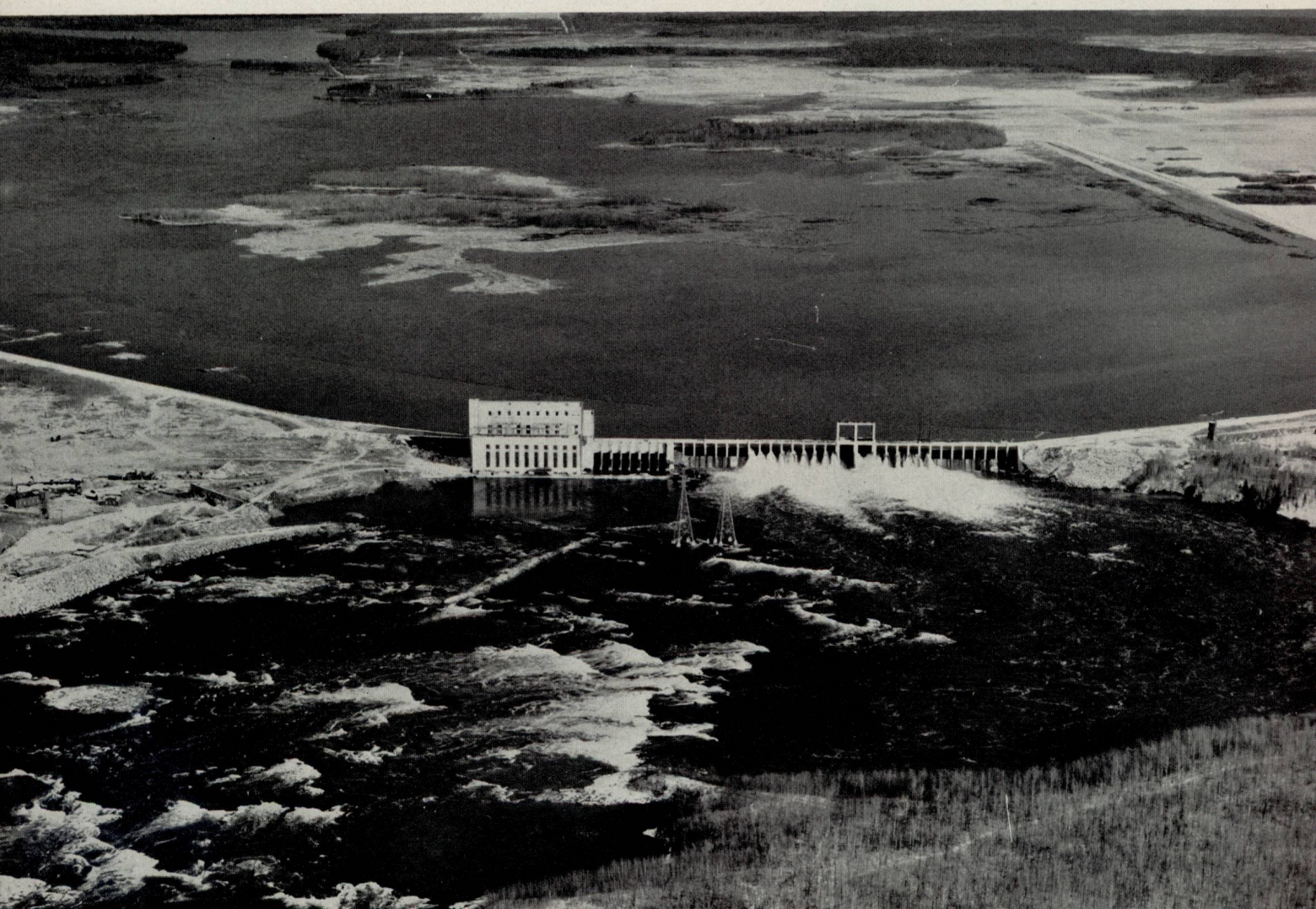
(S/L M. S. LAYTON, D.S.O.)



Regina, Sask.

TURNING POINTS
on training flights from No. 7

Seven Sisters Falls, Man.



On The Record

Period of operation			3 years, 11 months
Airmen graduated			5,176
Hours flown, approximately one-third being night flying			201,536
Miles flown (approx.)			24,184,320
Average training flight, hours			3:15
Average training flight, miles			350
Fatal crashes			5
Maximum number of aircraft on charge			95
Buildings maintained			45
Supplies consumed:			
Gasoline, gals.	—aviation	5,494,163	
	—motor transport	105,065	
			5,599,228
Oil, gals.	—aviation	161,382	
	—motor transport	2,410	
			163,792
Coal, tons			27,158
Electricity, Kws.			4,380,800
Water, gals.			73,079,150
Meals served to Air Force personnel			2,514,186
Civilian Employees—maximum, including messing staff			904
Operating Budget, 1944			$2,220,000.00
Savings on operations, 1941-45, returned to Dominion Treasury			$644,306.89

THE CIVIL FLYING SCHOOLS

No. 7 A.O.S. was one of the 36 Civilian-operated Flying Schools of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

The Plan is recognized as Canada's greatest single contribution to the victory of the United Nations. Yet, as one of the best informed writers on Canada's war effort in the air has written, "The fact is not generally realized by the public (that) the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, in the beginning and now (1943) was and is a combination of civilian and service effort."

* * *

Why were there civilian-operated schools in the Air Training Plan? The answer begins in 1926, the recognized birth year of Canadian civil aviation.

In December, 1926, the pioneer Canadian air freighting company, Western Canada Airways Ltd., was formed and took a contract freighting into Churchill, Man., for the Dominion government. One of the four aircraft used was flown by Capt. Fred Stevenson, after whom the Winnipeg metropolitan airport of today is named. About the same time, Northern Aerial Minerals Exploration Ltd. was organized, the trailblazer in Canadian aerial prospecting. The example and experience of N.A.M.E. and of Western Canada Airways and its successor, Canadian Airways Ltd., spawned a brood of air transport companies in frontier regions across Canada. By 1939, these companies had mastered "bush" aviation the hard way and had gathered a store of air pioneering experience unequalled in the world.

This development and expansion of air transport was due, in no small measure, to the late Jas. A. Richardson, of Winnipeg, who may well be called the father of Canadian civil aviation.

Parallel with this development of air transport companies had run the growth of the Canadian flying clubs. Also in 1926, Sir Alan Cobham brought to Canada the first of the thousands of De Haviland Moths that were to become the nursery of Canadian aviation, military and civil, as it is today. Next year, in 1927—because Canadians then needed encouragement to be air-minded!—Parliament passed an act to assist the formation of flying clubs, to enable beginners to train for their private and commercial pilots' licenses. Each flying club was given two Moths to start with, another one for each one it bought itself, and $100 subsidy for each pupil qualifying for his private pilot's license. All other expenses and revenue were the responsibility of the club. By 1939, there were 26 such flying clubs operating across Canada, and hundreds of their graduates were in the R.A.F. and the R.C.A.F.

To use this great fund of civilian flying experience when the country was in danger was common sense. And it was made imperative by the way in which the R.C.A.F. had been starved of funds and denied men, equipment and full training for years after 1930.

As war became likely, therefore, plans were begun for using all civilian flying experience for military training purposes. The initiative was taken in Canada by the Canadian Flying Clubs association. Its representations, from 1937 on, led to the first classes of R.C.A.F. student pilots starting course at eight flying clubs in June, 1939. At the same time, in England, after Munich, Air Marshal Robert Leckie—then in charge of training all Volunteer Reserves of the R.A.F., and now Chief of the Air Staff, R.C.A.F.—planned to mobilize British flying clubs, air transport companies and aircraft manufacturers for the same purpose.

* * *

Canada declared war on Sept. 9, 1939. Seventeen days later, the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan was suggested by the United Kingdom. Another fortnight, and the first agreement was announced. Three months after the first suggestion, the detailed working Plan was signed, on Dec. 19, by representatives of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The first new schools for the Plan opened six months later, in May and June, 1940. And by the end of 1940, a year after the Plan was signed, 33 of the 64 flying stations planned for were operating.

No small part of this speed in establishing the Plan was due to civilian participation.

Three types of aircrew were to be trained—pilots, observers, and WAGS (Wireless operator-Air Gunners). For the pilots, there were to be 26 Elementary Flying Training Schools and 16 Service F.T.S.'s. For the observers, 10 Air Observer Schools and two Air Navigation Schools. And for both observers and WAGS, 10 Bombing and Gunnery Schools.

To operate these 64 flying stations and the various ground schools needed to complete the Plan, it was estimated a staff of 40,000 would be required. And the R.C.A.F. had only its pre-war strength of 500 officers and 4,000 other ranks from which to draw experienced personnel.

Civilians—the bush operators and the "Sunday pilots" of the flying clubs—filled the gap. All the 10 Air Observer Schools and all the 26 Elementary Flying Training Schools, except one added three years later, were organized and operated by civilians.

In other words, throughout the five years' operation of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, two of the three main categories of air crew received much of their more critical training in civilian-operated schools.

As soon as the Air Training Plan was announced, civilian operation of the Air Observer Schools was urged at Ottawa by C. R. Troup, an ex-R.A.F. officer, then vice-president and general manager of Dominion Skyways Ltd., Montreal, which had been bought by Mr. Richardson. The idea was considered for the Air Force by Air Vice Marshal Croil, then Chief of Air Staff, and approved by the late Hon. Norman Rogers, then Minister of National Defence. Negotiations between the R.C.A.F. and the civilian operators were conducted by Air Vice Marshal Johnson.

Air Observer Schools were new in Canada and there were no records to work from. Through crowded weeks, detailed specifications were worked out from

the combined experience of the R.C.A.F. and the air transport companies. Costs were calculated and over-all operating estimates prepared. And in December, 1939, the first contract was signed, covering the operation of No. 1 A.O.S. at Malton, near Toronto, by Dominion Skyways Ltd., and under the management of C. R. Troup. This contract became the model for later contracts covering the other nine Air Observer Schools.

While the Air Observer Schools were being organized, the flying clubs were equally active in pushing the organization of the E.F.T.S.'s. R.C.A.F. pilot instructor training in the clubs had been tripled as soon as the war began. Details of the E.F.T.S.'s were hammered out during the fall of 1939, and in May, 1940, the first contracts for them were signed.

The form of these original contracts for both kinds of schools was drawn up by a committee headed by the then acting deputy minister for national defence, Col. J. S. McLachlan. With so large a group of civilian-operated schools being organized, it was desirable to have a single office at Air Force Headquarters to unify the organization, supervision and liaison of these schools. In April, 1940, Col. McLachlan asked J. L. Apedaile, of Montreal, an experienced auditor and executive, to undertake these duties, with the title of Financial Adviser to the Civil Flying Schools. This form of central supervision continued throughout the five years' life of the B.C.A.T.P.

Separate companies were set up to operate each of the Civil Flying Schools, whether A.O.S. or E.F.T.S. Of the 26 E.F.T.S.'s, all but two were thus organized by flying clubs.

Nine of the ten Air Observer Schools were similarly organized and operated by various air transport companies: No. 7 at Portage la Prairie by Yukon Southern Ltd. No. 1 at Malton and No. 9 at St. Johns, Que., by Dominion Skyways Ltd. No. 2 at Edmonton by Canadian Airways Ltd. and No. 8 at Quebec by its subsidiary, Quebec Airways Ltd. No. 5 at Winnipeg by Wings Ltd. and Starratt Airways and Transportation Ltd. No. 6 at Regina by Prairie Airways Ltd. No. 3 at Prince Albert, Sask., by M. & C. Airways Ltd. And No. 4 at London, Ont., by Leavens Bros. Ltd.

In January, 1942, it was announced that Canadian Pacific Airlines had been formed as an air transport system by the purchase and combined operation of seven of these companies, among others—Yukon Southern, Dominion Skyways, Wings Ltd., Canadian, Quebec, Starratt, and Prairie Airways.

Thus the Canadian Pacific System acquired responsibility for the operation of six Air Observer Schools (Nos. 1, 2, 5, 7, 8 and 9) and of one E.F.T.S. (No. 11, Cap de la Madeleine, Que.) as a by-product of its entry into air transport operations; and undertook to continue operating them as a war-time duty, without profit.

To supervise the operation of these seven flying schools, a separate organization within Canadian Pacific Airlines was set up in April, 1942. C. R. Troup, who pioneered the civilian operation of A.O.S.'s, was named general supervisor. J. A. Munroe, who had taken part in the emergency negotiations of 1939, was named his assistant. W. R. "Wop" May, general manager of No. 2 A.O.S. at Edmonton, was named supervisor of schools for Western Canada, responsible for Nos. 2, 5 and 7 A.O.S. W. "Babe" Woollett was named supervisor of schools in Eastern Canada, responsible for Nos. 1, 8 and 9 A.O.S. and No. 11 E.F.T.S. This organization continued until the end of the B.C.A.T.P.

In March, 1943, the original contracts ran out. But by that time the Civil Flying Schools had proved themselves so completely that their size was repeatedly increased. At the beginning in 1940, each A.O.S. had 120 students and each E.F.T.S. had 48. At the peak of the Air Training Plan, the A.O.S.'s, except a single small one, had pupil enrolments of from 520 to 667, depending upon the type of training being given; while there were four sizes of E.F.T.S., with 90, 120, 180 or 240 students apiece. The contracts therefore were revised and renewed for another two years.

By March, 1945, the graduates of the Plan had smashed Germany's factory cities into ruin. The allies were on the Oder and the Rhine. And victory was in sight.

So, on March 31, 1945, the great Air Training Plan, and the Civil Flying Schools as part of it, passed into history.

* * *

The results achieved by the Civil Flying Schools were outstanding, both as to quality of graduate and as to cost in lives, staff and money.

The quality of the graduates has been shown overseas. Of the 131,553 graduates of the B.C.A.T.P., over 70 percent passed through civilian-operated A.O.S.'s, or E.F.T.S.'s. The standard and methods of their training were checked and revised constantly in the light of operational experience. Their work, the world knows.

The training cost in lives—It is a matter of record that the low casualty rate of the Civil Flying Schools was beyond all expectations, due to efficient maintenance of aircraft and to care in flying operations and instruction.

The cost in military manpower to staff the schools was remarkably low. At the peak, some 15,000 civilians were employed. Of this total, nearly a third were women, who consistently did an excellent job. Of the more than 10,000 civilian men, practically none were eligible for enlistment, owing to age or physical defects. The few who were eligible were specialists temporarily deferred from the services because of their duties in the schools.

The cost in money was so much less than first expected that the Civil Flying Schools were able to return large sums to the national treasury, saved by efficient management of the monthly budgets allowed them, although these budgets were carefully revised every six months.

The Air Observer Schools voluntarily surrendered all profits and returned to the Dominion government all the savings they effected. The Elementary F.T.S.'s similarly returned all their savings except $5,000 per year per school, which was held for the sponsoring flying clubs to enable them to resume the training of civilian pilots after the war.

It is estimated that these savings returned by the Civil Flying Schools to the public through the Dominion treasury will reach the handsome total of more than $11,000,000. Of this total, the six Air Observer Schools managed by the Canadian Pacific Airlines have returned $3,250,000.



The Point of it all . . .

TO TRAIN
NAVIGATORS
to guide an aircraft from A to B in spite of the elements;

TO TRAIN
AIR BOMBERS
to locate and hit the target.



THE TRAINING STORY

"The priceless value of these scientifically trained young men, graduates of the A.O.S., is something which cannot be overstressed. Given the best Pilot in the world, the most deadly-eyed Gunners, the great Bomber and its cargo of sudden-death-to-the-enemy lose all value, as may the lives of the crew, should the young man in the navigator's seat, the Air Observer, be improperly trained, slipshod or inaccurate in guiding the ship to its target and bringing it home again. That is often overlooked by the uninitiated. The best Bomber Pilot in the R.C.A.F. is just as good as his Navigator." (Leslie Roberts, "Canada's War in the Air.")

At first there were many of "the uninitiated," not least among recruits dreaming of earning their pilot's wings and tossing a single-seater fighter from cloud to cloud. But with the Battle of Britain won, the R.A.F. taking the offensive over Europe, and big and ever bigger aircraft coming off production lines for Bomber and Coastal commands, the spotlight moved away from the fighter pilot to focus on that new unit, "our crew"; on teamwork; and on that flower of the air war, the self-forgetting, each-for-all, air crew spirit.

As the importance of the Observer, and then of his specialized successors, the Navigator and Bombaimer, grew in operational experience and in public notice, so too, the training changed.

Those first Observer students to enter A.O.S. back in the experimental days of the summer of 1940 faced the task of learning what later became two men's jobs; and of learning them in a 22-week course, whereas the combined training of their successor teams eventually totalled 40 weeks.

In the words of a 1941 account: "At the A.O.S. the map, chart, compass, bombsight and camera become the student's tools. He learns how to read maps and charts, how to read instruments and correct compasses, how to know what to look for, and how to report it to his crew or his station. He must also learn Morse well enough to receive or send eight words a minute on the buzzer and six on the lamp; learn photography to be able to record bomb destruction, troop placements, railway networks.

"Still another important duty of the Air Observer is to drop the bombs—and that's not just a matter of dumping them out willy-nilly. He's got to be able to plant a stick astride a battleship from more than a mile high and to do so through reckoning against his own speed, the wind speed and the speed of the ship. It is an exact and important science, and packs a thrill all of its own."

To master these duties, the Observer spent three months in A.O.S. studying basic navigation—that is, fundamental dead reckoning (his central task for the duration), map and chart projections and principles of map reading, compasses and instruments—with aircraft recognition, reconnaissance, visual signalling, photography, and armament; and did 60 hours flying.

Then he moved on to a Bombing and Gunnery School for six weeks, to learn in theory and practice how to handle the Vickers and the Browning machine guns, both on the ground and in the air. He practised range estimation and marksmanship with these weapons. He studied the theory of bombing and the workings of a bomb sight and dropped two score bombs on the Station range. The range was a mile wide to allow for his initial errors; but there were times when the spotters in the range hut found it uncomfortably narrow.

For most Observer courses, it was graduation from Bombing and Gunnery School that brought the coveted wing with the big "O." A sergeant's stripes replaced the LAC's propeller. And a sergeant's pay was not unwelcome.

The last four weeks of his training in Canada, the Observer took at Air Navigation School, at Rivers, Man., or Pennfield Ridge, N.B. There he learned astro as an aid to navigation—to find his way by the bearing of the stars and planets at night and of the sun by day, using the sextant and the blank plotting sheet. There, too, he practised advanced navigation and advanced bombing.

Long-range aerial operations and mass bombing attacks were still in the future, and astro-nav. was not rated as highly then as later. In those early days, a wonderful new instrument had just come out, which helped the Observer to establish his position by the stars more quickly. But specimens were rare. "The instrument was highly secret at first" in the words of one of the first observers to graduate from the Air Training Plan "and we were taken one by one into a tiny cubicle and shown—the astrograph."

A 20-mile error at a turning point was acceptable at first in training, where later one or two miles became the tolerance. An 8-minute error by dead reckoning against Estimated Time of Arrival would get by. Four years later the tolerance in training was three minutes; while on operations, bomber captains briefed for German targets made bets on the skill of their navigators that would be settled by a difference of seconds from the correct time of arrival at the bombing point.

"By contrast with today, we just fumbled along in those days," in the words of the early graduate quoted. But the "fumbling" was good enough that as many of those first Observer graduates finished their embarkation leave, each was assigned as sole navigator on the trans-Atlantic crossing of a North-American-built bomber being ferried to Britain. From that not inadequate level of performance, the standard of observer training was improved steadily throughout the duration of the Air Training Plan.

With the coming of longer-range aircraft and the approach to "1,000 bomber" raids, the navigational responsibilities of the Observer grew steadily heavier. Ever greater accuracy was required, to find small targets in spite of growing difficulties. The navigator had to cope with long distance from base, night, the enemy blackout, fighter opposition, flak, and the puzzle of keeping track of course while the aircraft was weaving madly to avoid being coned by searchlights or boxed by enemy aircraft or detectors. To help the navigator somewhat, constant research was carried on to develop mechanical aids. But these

aids themselves called for more specialized training.

In the summer of 1942, therefore, the duties of the Observer were divided between two new air crew trades, those of Air Navigator and Air Bomber, or Bombaimer.

The Navigator was to be responsible only for navigation, becoming "the brains" of the navigation team —a human calculating machine rarely able to leave his desk in the aircraft from take-off until return to base. In training for this, he was to take a 16-week course at an A.O.S., combining the former 12-week A.O.S. and 4-week A.N.S. courses, and omitting Bombing and Gunnery school. The new course included 60 hours of day flying and 36 hours of night flight. On graduation, it was at a wings parade on his A.O.S. that he received the new "N" wing and his sergeant's hooks.

The Bombaimer undertook a double duty. He became the specialist responsible for placing his aircraft's load squarely on target from whatever height might be necessary, by exact target-finding and bomb aiming. And he was to be assistant to the Navigator, acting as "the eyes" of the navigation team, by supplying positional data obtained through map reading and through use of the sextant, drift instruments, astro-compass, etc. For this, he was to train eight weeks at a Bombing and Gunnery school, then pass for six weeks to an A.O.S. for applied bombing, map reading and navigational training, with emphasis on night bombing, completing some 60 hours in the air by day and night.

The new stress on extremely accurate navigation and on specialized training for it was accompanied by a standardizing and tightening of navigational methods. Both the Navigator's and the Bombaimer's courses eventually were lengthened to 20 weeks, to permit still more thorough training. Dead reckoning remained the basic skill, but astro, radio and radar aids became more prominent and ever greater exactness was required. The early student Observers had heard of the astro-compass; their Navigator successors became familiar with it in training. Sextants were improved, synthetic dead reckoning trainers and celestial navigation trainers were introduced. And to begin early the fostering of administrative responsibility, air crew leadership training was added to the course. To free time for the new activities, the old photography and reconnaissance subjects were washed out of the Navigator's syllabus.

With the new subjects and the old, went always the routine of physical training, drill, parades and inspections, and of maintaining acceptable dress and deportment. Even with changed studies and the longer course, the student's day remained crowded.

Through four years at No. 7, and to the end, despite cheering news out of Europe, the classroom windows of the Ground School building blazed into the night. Behind those lighted windows, students were at work after hours, so keen to do their best that for them the use of the quiet rooms in the evening was truly described by the card upon each classroom door— "Late Study Privilege."

"... *The flight's going out now*"





Ready for take-off. "Safety belts fastened?"

THE STUDENT'S EXPERIENCE

The foregoing is the training story as the graduate or instructor looks back upon it, over the five years' operations of the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. But to the student, at the time, training looked somewhat different:

Arriving at No. 7 Air Observer School, usually on a Saturday about midday, he climbed out of the bus or truck that had brought him over five miles of dusty gravel road from the railway station, reported in, was taken in charge by the Training Wing Warrant Officer, paraded to the Stores to draw his bedding, then was marched to quarters to be shown his share of a double bunk, and made up his bed. The rest of the Saturday and most of the Sunday, he had to himself.

On Monday morning, he was introduced to the instructors assigned to his course, and filled out his personal index card for the Station records. Then he paraded with the others to the Navigation stores in the G.I.S. building, to draw his training equipment.

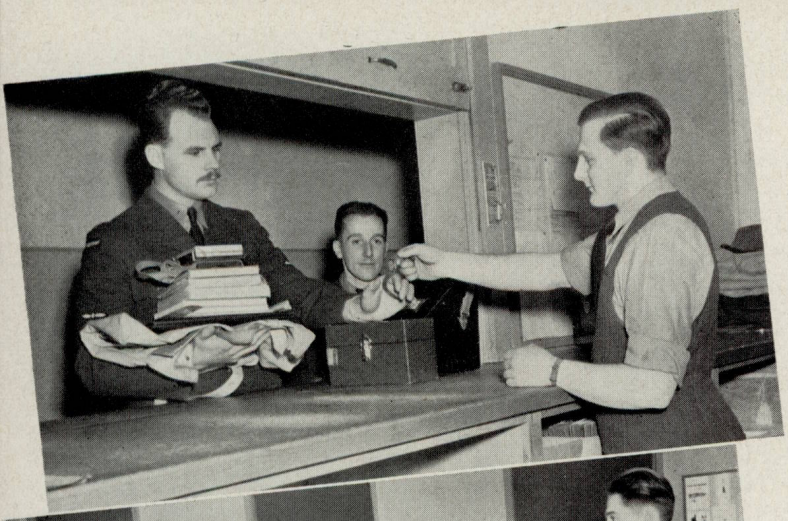
After that, the course paraded to the Recreation hall, where they were welcomed and given wise advice by the Manager, the Chief Supervisory Office, the Padre, Medical Officer, and the Special Services Officer.

A tour of the Station, under the guidance of the instructors, began the afternoon. The student had been in the Air Force for several months before he arrived at A.O.S. and had not yet flown. So, "to see dozens of Anson aircraft lining the tarmac was quite a thrill." He also took an eyeful of the coveralled girls handling the gas trucks so smartly, as they refuelled the aircraft parked on the line.

The care and use of a parachute and how to bail out of an aircraft were the next topics of his first Monday. Crowded into the parachute room with his course mates, the student listened to a talk and demonstration on this life preserver that probably he never would need, but which he would only need and lack once. The talk and demonstration were given by a woman at No. 7, a fact that invariably amused the new students at first. But amusement changed to respect as they took in the pithy explanation and found themselves quickly outfitted, each with a parachute harness that would accompany him on every flight until he left the Station months later.

The taking of a class photo, with the new course grouped in front of an aircraft, ended a day that left the new student well content to roll into his bunk that evening.

On the Tuesday, his fourth day on the Station, the student began Ground School classes. Not until a week later were he and his course taken for their first flight, in daytime, to become familiar with the aircraft that would be their flying practice rooms, to get the feel of flight—and to be able to rejoice that, after long weeks in Manning Pool and Initial Training School, at last they were approaching "the real thing."







After the four introductory days, the new student found himself settling quickly into a routine of Ground School classes, flights, Physical Training, drill, parades, inspections, games, recreation, and last, but very far from least, meals and snacks.

So crowded were his days that he was absorbed in routine almost too quickly to be aware of the fact. For most of the students were so keen, always straining forward to "the real thing," that the mass of training detail was taken in stride in a way that won the warm respect of the instructors.

In his training hours, the student progressed from the elements of navigation and the theory of dead reckoning, celestial navigation and the rest to rehearsal in the synthetic dead reckoning trainers, the map reading room, the sextant trainer, and "the silo" or celestial navigation trainer.

From these, he passed to airborne practice on day flights, first, then on night flights, with always greater responsibility.

All the time he was becoming ever more conscious of his instruments, particularly of his navigation wrist watch. When he arrived on the Station, a five-minute margin seemed punctual enough, and he thought in local time. When he graduated, he thought automatically to the nearest second and in the Greenwich time of navigators the world over, from which he did mental translation to keep local "dates."

Working hard for most of his training hours, seven days a week, the student was ready for his "48"-hour leave when it came around every tenth day. A visit to Winnipeg usually made the time pass too quickly. Then it was back to the Station, to press on towards graduation day and the dreamed-of, waiting "O," "N" or "B" wing that would be the proud symbol of his aircrew trade.

Top—Drawing Nav. equipment
Two—"Now it works this way . . ."
Three—Spark

Bottom, left—Shooting the sun (with a sextant)
Centre—Astro-compass and deviascope
Right—"Hold that line" (projected from the astrograph)





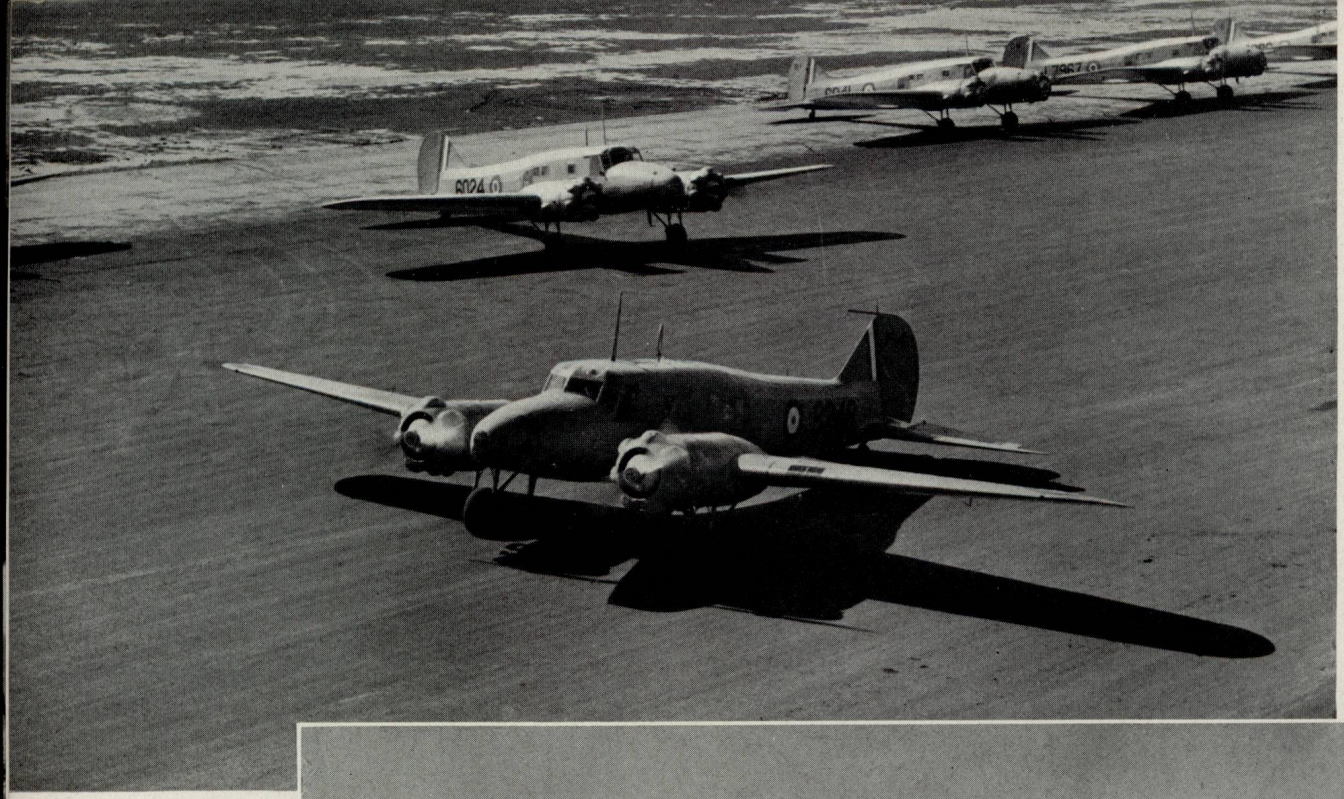




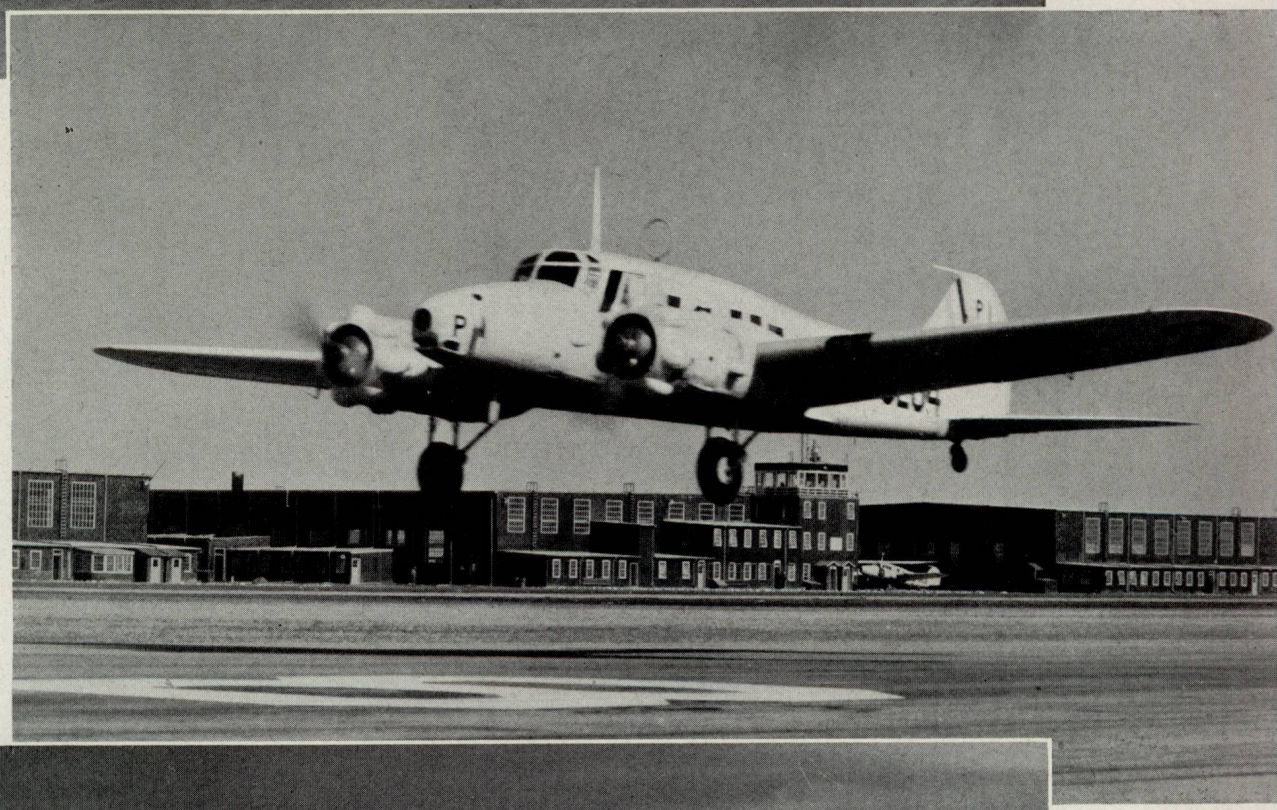
Briefing

"That's ours, over there"

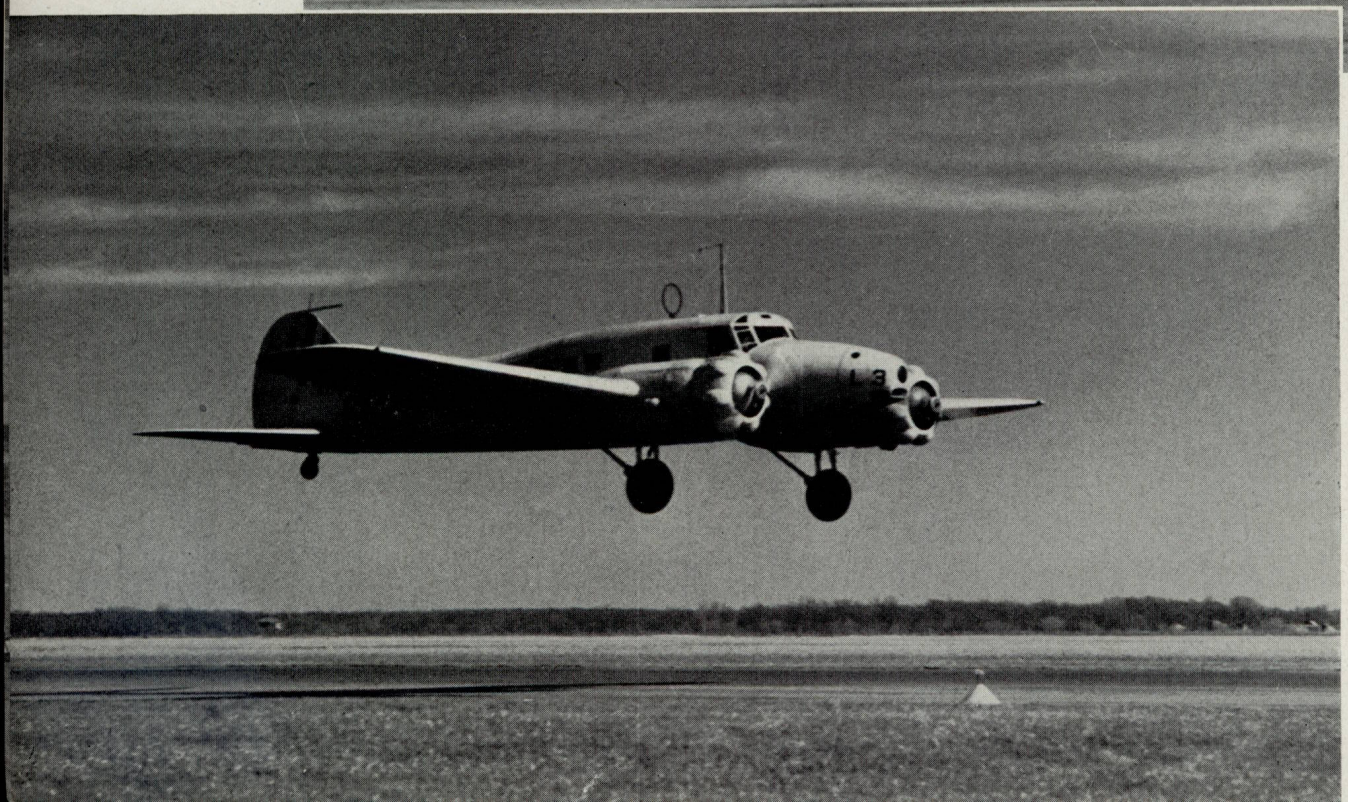




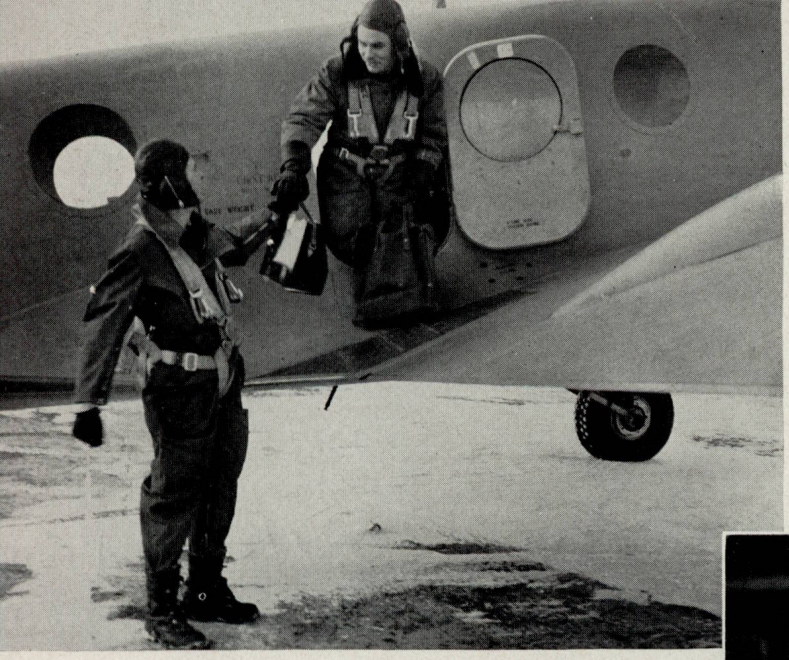
Taxiing Out



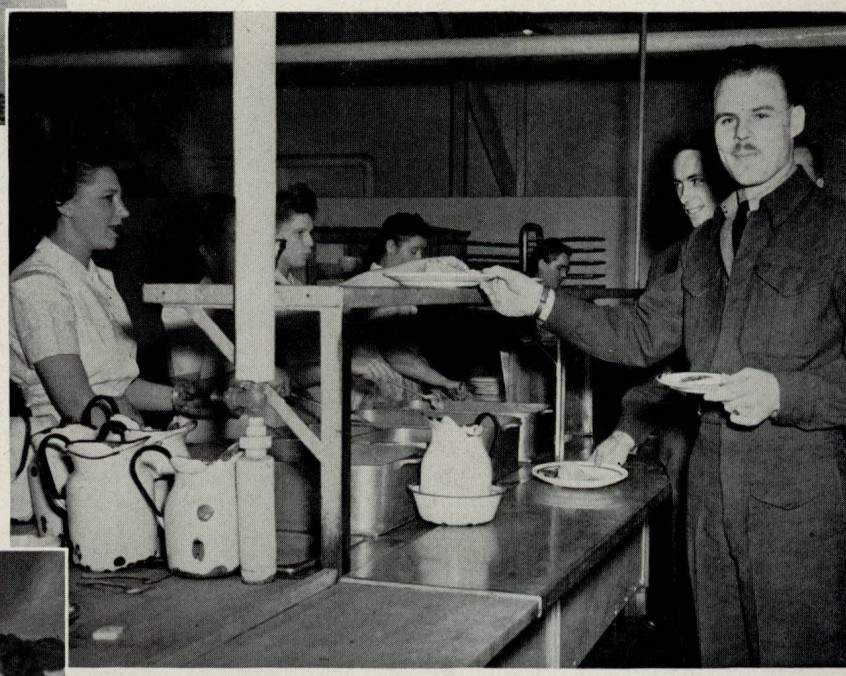
"Airborne..."



Coming In



"Handle with care"



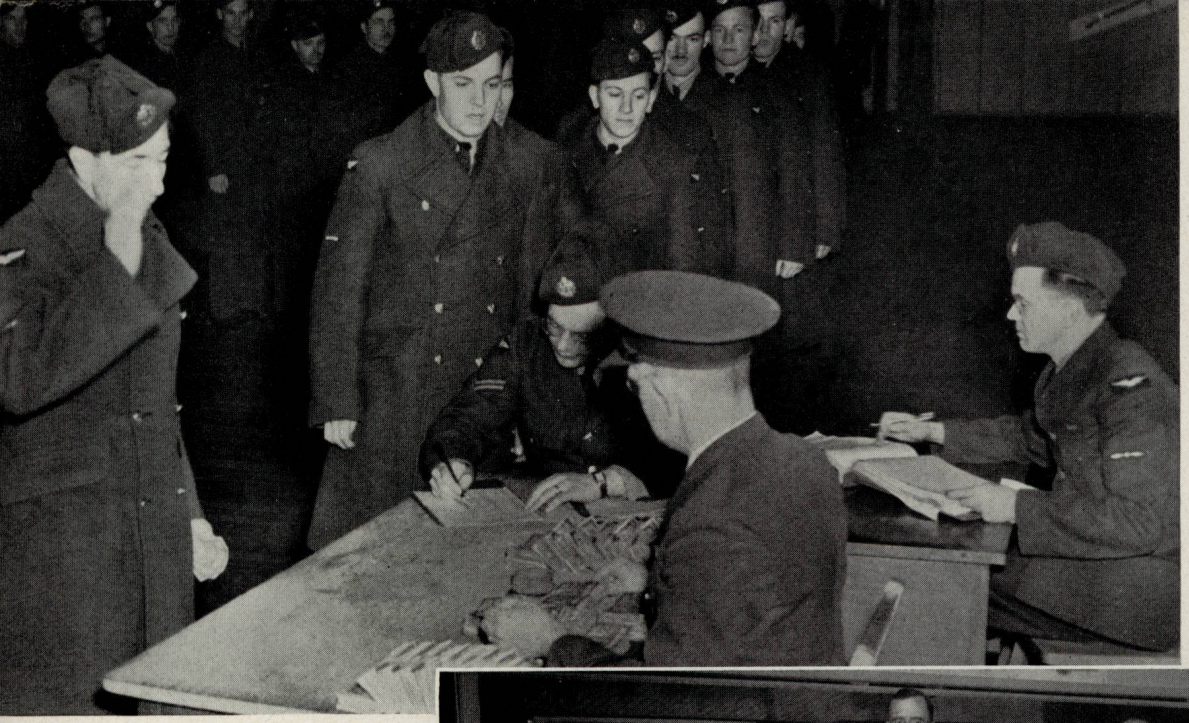
Food!



"... Milk shake, please"



Letting down
(the Airmen's Lounge)



"I've got no pence"



"Here's to..."



"Ickie and alligator
got into the groove . . .
jived dreamily . . ."



Graduation Communion

The Wing!



The Day's Work

This book is prepared for the staff of No. 7. Which means that it is planned also for their friends, with whom it will be shared. To these friends, the following account of the Station's workings is addressed:

An Air Observer School was like a small town. At the peak, No. 7 numbered some 2,000 people: students, Air Force and civilian staff. But few towns of 2,000 ever had services as complete as those of an air school.

The daily work of an A.O.S. fell into three divisions: Operations, which included flying and the upkeep of aircraft; Ground School, where the student received his classroom training; and Supply, which took in messing and canteens, recreation, postal service, housing, works, buildings and grounds, stores, transport and safety; besides Administration.

Operations was staffed mainly by civilian personnel, Ground School by RCAF service personnel, Supply and Administration by both civilian and service.

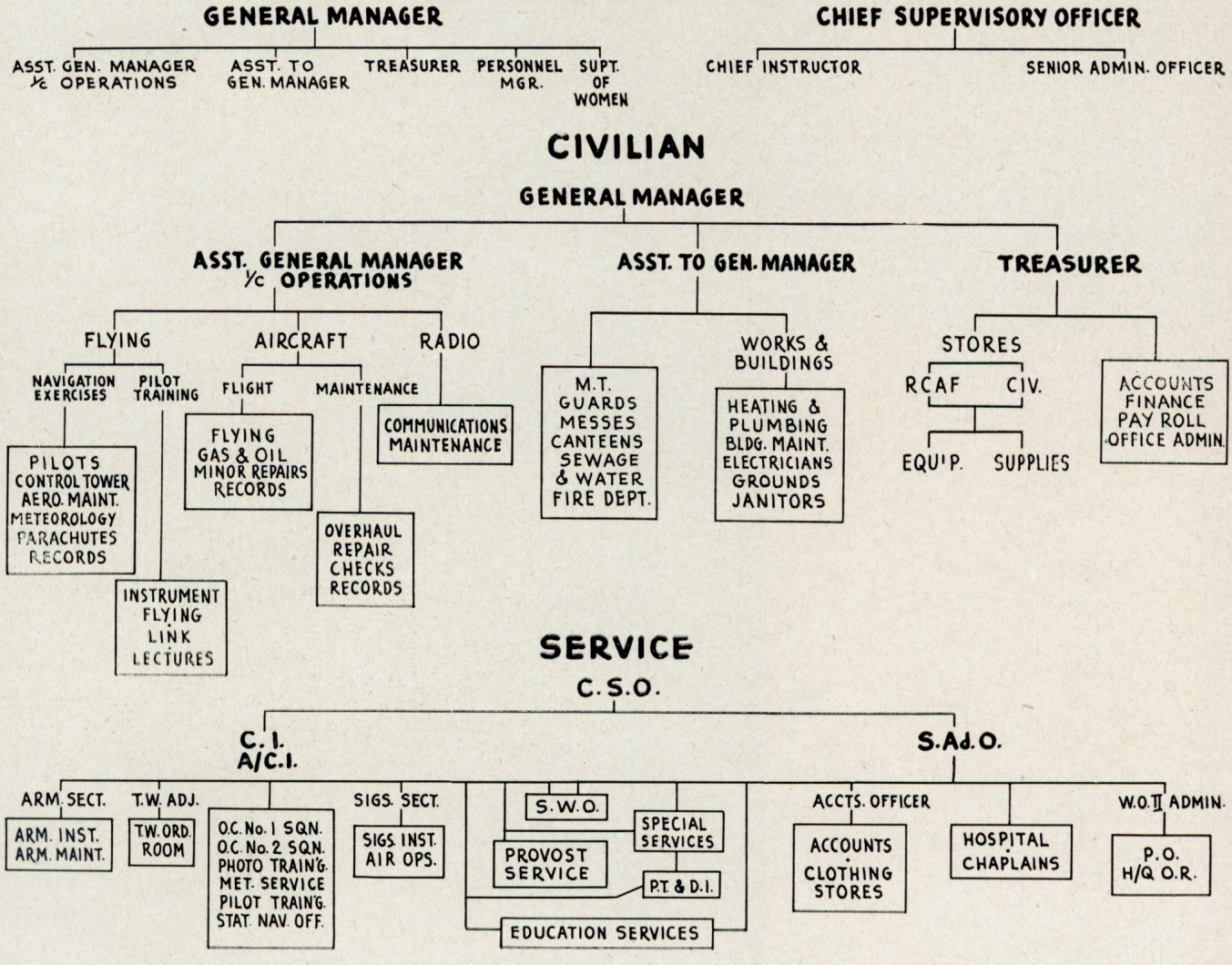
Each division, and each department or section within a division, had its own problems. But most of these problems grouped into three main ones, which were shared by all in some degree: shortage of trained staff; shortage of equipment; and establishment of the most efficient routine in face of the necessary continual changes in student numbers, training program, plant, equipment, and personnel.

Something of how these problems were met is told in "The Training Story"; in this chapter, "The Day's Work," near the group pictures of those who did the work; and in the next chapter, "The Station Diary," the story of the Station's experience as a unit.

One of the main points of pride in the civilian schools was the irreducible minimum of men employed who were of military category. This was accomplished by engaging over-age and medically-unfit men, and by the employment of Women.

Women were employed first as clerical help and in the messes. But in the summer of 1942 the first group of girls was engaged to work in the hangars, and from then on they filled positions in almost every department—aircraft maintenance and workshops, radio communications and maintenance, motor transport, gassing of aeroplanes, janitors, messes and canteens, as well as office work. At the peak, about 300 women were engaged on the Station, out of 900 civilian staff—no mean contribution to the war effort.

NO. 7 A.O.S. ORGANIZATION CHART



FAMILIAR FACES



S/L R. Proudfoot, Chief Instructor, and D. W. Moir, assistant general manager in charge of Operations.

". . . IN CONFERENCE"



J. McConnachie, assistant to the general manager, and S/L Frank Boughton, senior administrative officer.



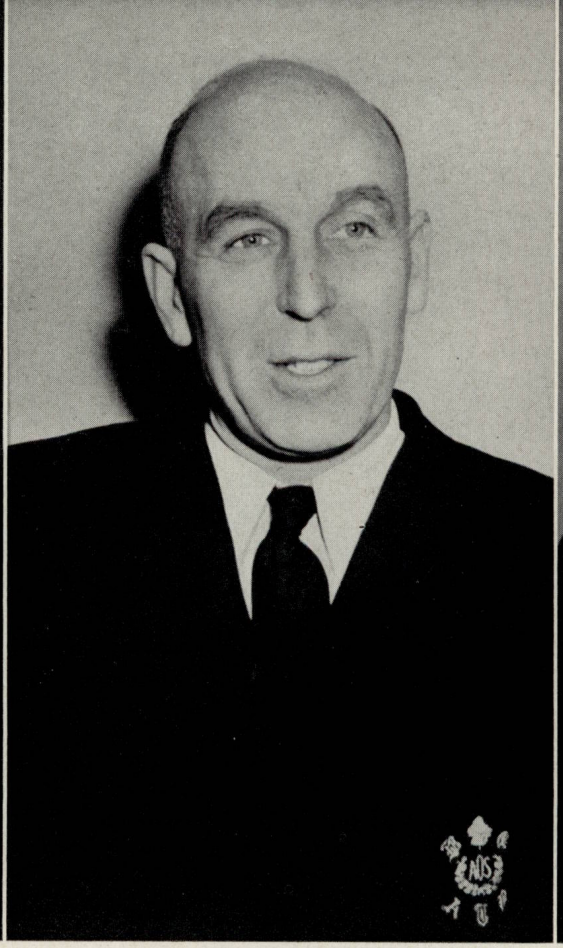
Mrs. G. Bailey, Station nurse.



Mrs. A. R. Ross, superintendent of women.



F. R. Bradley
Superintendent of Maintenance



C. W. Hanna
Treasurer



C. G. Tarbuth
Chief Storekeeper

DEPARTMEN



A. C. Spandier
Radio Superintendent



W. L. Ellwood
Camp Superintendent



H. G. Sparling
Personnel Manager



F/L F. R. Attridge
Senior Medical Officer



F/L J. K. Morrison
Accounts Officer



F/O G. Aitchison
Physical Training

EADS



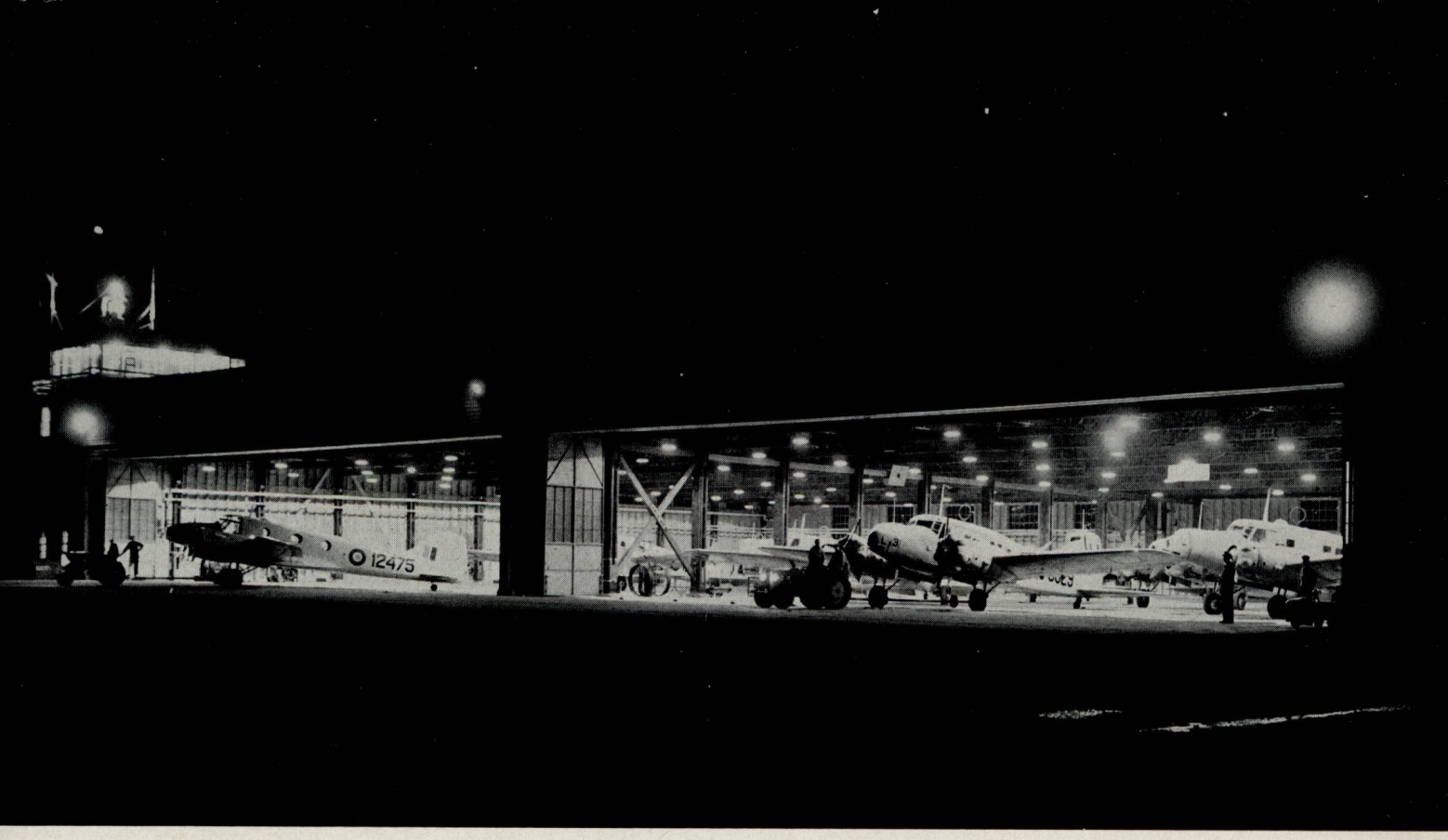
F/L J. C. H. Blackburn
Synthetic Trainers



F/L E. Bigar
Signals Officer



F/L J. M. Cruse
Armament Officer



"They're putting out the aircraft"

NIGHT FLIGHT

Flying was the centre, and the distinctive feature, of the School's life. And night flying was its most dramatic activity.

* * *

Assigned to a night flight, a Navigator student pulls on flying suit and flight boots, snaps on his parachute harness, picks up helmet and earphones, navigating instruments and the rest of his gear and heads across the camp to one of the two briefing rooms in No. 1 hangar. There he joins the rest of the crew with whom he will fly—the pilot, a wireless operator, and two other students in Navigation or Bombaiming, or perhaps another student and a navigation instructor.

A large board on the wall lists the aircraft to be used on this flight and the crew members assigned to each. The members of each crew sit together at long tables in the briefing room, in front of the "pulpit" and a map of the flying area, to hear the "gen" for the flight. The Senior Duty Officer is master of ceremonies, and he begins by calling the roll. The Met. man gives the winds, temperature, moisture, weather hazards and so on, which may be expected for the next few hours on the route to be flown. A Navigation instructor states the navigation exercise for the flight, how it is to be done, and how the pilots and wireless operators can assist the students. A Signals N.C.O. speaks to the wireless operators and an Armament N.C.O. to the bombaimers. Then each crew goes into a huddle to discuss the gen they have heard, and to raise any questions needed before take-off. Watches are synchronized.

Meanwhile, the flight engineers and their helpers have filled the far edge of the taxi-strip with a line of aircraft, towing the ships with tractors from the brightly lighted hangars across the concrete apron and asphalt taxi strip to the edge of the grass beyond.

Their "huddles" over, the crews go out from the briefing rooms into the night. Bulky with gear, they clump heavily along the shadowy apron and scatter across the wide taxi-strip to the Line of waiting aircraft.

Our student and his crew mates are assigned tonight to aircraft 12125, a Mark V Anson. As they reach the ship, one of the crew pulls himself up on the safety step and enters the aircraft. He turns in the doorway, and takes aboard the sextants, flight bags and gear handed up to him. His crew mates follow him aboard. The door bangs shut.

Pilots finish their first cockpit checks, and switch on. Engines cough, propellers kick and flash all down the Line, tracing bright circles in the floodlights, as the motors roar into life. The sound piles up, pounds back off hangar walls and pavements, and crowds the night.

The last crews, walking stiff-legged with gear, like clockwork men, disappear into the shadows of their ships. Then—

"125 to Portage Tower requesting radio check, altimeter setting and taxi clearance" sounds a voice in the Control Tower loud speaker, as the pilot of 12125 finishes warming his engines and makes ready for take-off.

"Tower to 125. Your radio checks. Your altimeter setting is 29.79 inches and 1008.9 millibars. You are clear to taxi to the intersection of runway 26."

"125 to Portage Tower. Roger—out."

And, looking like a huge beetle from the control tower, 125 wheels out of line and taxies slowly down the tarmac towards the runway indicated for the take-off. Ahead and behind him, other ships have received clearance and are rolling in line towards the runway in use. Arriving at the end of runway 26, or behind the aircraft waiting next ahead, the pilot of 12125 runs up his engines and does his take-off cockpit check of instruments. Then—

"125 to Portage Tower—clearance for take-off."

"Tower to 125—you are clear to take off."

"Roger 125."

With a last burst of the engines, 12125 starts down the runway, the tail lifts, and, gathering speed, the ship is airborne in a surprisingly short run for so large a craft. The wheels disappear into the fuselage almost as soon as they are off the ground, since 12125 is a Mark V Anson. In a Mark I, by contrast, the wheels rise slowly, inch by inch, as the co-pilot begins the weary grind of 165 turns of the crank needed to retract the "under-cart."

125 circles the field once in a left-hand circuit. As he nears the point on the circuit where he will head away on the first leg of his flight,

"125 to Portage Tower . . . setting course—clear to Congo."

Congo is the code name of the Radio room in the Tower to which 125 will report while away.

"Tower to 125—cleared to Congo."

"Roger 125."

After the Tower clearance is received, communications are taken over by the WOG. The initials stand for Wireless Operator Ground, i.e., a wireless operator trained for duty in ground installations. Operations overseas have taken away the WAGS (Wireless operator-Air Gunners) formerly used on training flights. And the WOGS have gone aloft to replace them.

The WOG contacts Congo, the Radio room in the Tower, identifies the aircraft by its code sign, and reports "QZ 2100" (meaning "Airborne 2100 hours").

In the Radio room, a girl operator receives the signal, checks the position reported, and records the exchange of signals. Each half hour during the flight, the WOG calls in and reports flight position. The same girl receives and records the report each time, for she is responsible for keeping radio watch on 12125 and on five or six other aircraft while they are out. To right and left along the signals desk, her fellow operators keep similar watch over other groups of aircraft. Weather reports are sent out at regular intervals, and the aircraft reports to base any unfavourable weather conditions or any difficulties encountered.

Scores of miles away, meanwhile, and six or seven thousand feet higher, the crew of 12125 is absorbed in flight routine and, perhaps in keeping warm. The pilot handles the controls, follows the headings given him by the student navigators, and keeps a private check on the position of the aircraft, for he must find base if the student navigators become lost. The WOG makes his regular half-hourly position reports and obtains bearings on known radio stations and other data for the navigators.

By this time, the aircraft has been out for a couple of hours. The student navigators are getting colder and more worried as they get farther from base, and risk of mistakes increases as their calculations get longer. The responsibility on the pilot and WOG is growing, for the ship may get off track, or become lost, run out of fuel and have to chance a forced landing.

However, the weather stays true to the Met. forecast, the navigators unscramble their mistakes with or without the aid of the pilot and of the WOG, and in the black of midnight or later, the flights begin to report in to the Control Tower.

"125 to Portage Tower—five miles out . . . landing instructions—over," says the Control Tower loudspeaker, as the WOG switches off the W/T and the pilot takes back communications.

"Portage Tower to 125—join circuit at two thousand feet. Land on Runway Two." For the wind has shifted while the flight has been out, and now the aerodrome lights mark out a different runway from that used when 125 took off.

The red, green and white navigation lights of 12125 slide down out of the dark and skim across the black field. Minutes pass. Then into the pools of floodlight along the taxi strip, 125 rolls out of the dark, gleams bright yellow as it taxies past the Tower, then wheels into place at the end of the shadowy Line. The engines quiet and the propellers kick to a stop. From the shadows beyond the starboard wing appear the crew, clumping together across the tarmac towards interrogation, while the pilot reports to the Time Office; and then to the airmen's mess for bacon and eggs, "the best meal of the day" after a night trip. And so to bed.

The crew is hardly across the taxi strip before a gasoline truck pulls up at 12125. The gas tender girls swarm over the aircraft with ladders, gasoline hose, and oil cans, record the amount of fuel put into 12125, and move swiftly to the next aircraft in line.

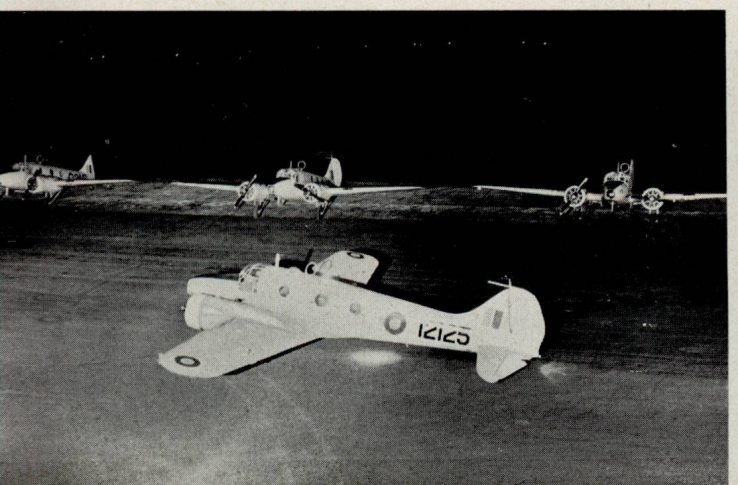
The thunder of engines fades as the last of the flight joins the Line of parked aircraft. But already, at the other end of the taxi strip, the tractors are sputting a staccato chorus, as they start towing in the aircraft for the nightly check.

The floodlights dim on the tarmac. Above the shadowy buildings and the dark field, the beacon light on the Control Tower is left to its tireless sweep.

"125" has made a typical flight.

* * *

Weather varied. Men, aircraft types, and equipment changed. Aircraft sometimes were lost. Some had to force-land at other aerodromes or take their chances on unknown farm fields. And some did not return. But the basic pattern of flight and of Operations remained the same.







*"We'll do it **this** way"*
(Messrs. Mills, McCaw and Moir)



EARLY PILOTS: Front row, left to right, Jim Hatherly, Jack McConnachie, Norman Black, Jim Healey, Neal Umholtz. Back row, Bert McCaw, Don Jamieson, Harry Warr, Art Roberts, Cecil Routh, "Fearless Frank" Granger, Bill Nortz, Pete Mills.

OPERATIONS—FLYING

The Student Observer, Navigator or Bombaimer learned the theory of his trade in the classrooms of the Ground School. And it was on the ground, too, that he was introduced to working with his instruments.

But the student took his practical training in the air, as one of the crew of an aircraft flying various routes of approximately 350 miles each. Beginning with the second week of his course, he averaged two or three such flights each week, until his flying time at A.O.S. totalled 60 hours in the early days, 100 hours in the later period.

Safety of training flights, the punctual provision of well-kept aircraft for them, and contact with the aircraft while in flight were the immediate responsibility of Operations. And the work of Operations was tested daily, right at the Station, every time an aircraft took to the air.

A flight was the unit of Operations work. A flight made on time, without incident, and with the best training results for the students carried, was the goal of all Operations' routine and the test of the teamwork of its sections.

* * *

The sections of Operations grouped into two departments, Flying and Maintenance. At No. 7, both were directed from the Control Tower, where first "Matt" Berry, then D. W. "Scotty" Moir, had his office as Operations Manager. Nearby were the other sections of the Flying department: the offices of the two assistant operations managers, Bert McCaw and Pete Mills; the "Met"(eorological) office, where the weathermen probed the future; radio communications room, time office, and pilots' rooms; and up in the greenhouse on the top "deck," the Control room.

One assistant operations manager, Bert McCaw, had charge of the flying of students' navigational, bombing and photographic exercises, of pilots' flying schedules, of liaison with the Ground School and seeing that each course in training kept up with its flight timetable. Reporting to him were the flight commanders, each of whom had a regular period of duty, overseeing the flights. The other assistant, Pete Mills, had charge of pilot training and instruction, including periodic checking of staff pilots, and of regular practice for each staff pilot in the Link trainer.

The flying program of each course of students was planned and supervised by the Chief Instructor and the Operations Manager consulting together. Then, each day, three men conferred— the Met. chief, i.e., the "weatherman" (Department of Transport), the senior duty officer (Air Force), and the duty flight commander (Civilian). According to the weather,

FLIGHT COMMANDERS: Front row, left to right, A. Ingham, A. M. Kent, B. A. McCaw, assistant operations manager; Mrs. E. D. Lundy; D. W. Moir, assistant general manager i/c operations; P. V. Mills, assistant operations manager; R. J. McVicar, W. R. Cranston. Back row, left to right, H. C. Scott, E. G. White, R. E. Torgalson, F/O K. Rutherford, F/O G. A. Smith, M. R. Cassidy, C. F. J. Harvey, L. Niles.



they decided whether flights would be made or washed out that day; and if made, in what direction each flight should go, to find the best conditions for the specific exercise planned.

Discharge of the responsibility for safety of students and instructors was not made easier by the shortages of trained staff and of equipment, which fell most heavily on Operations. Skills were required there in which only a few had been trained before the war, compared to the many needed all at once to staff the new air training schools in the B.C.A.T.P.

* * *

The first and chronic problem in Flying was the supply of pilots. Piloting at an A.O.S. imposed special duties. Flights had to be made with exceptional accuracy as to elevation and distance. The pilot also had to act as instructor, teaching the students how to distinguish landmarks and pin-points, building their confidence, and reporting, after flight, on their efficiency.

Experienced bush operators were the backbone of the pilot staff, because of their all-round knowledge of long distance flying and of weather. Chief among those at No. 7 were Matt Berry, a pre-war winner of the McKee Trophy, and Scotty Moir.

The original pilot staff at No. 7 was drawn from four groups: bush pilots, United States airline co-pilots, flying club "graduates" holding private or limited commercial licenses, and extra staff pilots trained by the A.O.S.'s already operating. Sixteen of the original 25 pilots were from the United States, where they had been co-pilots on scheduled airlines: and a few others joined later. The flying club graduates taken on the pilot staff included a number who had been rejected for general service because of the extremely strict medical and age standards enforced by the R.C.A.F. in the early days of the war. All of these required further training in the special duties and conditions of A.O.S. flying, and they had to be checked out by an R.C.A.F. testing officer.

The civil flying schools generally began losing their American pilots in 1941, as the growth of aircraft manufacturing caused demand for experienced pilots as ferry and test pilots in the United States, and as the U.S.A.A.F. began calling U.S. airline pilots. After Pearl Harbor, the exodus was rapid.

When the big expansion of the Station came in 1942, more pilots were needed than could be had outside the Service. About the same time, the R.C.A.F. forbade the A.O.S.'s to hire any more civilians. From then on, all new pilots were R.C.A.F. personnel, drawn from graduates of the Service Flying Training Schools and posted to an A.O.S. on leave without pay. The S.F.T.S. graduates arrived without experience in the special needs of A.O.S. flying, and had to be trained on the Station. And the turnover among service pilots was considerable, as senior pilots were posted overseas, with younger men posted in as replacements.

From 25 at the beginning, the pilot staff grew to 138 in the spring of 1944, before the size of the Station was stabilized. Due to retirements, wastage and postings, changes were continuous and pilot training never ending. In all, about 300 passed through the pilot staff during the operation of No. 7.

* * *

Next to lack of trained staff, the chief problem was shortage of equipment and facilities—a shortage never fully caught up until training and expansion began to slow down in the latter months of 1944.



PILOT TRAINING: Back row, left to right: A. M. Kent, R. J. McVicar, H. C. Scott, W. E. Nortz, R. K. Cousins. Front row: F/O L. F. Hoffman, P. V. Mills, assistant operations manager i/c pilot training; W. R. Cranston.

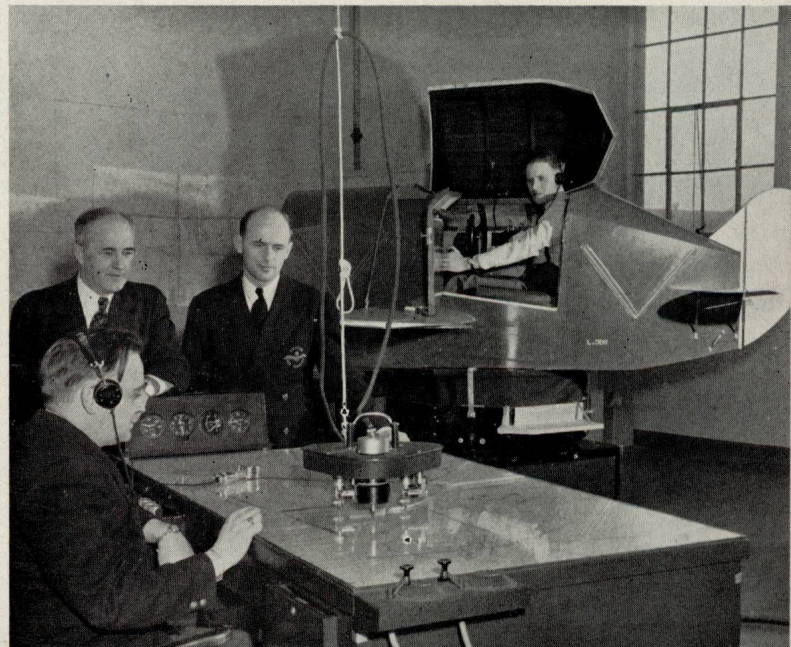
In the first summer, the field had no runways, and "flying was controlled by the weather and airport conditions. Many a time, after aircraft landed it was necessary to go out with a tractor and pull them in to the tarmac."

Work on the runways began in 1942, but only the NE-SW runway could be finished that year because of heavy rains, so that the rest of the field "was a bog." In 1943, the rest of the triangle was completed.

Operations were further complicated while construction of runways was going on, "because the field was cut up by the construction work, plus the contractors' trucks and equipment. It was not so bad in the daytime. But at night a pilot scarcely knew where to come in, because of the red lights all over the field and because of the six-inch ditches being dug beside the runways to drain them."

Landing paths at first were laid out with flares. In 1942 a special crew was kept busy re-setting the flare paths clear of the runway construction work. "And we went through the period without an accident."

LINK TRAINER: Left to right: R. B. Davis, R. J. Stone, J. D. Clarke, instructors. In trainer: T. A. Ewen, pilot.





PILOTS, "A" FLIGHT: Front row, left to right, J. J. Conner, S. E. Ritchie, H. A. E. Burgess, N. A. McAmmond, I. B. Hodgson, J. T. Anderson, L. S. Murray. Back row, G. C. Middleton, T. M. O'Neill, W. G. Bladon, W. A. Brown, T. D. Irwin, W. G. McAndrews, D. J. Craig, M. Shaw.



PILOTS, "B" FLIGHT: Front row, left to right, J. Bruce, K. A. Anderson, R. H. Brandreth, A. S. Wittman, E. R. Edwards, L. W. Passmore. Back row, W. L. Steeds, W. Osborne, E. B. Farris, G. B. Taylor, C. J. Calder, J. B. Knox, G. B. Hardy.



PILOTS, "C" FLIGHT: Front row, left to right, E. B. Smalley, C. A. Moorhead, E. J. Guzzo, J. Burchell, E. S. Shak, B. E. Thompson. Back row, J. C. McBride, J. D'Arcy, L. C. Quesseth, G. Chekaluk, E. L. Brothen, C. J. N. Willis, S. J. Batho, L. A. Alexander.

To make things worse, there were no radio-equipped aircraft—the first sets only started coming in the latter part of 1941. And there was no Control Tower all the first summer, after the fire that destroyed No. 2 hangar in May.

Night flying facilities had to be provided, and experience had to be given the pilots in night flying, landings and take-offs—"and there was some fun in that!

"One of the original R.C.A.F. signals men, F/S Ted Gibbon, and Mac Turner (senior control tower operator) used to stand out on the field with an Aldis lamp and signal aircraft landings, clearances and take-offs—unsheltered!" Power for the lamp came from batteries taken out on the field in Turner's own car, control trucks being still in the future.

* * *

The aircraft used for training also presented problems, for the Mark I Ansons first sent to the Station had been used earlier in England by the R.A.F.

Indeed, it was rumored that some of the aircraft first on strength at No. 7 had been in action at Dunkirk. This could not be proved from the logs, for the aircraft had been shipped to Canada, rebuilt here, and given new log books which recorded only their Canadian service. But the old gun blisters still were on a number of the aircraft, and patched-up bullet holes could be seen on some.

"The Mark I was safe and stable, and it did a hell of a lot of work after it was considered obsolete" in the words of a senior Operations officer.

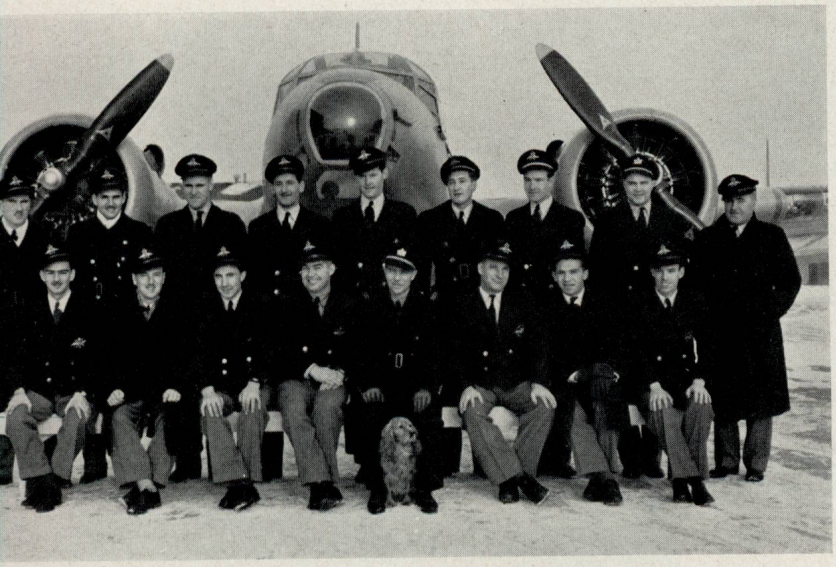
But the Mark I was designed for English conditions. The early ones sent to No. 7 were not winterized: they were unlined and had no cabin heaters. The first cabin heaters supplied were poor. And for the first winter

or so, equipment could not be had for making the aircraft more livable.

The result was hard on all who had to fly, and particularly hard on unfortunate students trying to write navigation notes and calculations bare-handed at 25 or 30 degrees below zero. But it was hardest on those who came from warmer climates, the Aussies, New Zealanders and United Kingdom students. "One class of Anzacs arrived on the Station in a January of 30 below, directly from the Antipodean summer. It was bad enough for them on the ground, let alone in the air." Some of the students suffered acutely from the cold



PILOTS, "D" FLIGHT: Front row, left to right, H. N. Walmsley, A. A. Hyam, R. E. Henley, C. E. Maxwell, J. H. Peterson. Centre row, R. A. Thomas, B. A. Low, E. W. E. Grant, R. H. Real, E. P. Choiniere, J. B. Parsons. Back row, G. A. Dickson, F. W. Haag, M. R. Keys, J. M. Dewar, A. D. Swinson.



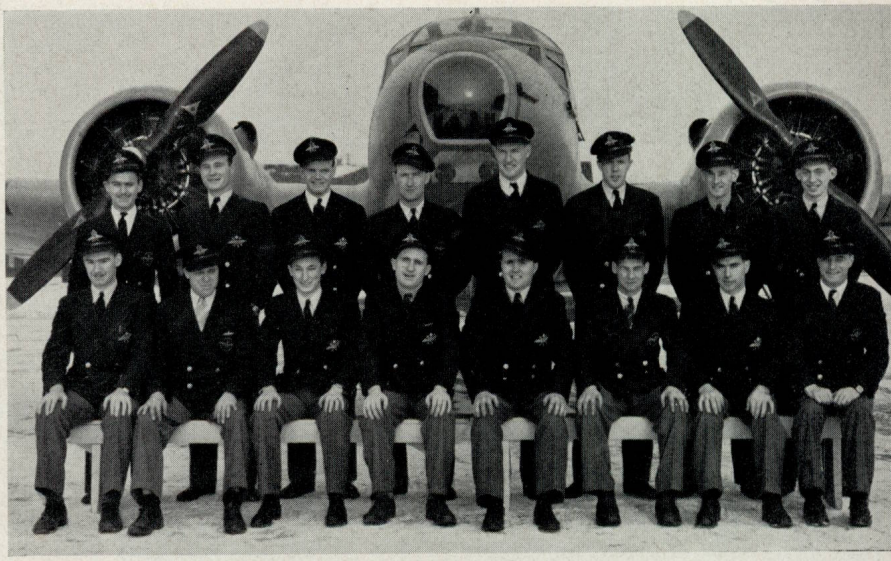
PILOTS, "E" FLIGHT: Front row, left to right, J. C. Kirkwood, G. A. Fennings, H. M. Lapp, V. J. Simpson, C. N. Sawyer, J. D. Leech, M. Teitelbaum, J. B. Davison. Back row, R. B. Knowles, D. A. Wilson, D. E. Hennings, J. W. Maddock, R. D. O'Neill, C. E. Dumville, L. R. Evans, J. H. Hunison, R. G. Giffen.

aloft and many returned to the ground from training flights with slight frostbite. Yet C.T.'s (students Ceased Training) were few.

So hard on the crews was the cold that after early experience it became routine not to fly in Mark I's when the temperature was lower than 15 below at night or 20 below by day, even when these aircraft were insulated and warmed as far as possible.

The change-over from Mark I's to Mark V's offered its own problems, because of the different behaviour of the two kinds of aircraft, one difference in particular being the very powerful brakes on the Mark V. But it was a matter of satisfaction that the Station went through the whole conversion without an accident.

The Mark V could be used in much colder weather, for it had a tighter cabin and better heating, as well as better engines, constant-speed propellers, an under-carriage retracted by hydraulics instead of by the old hand-crank of the Mark I, and various accessories, being generally a better aircraft from the point of view of both pilots and students. But the Mark V's were not received until the winter of 1944-45; and while the winter of 1941-42 was fairly mild, the winters of 1942-43 and 1943-44 were very cold.



PILOTS, "F" FLIGHT: Front row, left to right, J. R. Simmons, T. A. Ewen, D. J. McKillop, C. W. Keith, D. A. Martin, R. J. F. Lavin, A. D. James, M. Sheridan. Back row, J. G. Birkett, M. Bernreiter, C. G. Moe, G. T. Acheson, L. J. Hughes, G. W. Allen, G. A. Simpson, E. W. Gilbart.

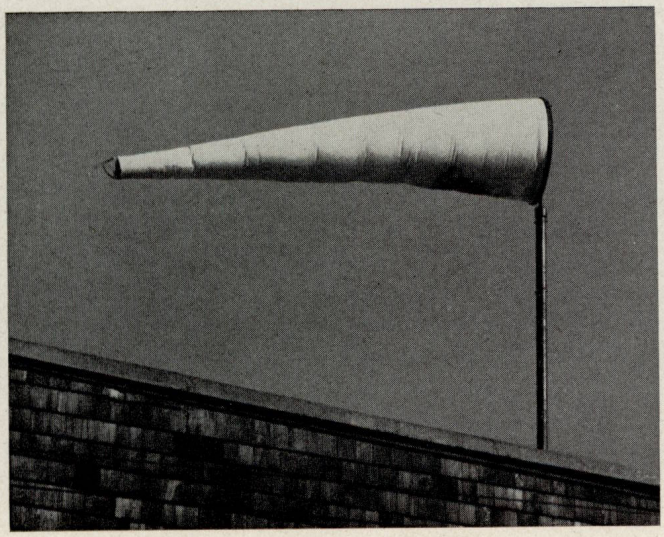


CONTROL TOWER

"What's that pilot think he's doing?"



CONTROL TOWER: Left to right, Lorne Lytle, MacLean Turner, A. George Colwill, Roy K. Cousins.



The Wind Sock.

THE Control Tower despatchers regulated all take-offs and landings of aircraft, to keep order when a dozen or more aircraft were taking off or returning. The Aldis lamp was used for visual signals. But most of the communication was by radio.

Control conditions improved greatly as radio was installed in the aircraft after July, 1941, and as communications equipment generally was improved by installation of more telephones, amplicalls, and a public address system inside and outside the hangars.

Mac Turner, a former school teacher, was chief despatcher at No. 7, arriving in June, 1941, after a course at Stevenson Field, Winnipeg. The only other operator to come to the Station with previous experience of Tower work was Laurie Livesay, who came from No. 6 A.O.S. Prince Albert in September, 1942, and went to aircrew eighteen months later. The other five who passed through the staff were trained on the Station.

RADIO



RADIO OPERATORS: Front row, left to right, Corinne Lalonde, H. Eileen Balmer, Art C. Spandier, Les R. Andrew, Lucille Musgrove, Sadie Fisher. Back row, Mrs. Freda Fallis, Bernice Gardiner, Marian Hartnell, Helen Logan.



RADIO OPERATORS: Front row, left to right, Kae Davis, Les R. Andrew, Mrs. A. Bardal, Art C. Spandier, Willa Carroll. Back row, Jackie Fallis, Kay Kennedy, F/S A. Ted Gibbons, Hazel Asseltine, Audrey Wishart.

COMMUNICATIONS by voice or code, by wires or over the air, were the nerves of the Station.

Art Spandier and Barney Barnstable were the core of the Radio staff all through the work of the Station. Art had been in aviation radio in British Columbia with United Air Transport, Ginger Coote Airways and Yukon Southern. Barney had his own radio repair business in Edmonton.

Arriving in April, 1941, before the Station opened, the two found themselves without equipment or detailed information as to their duties. A month later the first equipment arrived—four automatic transmitters, of which one was to be lost in the fire that destroyed No. 2 hangar. All equipment in the operating room also was lost in that fire.

While No. 2 hangar was being rebuilt after the fire, and Radio was making shift in the old carpenter shop, the W/T and D/F stations were built west of the camp.

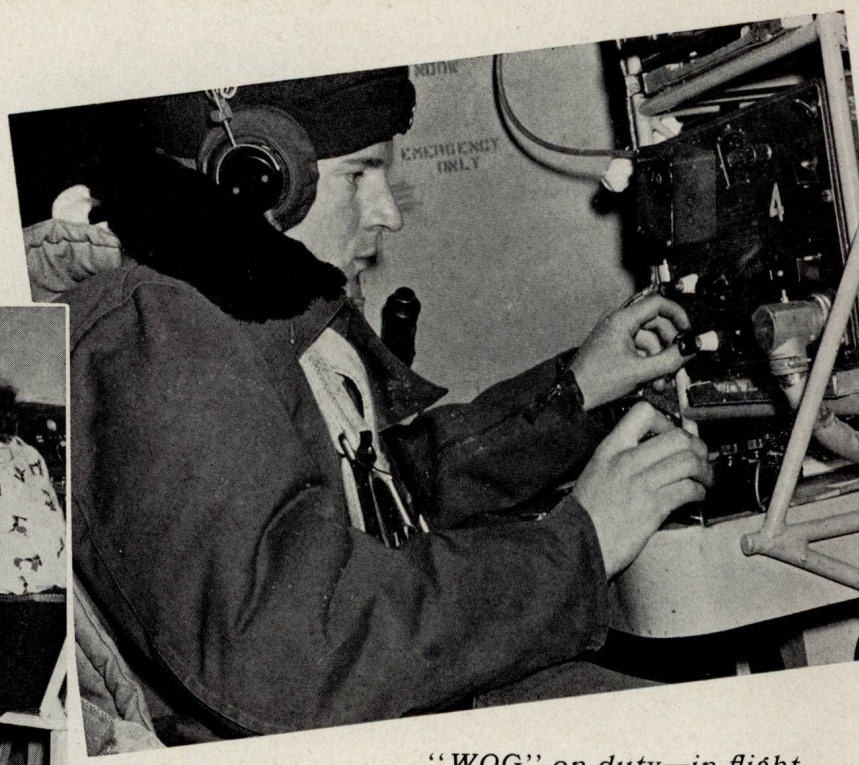
Only four aircraft could be equipped with radio when the first sets arrived. Supplies improved after that, but equipment never caught up with the need, owing to overseas requirements. During the 1942 expansion, only a third of the aircraft had radios, and for many months the Radio staff was doing more shifting of sets than maintaining them. But that was the last bad pinch. The situation was eased somewhat at times by the greater freedom of action in local pur-

RADIO OPERATORS: Joyce Vickers, Gladys Hicks, Art C. Spandier, Mrs. Betty Crawford, Mrs. Penny Donovan. Back row, Erma Brown, F/O J. L. Gartshore, Pat Moran, F/S A. Ted Gibbons, Margaret Hicks.



"WOGettes" on duty—Congo.

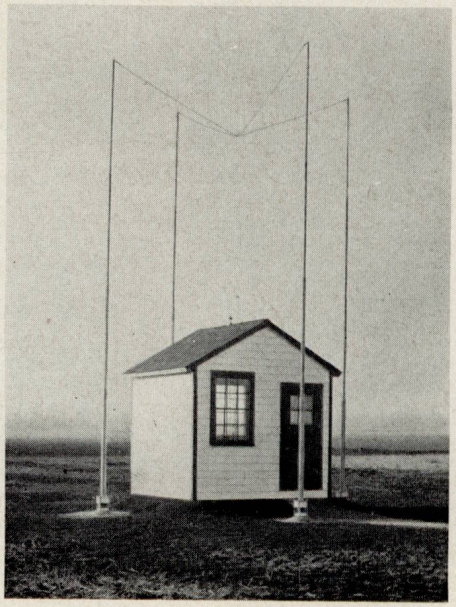




"WOG" on duty—in flight.



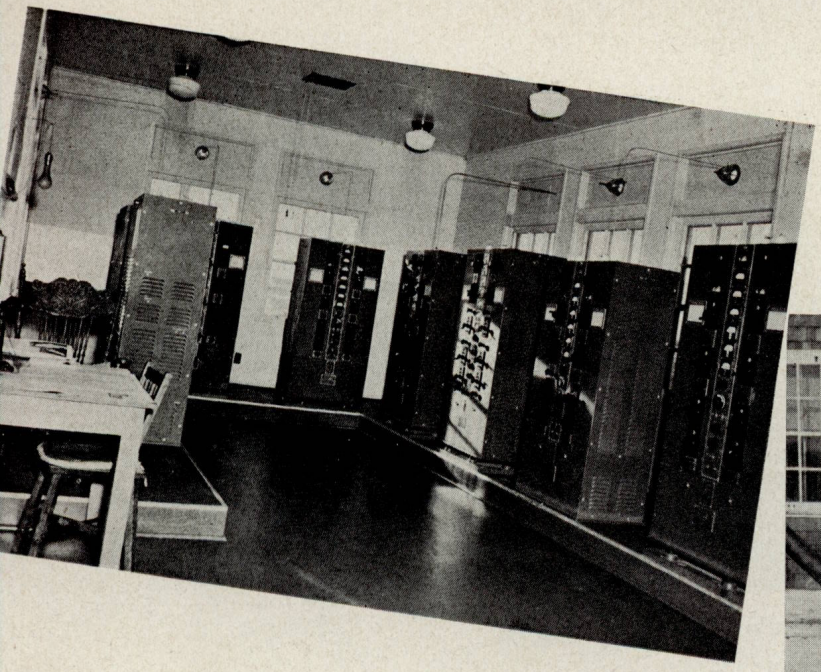
"Cece" Morton at the key.



The D/F shack.

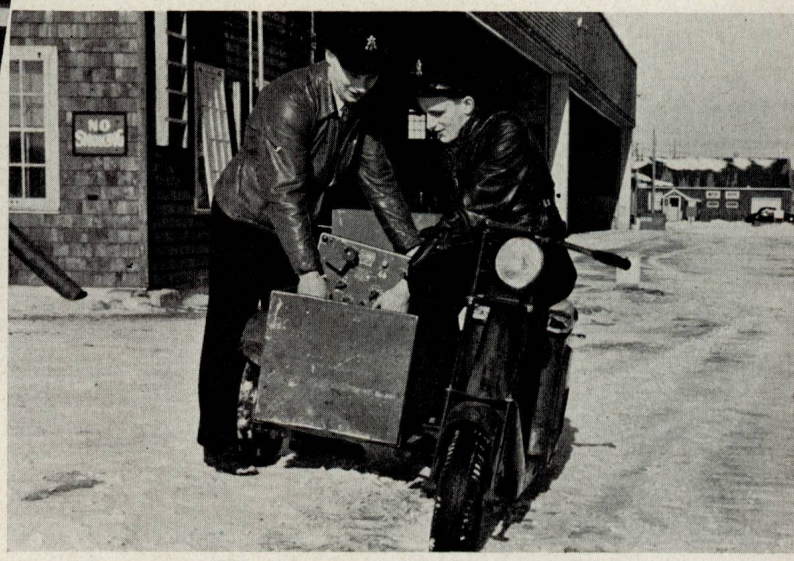


RADIO MAINTENANCE: Front row, left to right, Mel Davis, Martin Murray, Art Spandier, Barney Barnstable, Cliff Hannah. Back row, Martin Voldeng, Harry Hughes, Nick Bocker, Les Andrew, Bill Bereza, William White, Bert Anderson.



The Wireless Transmitter room.

Radio's scooter and a replacement radio set.



chase enjoyed by a civilian-operated school compared with a Service unit, and a number of emergency modifications of equipment were tried out successfully.

Radio/Telephone communication with the aircraft in flight was used until the fall of 1942, when Continuous/Wave sets were installed to give more powerful signals. At the same time, Wireless/Air/Gunners were posted in as operators on the aircraft, to supply the navigators with Direction/Finding bearings and for better communications. It became compulsory to have WAGs aboard on all night flights. Later, all the WAGs were needed overseas, and Wireless/Operators/Ground were posted in to take their places on training flights.

Use of C/W required ground operators. None could be had, so inexperienced local women were hired and sent to the Radio college of Canada at Toronto for a three-months' training course, coming back to the Tower in time for the signals change-over in the fall of 1942. A second group also was sent east for training, but the others who passed through the staff were trained on the Station. Despite the isolation of the D/F and W/T stations off to the west of the camp, girl operators handled the work there more than once when no men operators were available.

In the same year, No. 7 became the control station for the High/Frequency Direction/Finding network from Winnipeg to Rivers.

D/F was doubted by some of the early pilots at first, but soon proved its value. On one such occasion a Winnipeg aircraft lost in the fog thought it was near St. Anne's, when actually it was out over Lake Winnipeg. No. 7 picked it up and gave bearings on it until the aircraft broke through the overcast near Poplar Point and reached a safe landing.

At the peak, 48 were on the Radio staff, as operators and maintenance personnel.

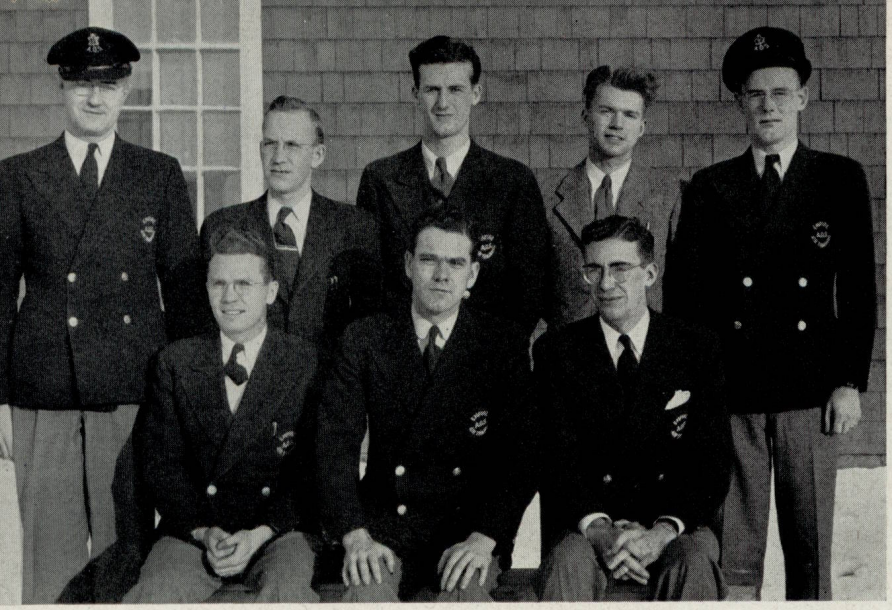


RADIO SHOP STAFF: Front row, left to right, Irma Busby, Boris Novikoff, Isabelle Busby. Back row, J. T. B. Clark, Ed McDonald, Gilbert Gallagher.



Testing in the Radio shop.

MET.



MET. FORECASTERS AND INSTRUCTORS: Front row, left to right, T. H. "Stein" Loptson, Rod. C. McKenzie, o/i/c; J. G. "Quinias" Moe. Back row, George M. Busche, J. Crowley, W. K. "Curly" Godfrey, Alfred F. Ingall, B. Vern Benedictson.



Plotting the day's weather map.

THE weather ruled flying. Keeping advised of weather conditions was the operational duty of the Meteorological section, its other duty being teaching weather lore to students in the Ground School.

The Met. Staff were civilians employed directly by the national Department of Transport and assigned by it to airports as needed. All had to be university graduates, who took a further course of training in meteorology at the University of Toronto. At first there were two Met. men at No. 7, but at the peak, eight, assisted by half-a-dozen Air Force N.C.O.'s and LAC's. Among them, probably the two best known for long service on the Station were Rod McKenzie, in charge of the section for the last two years, and J. "Quinias" Moe, hero of many an argument with the Scandal Sheet over weather forecasting methods.

Weather data were obtained mainly from the stream of reports received over the teletype from observation stations all over Canada and particularly from stations in the West and North; and from local observations, made partly with the aid of weather balloons released from the Control Tower. These local data in turn were transmitted by teletype to other stations. With this information the "huddles" took place as to weather prospects and type of exercise to be flown.



Teletyping Portage observations to other weather stations.



The daily weather huddle—from left, senior duty officer, duty flight commander, and the "weather man."

METEOROLOGICAL SECTION: Left to right, LAC Frankie E. Fairbairn, LAC F. Bernard Muller, LAC Jerry R. G. Milot, Sgt. William C. Hibbert, Cpl. Eric W. H. Laing.



PARACHUTE ROOM

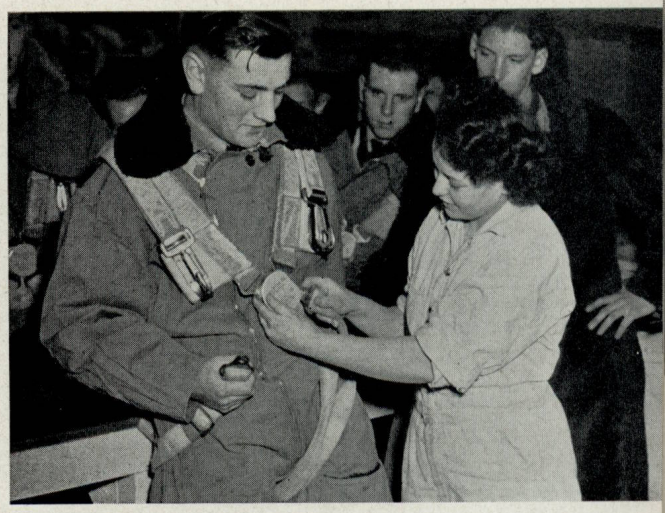


PARACHUTE SECTION: Front row, left to right, Mary McKie, Mrs. Ruby Kennedy, Mrs. Ella Lasell, chief parachute packer; Mrs. Bessie Harvey, Lyla Murray. Back row, Audrey Beech, Mrs. Mable Gray, Mrs. Doreen Walker.

NO one ever had to make a parachute jump from a No. 7 aircraft in the whole history of the Station —"much to the disappointment of the Parachute section," it was alleged.

For the first two years, the section was in charge of Ted Gibson, who had trained at the Toronto Parachute club, and Lorne Benville. Both these men enlisted in the RCAF, and the department became the responsibility of Mrs. Ella Lasell, one of the first class of civilian parachute packers trained at Toronto in May, 1942. Mrs. B. Harvey also trained in Toronto. The other four packers and three Daily Inspection girls were trained by Mrs. Lasell at No. 7.

Each new class coming on the Station received parachute harnesses and a two-hour instruction period from Mrs. Lasell and the section staff. The section was responsible for the records of the equipment, for the location in aircraft of all parachutes, and for the issuing and receipt of all harnesses. At the peak, the section had on charge 523 parachutes valued at $350 each and 1100 harnesses at $84 each. Every 'chute had to be inspected and hung every thirty days, and cleaning and repair of harnesses was continuous. Minor repairs were done in the section; major repairs at No. 8 Repair Depot in Winnipeg.



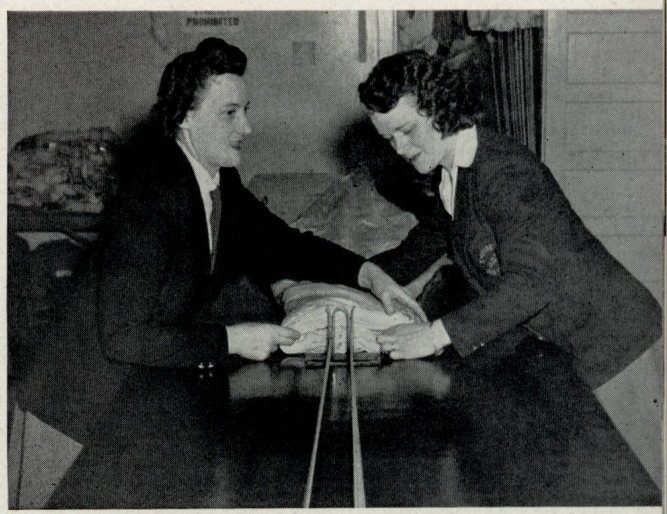
Fitting a student with harness.



Explaining the construction of a 'chute.



Delivering fresh chest-pack 'chutes to an aircraft.



Packing a parachute.

FLIGHT [TIME] OFFICE



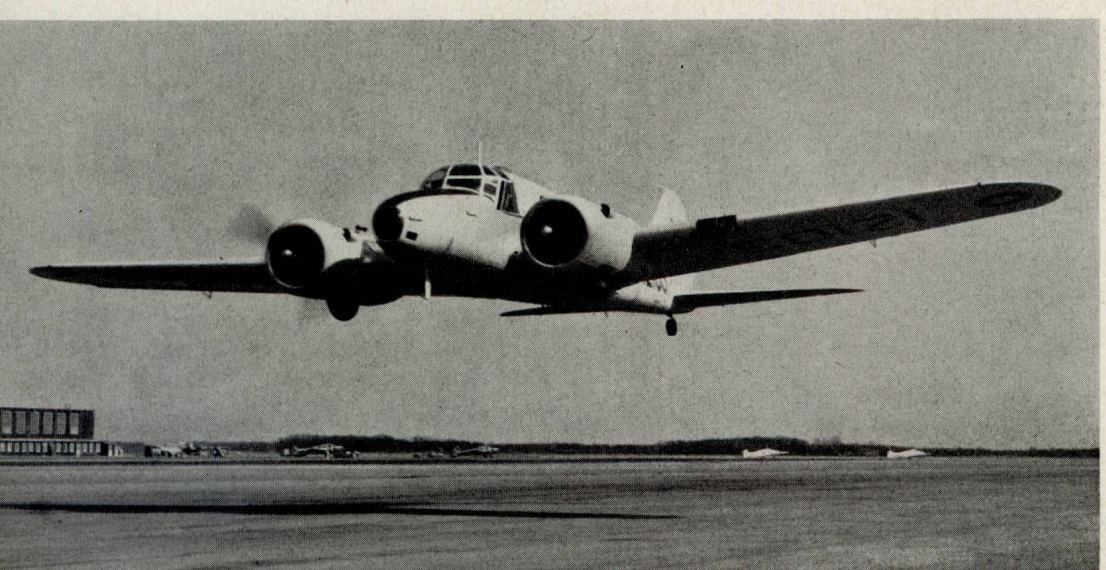
Reporting in from a night flight.

TIME was an important factor in Operations. Pilots were permitted to fly not more than seven hours a day, thirty hours a week, or ninety hours a month; and a personal log book for each pilot had to be kept entered up. Flying time of aircraft and engines was recorded daily so that they might receive periodic checks and overhauls, and to maintain an even flow of aircraft to and from maintenance hangars. Consumption time for gas and oil per hour for each aircraft had to be known. Students' flying time had to be recorded for each student separately, and by classes.

The Time Office and its work were in charge of George Acton, who came to the Station from No. 6 at Prince Albert. At the peak, eight were on staff in the section, most of them from Portage la Prairie district and trained at No. 7.



FLIGHT CLERKS: Front row, left to right, Charlotte Fotheringham, Mrs. Frankie I. Cowan, George H. Acton, Mrs. Edith MacMillan. Back row, left to right, Mrs. S. Reine Stevens, Gwen Montgomery, Elsie I. Porter, Audrey J. Howie.



"Beautiful, isn't she?"







Top—Setting out a flare path—old style.
Second—Setting out a flare path—with electricity.
Third—The "broom" that kept the tarmac clean.



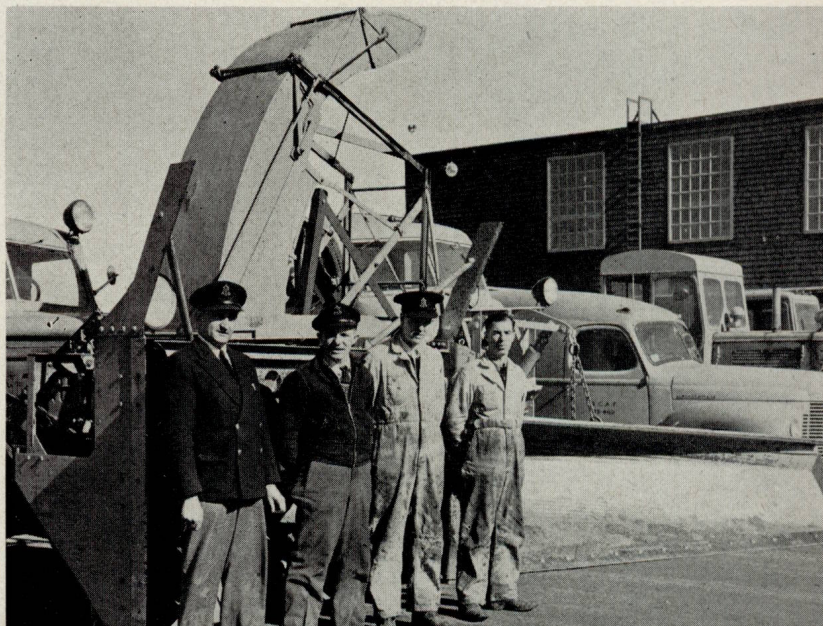
The Sno-go in action.

AERODROME MAINTENANCE

AERODROME Maintenance was not organized as a separate section until 1943, when Cliff Charbonneau came to No. 7 on the closing of No. 3 A.O.S. at Pearce. The section was responsible for laying, changing (when necessary) and picking up field lighting equipment; cutting grass within and around the runways triangle; keeping runway drains clear; patching runways; clearing snow from runways, camp roads, and, at times, the road to town; and for maintaining the road from the camp to the highway.

The snow blower was a massive, impressive piece of machinery, and when heavy snowfalls occurred the crew had to put in long hours—first, to keep open the camp roads, especially so that the fire department would have access to all buildings in case of need; secondly, to clear the runways so that flying could be resumed as soon as possible. Maintenance of their equipment was also the crews' responsibility.

AERODROME MAINTENANCE: Left to right, Clifford "Frenchy" Charbonneau, Bill Carmichael, Lawrence Wood, Jim Smith.





"That's the taxi strip and part of the Line."

AIRCRAFT

THE Aircraft Maintenance Department had two main sections—Flight, and Maintenance or Overhaul. Flight had charge of the serviceable aircraft, and Maintenance was responsible for serviceability, repair, and overhaul.

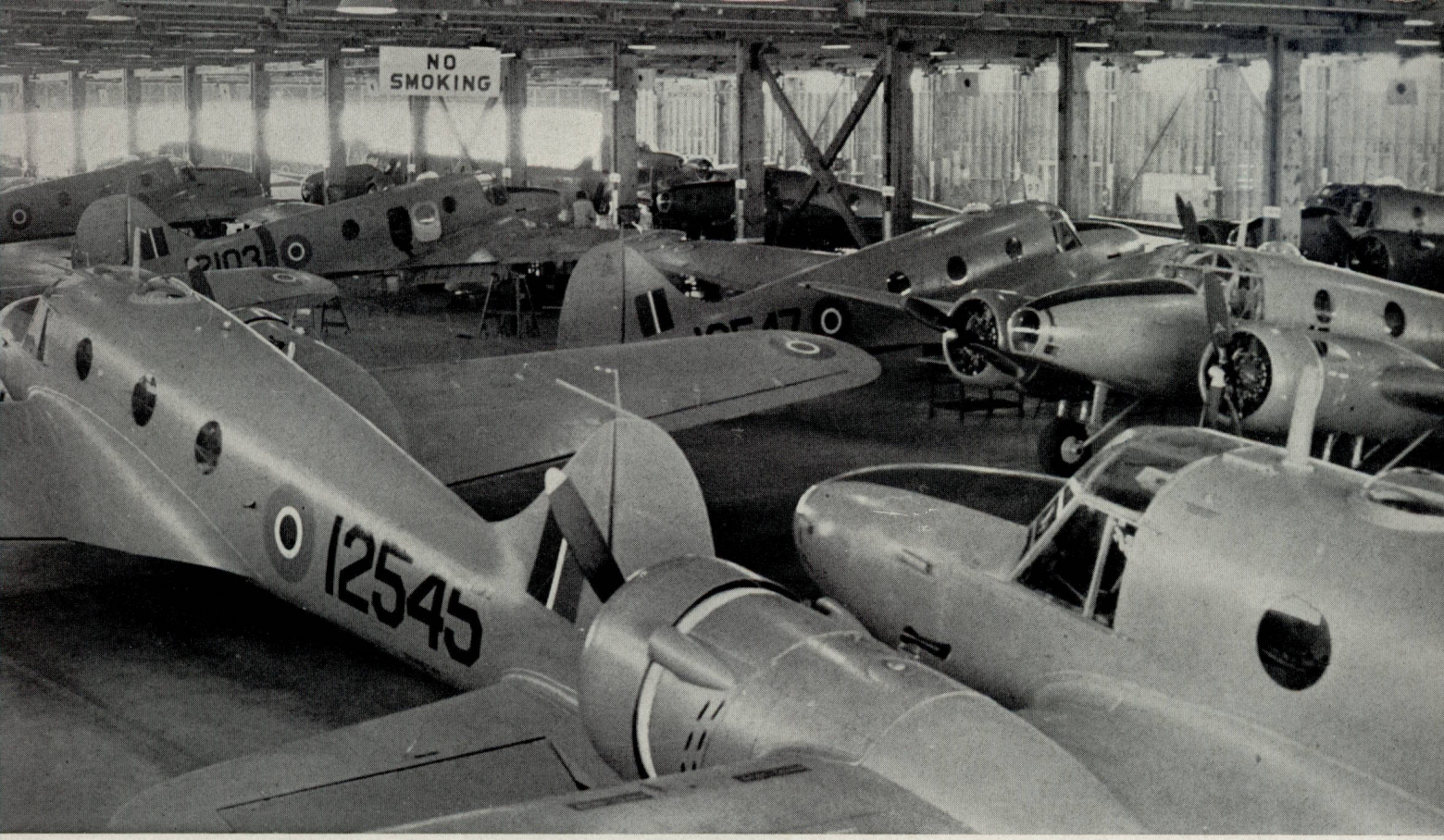
Here again the story was one of gaining experience the hard way. Relatively few aviation mechanics had been trained before the war, and those available were spread thin among the many schools to be staffed.

No. 7 opened with only three men on staff who had been trained in commercial aviation: Rex Terpenning, first superintendent of Maintenance; Fred Bradley and Dannie Trusdell, then senior flight engineers. Nearly all the early staff, which numbered sixteen and gradually grew (until there were 244 at the peak) were picked and trained by these three. And "the biggest headache the first year was overtime for all three!"

Of the rest of the Maintenance staff, perhaps 50 had been auto mechanics before coming to the station. Most of them were from around Portage la Prairie or from Winnipeg. A few trained personnel came from No. 3 A.O.S. at Pearce, when it closed in 1943, and

FLIGHT CREW CHIEFS: Front row, left to right, Bill Kerr, Les Nicholson, Ab Conacher, Jim Davis, Pat Conacher. Back row, L. "Scotty" MacTavish, Don Vincelette, John Gowan. Missing, Gene Riley, Joe Tucker.





In No. 5, the double-double Maintenance hangar.

MAINTENANCE

from No. 2 A.O.S. at Edmonton, when it closed in the summer of 1944.

In 1942 the department experienced some radical changes. Rex Terpenning and Dannie Trusdell accepted positions with C.P.A.L. commercial operations. Fred Bradley became superintendent of Maintenance; Buster Quigley, from No. 2 A.O.S., assistant superintendent of Maintenance; and Ab Conacher, senior flight engineer. These men remained in these posts throughout the expansion and to the end.

Special mention might be made of George Campbell (a graduate of the Boeing School of Aeronautics) the chief instrument man; of Art Dillon, aircraft electrician; and of Jim Medcalf, lathe operator, a pensioned C.P.R. machinist who came out of retirement at 70 years of age, to help. All were specialists and served throughout the lifetime of the School.

The gradual growth of the station proved to be a blessing. It gave an opportunity to train the men when there were few aircraft and little flying, as com-

MAINTENANCE: Front row, left to right, Art Tucker, Erma Jones, Ivan Hodgins, test pilot; Buster Quigley, asst. supt. maintenance; Fred Bradley, supt. of maintenance; Pick Cross, aircraft inspector; Mac. Watson, crew chief; Mrs. Muriel Scott, Muriel Scott. Back row, left to right, George Campbell, i/c instrument room; Art Dillon, i/c electrical shop; Irwin McLeod, Al Cummings, senior aircraft inspector; Art Hinds.



FLIGHT HANGAR CREWS



FLIGHT HANGAR: Front row, left to right, Bob Rusnak, Steve Romanyshyn, Pat Conacher, Fordie Dunn, John Sheridan, Albert Findlay. Back row, Cliff Hostler, Gordon Rutland, L. "Scotty" McTavish, Tom Clarke, Roman Bazin.



FLIGHT HANGAR: Front row, left to right, Beryl Askin, Mary H. McLeeson, Mrs. Margaret Loader, Mrs. Mary Williams. Back row, Lee Davis, Mrs. Audrey McGaw, Mrs. Annie Tufford, Lily Hewins.



FLIGHT HANGAR: Front row, left to right, Harold Hancock, Les Nicholson, Peter Hudy, Aubrey Marks, William J. Smith. Centre row, Blake Taylor, Eugene Riley, Ray Fawcett, Joe Carmichael, John Gowan. Back row, Rheinhardt Saulzsaler, Fred Lundy, Jim Dowd, John Meekings, Jimmy Mills, Milton McIvor.



FLIGHT HANGAR: Front row, left to right, Ed Morris, Joe Tucker, Milt Ogilvie, Guy Johnson. Back row, Mike Germain, Keith Smith, Clarence Denslow, Don Smith.



FLIGHT HANGAR: Front row, left to right, Frank Grant, William Kerr, Bill Egan, Stan Kushner, Paul Maychruk, Art O'Neill, Bob White. Back row, Kelly Smith, Keith Bowes, Don McDonald, Hazen Manderson, Larry Buchanan, Martin H. O'Neill.



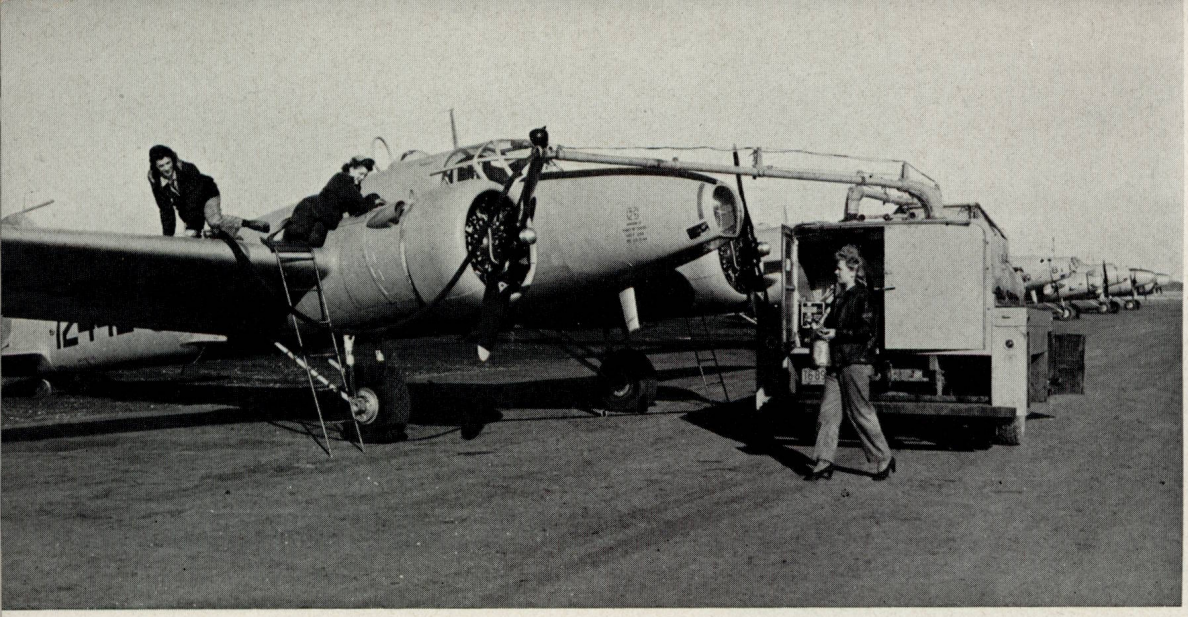
FLIGHT HANGAR: Front row, left to right, Mrs. Hazel Munro, Olga "Peggy" Kowalchuk, Kay Ellis, Mildred McDonald, Lila Currie. Back row, Dalt Treffery, Mrs. Helen Fenny, Jessie McMinn, Ethel Wilkenson, Evelyn Irwin, Harry Bird.



FLIGHT HANGAR: Front row, left to right, George Montagnon, Don Vincelette, Jim P. Davis, Maurice O'Neill, John McIvor. Centre row, Art Irwin, Keith James, Ken Maynard, Teddy Chartrand, Ed Rodenbour. Back row, Bob Arnott, Peter Kowalchuk, Cliff Peffers, Don Gray, Fred Stebeleski.



FLIGHT HANGAR CLERKS: Left to right, Mrs. Gladys Gibbons, Ruth Bunnell, Geraldine Thompson.



Flight hangar girls refuelling an aircraft.

pared with the days to come. As the work and responsibilities grew, these men became crew chiefs and senior engineers, and fulfilled their duties with great credit. Beginning with 12 aircraft, the station had 90 aircraft on charge at the peak.

The arrival of female employees gave rise to many comments as to their possible efficiency and ability to replace men. Their work dispelled all doubt.

On the young station, mechanics and pilots all were billeted in barrack block No. 23. "It was a nightmare for flight crews on night shift to try to get any sleep in the long room, which was the locale for many a session of African dominoes."

Among the crew personnel who wanted to fly, took time off to qualify, and later became pilots on the station, were Les Passmore, Cliff Sawyer, and Jimmy Siddle.

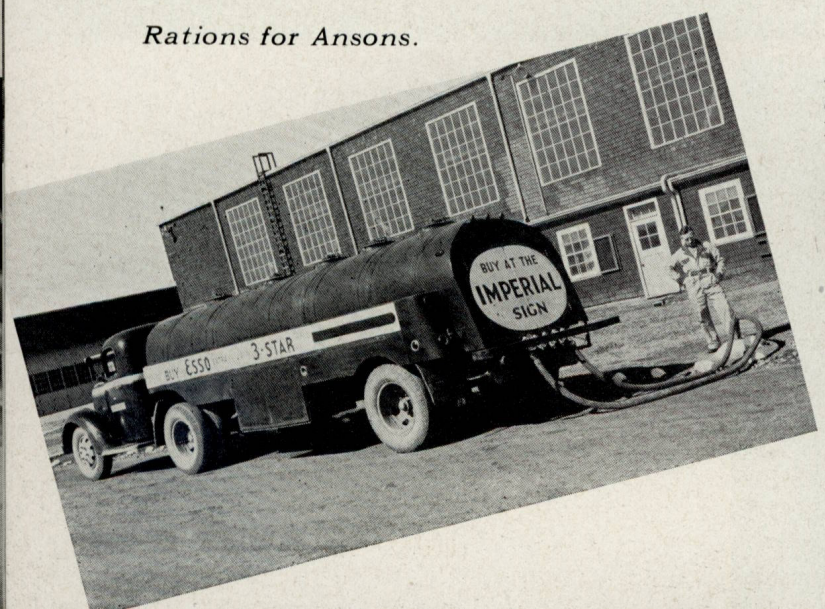
PERHAPS the hardest job assigned to Flight crews was cranking motors. In summer, hot motors were easily flooded and difficult to start; in winter the job was both unpleasant and difficult in cold weather on the icy tarmac. And when the motors did start in winter, one blast from the props was enough to freeze a person on the spot. A few casualties resulted from this task too, including Gordon Lee, who was killed, and others who received injuries.

Flight hangars operated on a 24-hour basis—night flights might be delayed in starting, awaiting further weather reports, with consequent delays in returning. In summer the long evenings made necessary a late start, if the exercise was not to be another day trip. On return, all the aircraft had to be gassed up, brought into the hangar for checking of "beefs," washing and cleaning; and aircraft had to be allotted for the next morning's flights. Flight crews' duties included D.I.'s (daily inspection), minor "beefs," washing, cleaning, refuelling, and placing in Maintenance hangar the ships coming up for check. Until well on in the expansion period, the crew on duty also had to lay and pick up flare paths and man the crash truck. The latter was the only mobile fire wagon on the station until the firehall was built, equipped with a pumper and manned by a special fire-fighting crew.

Gas storage facilities were limited to underground tanks with a capacity of 14,000 gallons. All gas had to be transported by tank truck from storage in Portage la Prairie to the station. All told, in 1944 the station used 2,074,274 gallons of aviation gasoline, and 57,249 gallons of oil, besides large quantities of fabric dope, soft soap for washing down aircraft, and water glass which kept the hangar floors very clean.

To give some idea of Flight operations in 1944, training flying was approximately 6,000 hours per month. With washouts on account of weather, this would average 300 hours per flying day. In a 24-hour period, therefore, one hundred aircraft would take off and land, and the distance flown would be about four times around the Equator.

Rations for Ansons.



THE PIONEER HANGAR GIRLS: Left to right, Iona Bowie, Cora Taylor, Mrs. Elda Crawford, Erma Jones, Hilda Smith, Margaret Briese, Margaret Brydon, Agnes McMurrich.



Putting away an aircraft after a night flight.



Pay day!

MAINTENANCE

MAINTENANCE hangar also had to operate 24 hours a day in the early days. So few ships were on strength and replacements of both aircraft and parts were so scarce, that servicing could be done only as opportunity offered. Lack of space, too, prevented any large number of aircraft being housed for maintenance work at the same time. For this department carried on in the small No. 1 hangar until the large double hangar was ready for occupancy in 1943.

As routine became established, though, working hours in Maintenance were reduced to two shifts per day, so that specially qualified men could give closer supervision to the work being done, and because better work was done without a "graveyard" shift. For these reasons, too, the work was handled in one shift per day after the big No. 5 maintenance hangar was occupied, when enough space became available to permit departmentalizing the work properly.

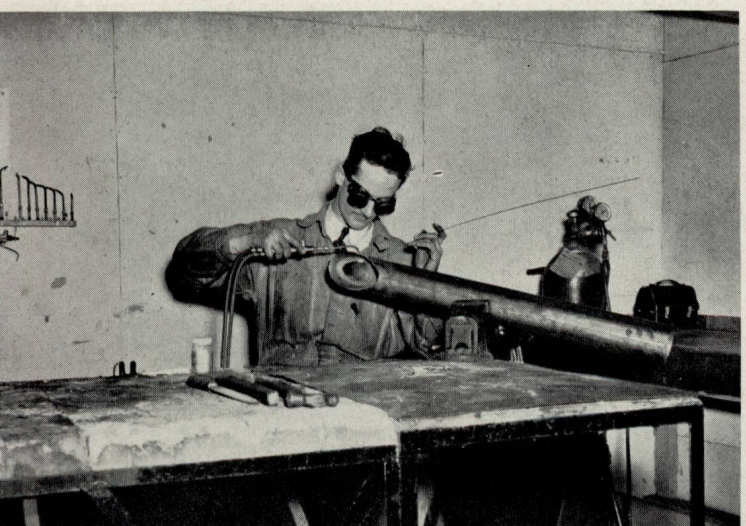
Some idea of the work performed in Maintenance hangar is revealed in the report of January, 1944, when there were 59 50-hour checks, 35 100-hour checks, 27 350-hour checks, 11 engine checks, 7 acceptance checks and 130 "beefs."

In the beginning, few knew anything about Ansons and their motors, and there was little written on the subject. So general knowledge and resourcefulness had to be brought into play constantly. "One plentiful source of arguments was the number of turns required in the cylinder adapter collar to achieve the proper gap in the locking ring. Even the direction of the turns caused discussion."

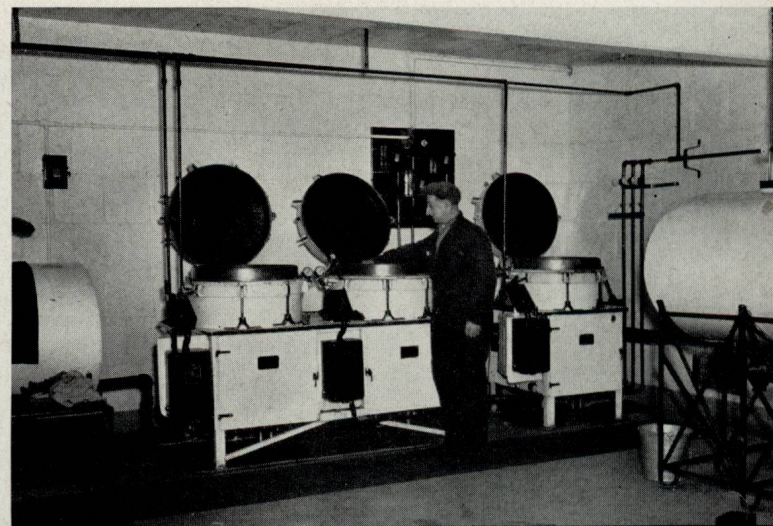
"In the early days of operations at No. 7 A.O.S.," in the words of "Scotty" MacTavish, "there were few tools to be had, either privately or company-owned—there being about one Cheetah repair kit among the crew. The mechanics—or helpers, as most crew members were on arrival—seldom owned more than a pair of pliers. Consequently anybody with a full tool box soon found everyone else used his tools more than he did himself."

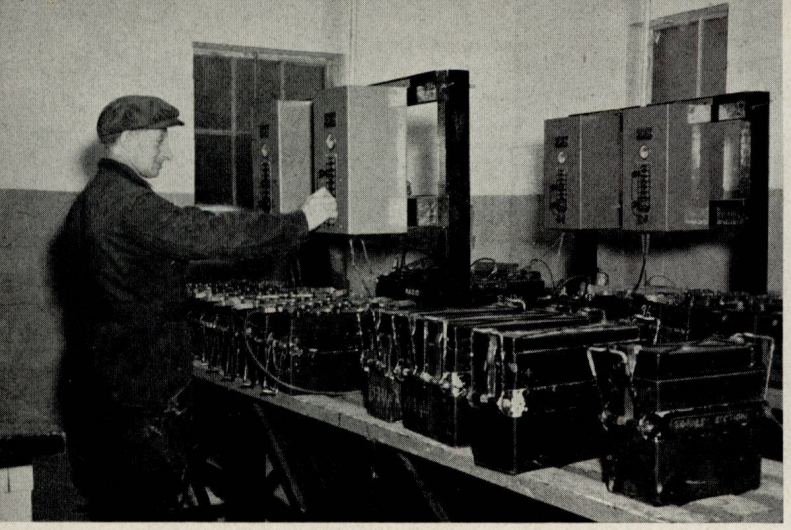
Much hangar equipment had to be constructed on the station—towing bars, battery carts, machine stands, drip pans. Lack of navigation equipment—drift recorders, bomb sights, radios—made things worse, because the aircraft that were equipped had

The welding shop.

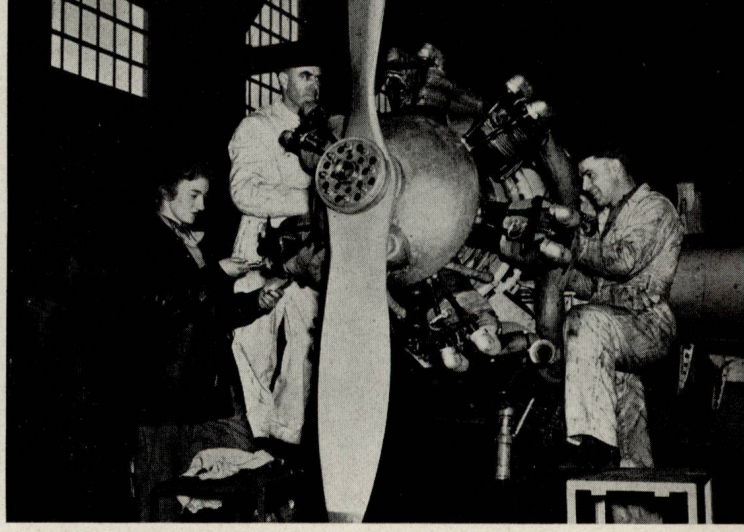


The oil reclaimers.





Testing batteries.



Checking a motor.



MAINTENANCE SHOPS: Front row, left to right, J. Taylor, G. Ingham, Isabelle Busby, Irma Busby, I. Egan, E. Lorch, B. Turner. Middle row, B. Novikoff, P. Raymach, A. Dillon, I. McLeod, R. Harris, J. Zdan, R. Smith, G. Gallagher. Back row, E. Bright, M. Watkin, E. Stocks, B. Donald, E. Thompson, N. McDonald, A. Brown.

to be used most and could not be staggered. Equipment which could be transferred was continually on the move to the serviceable aircraft allotted for flight. All this made extra work for the maintenance staff, and ingenuity was needed daily. However, in time these shortages were overcome. The Armaments section got a truck of its own, instead of having to argue with Flight over when a tractor would be available, and scooters appeared on the scene to speed up the service along "the Line."

Much work had to be done on the aircraft to make them as comfortable as possible. As time went on, engines began to grow old and tired, troubles developed through wear and tear, with replacements hard to get. Ours was the last A.O.S. to receive the new Anson V's, so that the struggle to "keep 'em flying" was that much harder toward the end. Even under such circumstances, though, the flying programme was maintained, and while there were many "returned to base" on account of engine trouble—due to outright deterioration of parts—no serious accidents or damage were caused on this account. Flying crews had every reason to feel confidence in the aircraft pronounced by the mechanical staff to be "Serviceable."

INSTRUMENT ROOM: Front row, left to right, George Campbell, Fred Ellis, Jas. Porter, Jim Lapinsky. Back row, Ed "Stogie" Stock, John Zdan, George Ingham, Merritt Rublee.

MAINTENANCE: Front row, left to right, Frank Walker, Ivan Paton, Jim Humiski, Clayton "Zimmy" Zimmerman. Back row, Roy Fries, Jack Kerr, Madeline Fenwick, Charles Nichols, John Myrold.



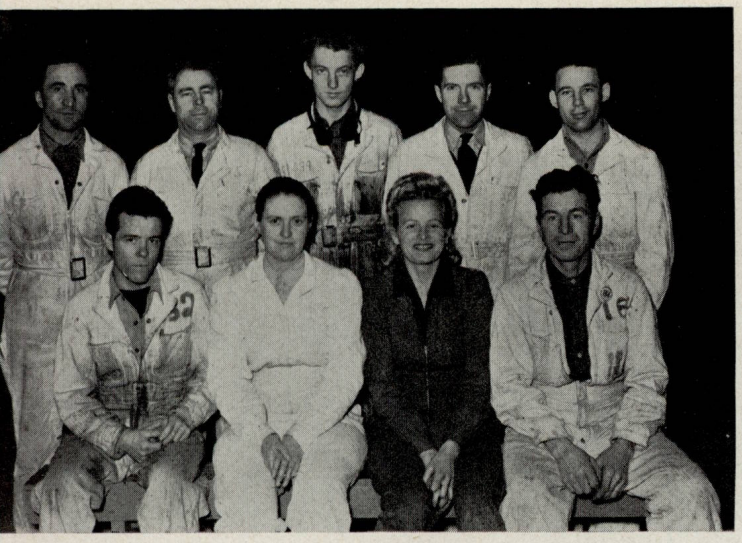




MAINTENANCE: Front row, left to right, Bill Radford, Mrs. Mary Hollins, Mrs. D. "Sis" Graham, George Brown. Back row, Fred Williams, Ivan Rybak, Sam Russell, John Swabuk, Fred "Flash" Bailey.



MAINTENANCE: Front row, left to right, Bill Dickson, E. "Doc" Clark, Bob Campbell, Cliff Braden. Back row, Mike "Red" Metruk, Lawrence Hollins, Elmer Thompson, Wilbur Bonar, Roy Witherspoon.

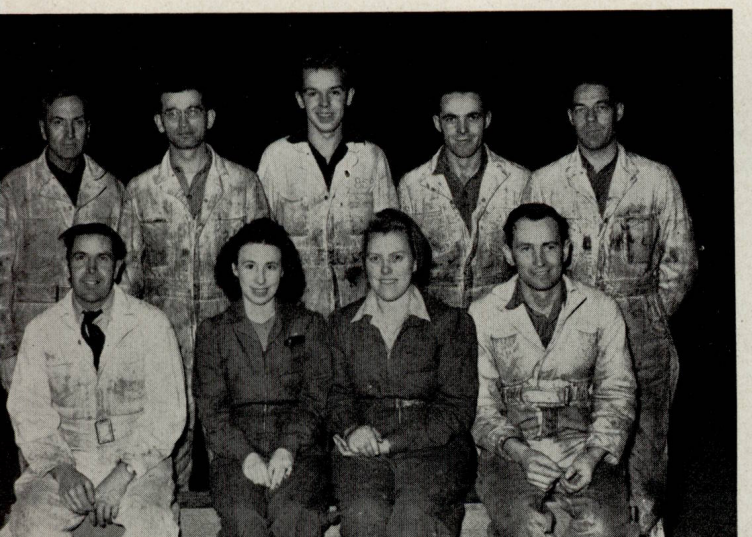


MAINTENANCE: Front row, left to right, Ed Lorch, Mrs. Iris Paton, Ella "Blondie" Kerbis, Don McLean. Back row, Peter Raymack, Norman McDonald, Vic Wiebe, Russ Gordon, John Thorley.

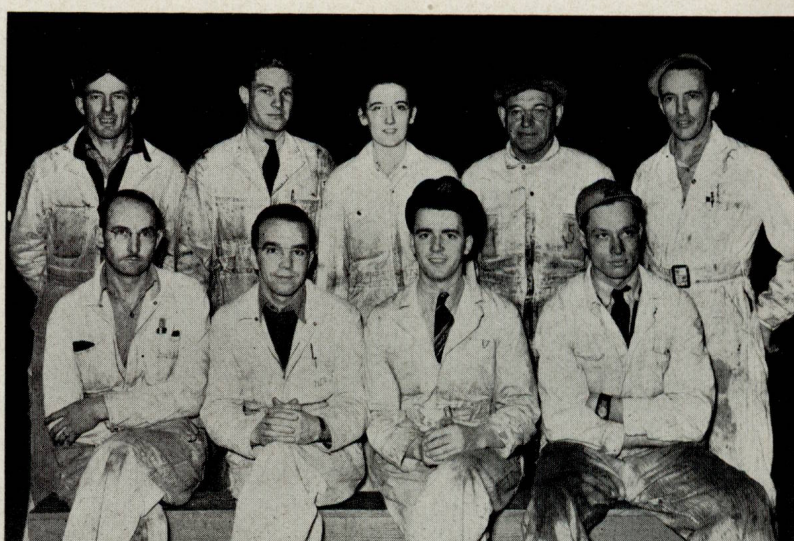


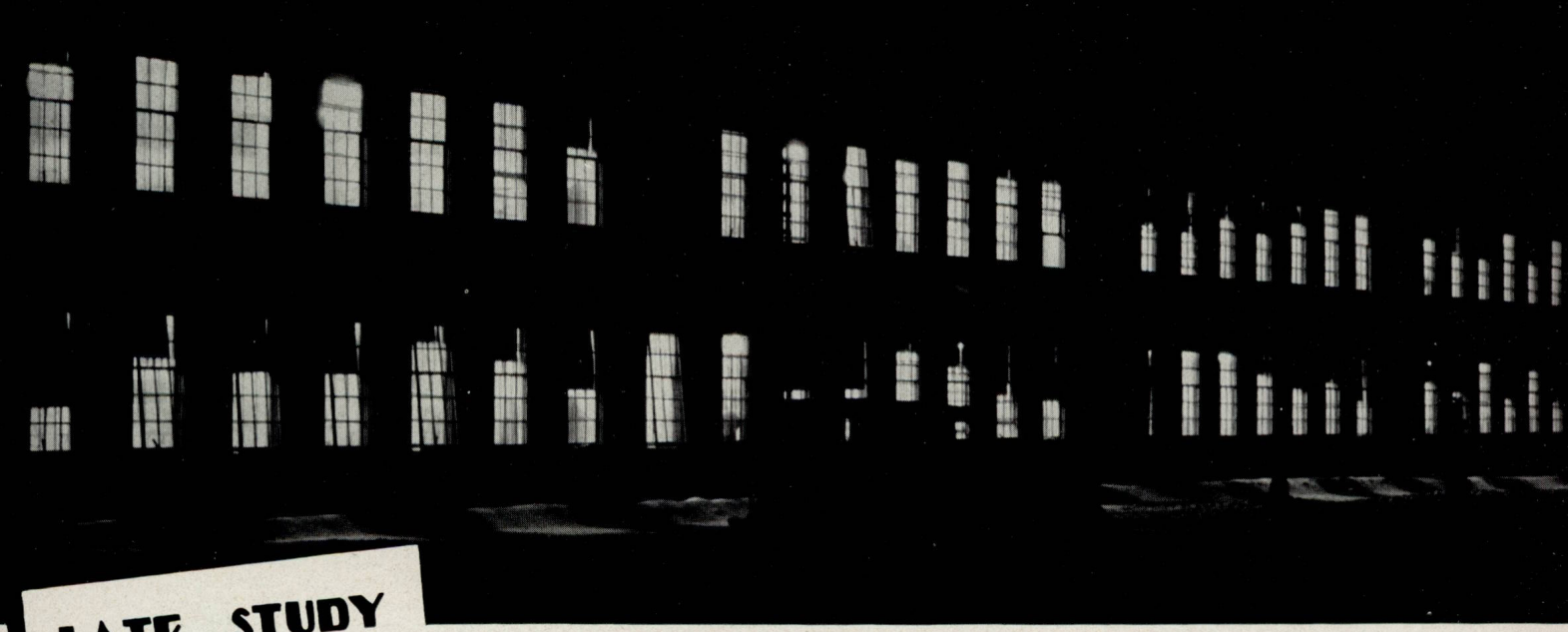
MAINTENANCE: Front row, left to right, Maury W. Bennett, Florence Theobald, Vi Taylor, Tommy Dahl. Back row, Earl Cleveland, Pat Ramsey, Bill Campbell, John Pearce, Henry Davis.

MAINTENANCE: Front row, left to right, Stan Crawford, Mrs. Bertha Nichols, Mrs. Janet Edgeworth, Frank Paull. Back row, Jim Scott, Ed C. Clark, G. "Archie" Farncombe, Perry Batters, Lawrence Christle.

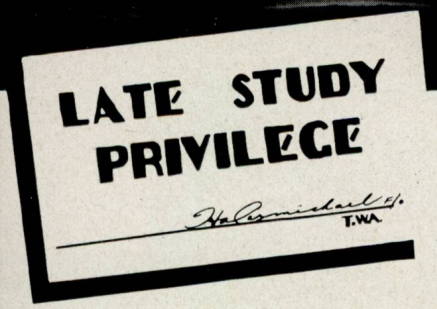


MAINTENANCE: Front row, left to right, Reg. Smith, Norm Brand, Louis Guenette, Sid "Step'n Fetchit" McNish. Back row, Hugh McLaren, Chas. Harkess, Peggy Dennis, Archie McMillan, Bruce Turner.





The G.I.S. by night.



GROUND SCHOOL

THE work of the Ground Instruction School has been sketched in "The Training Story" and "The Student's Experience." Something of the detail and people of the dozen sections that made up the G.I.S. and its related services will be found in the following pages. Unfortunately, the group pictures can show only a few of those who staffed the Ground School through nearly four years. For it was staffed entirely by R.C.A.F. service personnel; and this personnel changed continually, with routine postings and replacements.

On two of the Chief Instructors fell the heaviest responsibility for organization of the G.I.S.—S/L D. B. Riddell, who directed it for the first fourteen months; and S/L Wilf Hawkins, C.I. during the great expansion of 1943. F/L J. S. Nutt followed the former. The latter handed over to S/L Bob Proudfoot, who came to the Station on Sept. 1, 1941, as a Pilot Officer ("Junior"), was there when the Station closed, and in between did duty up to Acting C.S.O.



Gremlins!



TRAINING WING ORDERLY ROOM: Left to right, F/S Douglas Hadcock, Kaye Devereaux, Margaret Glennie, Thelma Hourie.

EARLY NAVIGATION INSTRUCTORS: Front row, left to right, F/O E. T. Cook, P/O Hal Cumming, F/O Don McLaren, F/L Art E. Buller, F/L R. Proudfoot, F/L Jim S. Nutt, F/L Fred L. Cooke, F/L A. F. Banfield, F/L Bob J. W. Pollock, F/O Jimmy L. Stein, P/O George Loveday. Centre row, left to right, P/O J. C. H. Blackburn, P/O P. Tom Burch, P/O Karl E. Chambers, P/O L. G. M. Self, R.A.F., P/O Art W. T. Martin, P/O Bill A. Moore, P/O Mel Pipe, P/O Ken D. Kemp, P/O Tom C. Wilson, P/O C. Ray Yarham. Back row, P/O Fred Bardal, P/O Dewi C. Jones, P/O Ellard Yeo, P/O Ray McLeod.



In the Ground School, the familiar problem of shortages took many forms. The ideal was to have the same classroom be headquarters for a course all through its time on the Station. But during the expansion, classes were held in hangars, barracks, and all over the camp. Equipment shortages were by-passed with similar "make-do"—needed dividers once being got from the 15-cent store in Portage la Prairie. Organizing routine, too, was a headache, for time-tables varied endlessly with changing weather, syllabus, messing space, etc.

THE Navigation Instructors were the backbone of the G.I.S., for the skill they taught was the point of the School's existence. To the students whom they initiated into the mysteries of dead reckoning and the rest, they were guardians of the holy of holies. To themselves, they were in transit, instructing for a while between their own graduation from A.O.S. and the long-awaited posting overseas. In later years, more and more of the instructors were returned ex-ops men, passing on their combat experience.



NAVIGATION STORES: Background, left to right, LAC Norman "Sunshine" Newmark, Cpl. Dick Lineham. Missing, Sgt. J. E. A. "Scotty" Campbell.



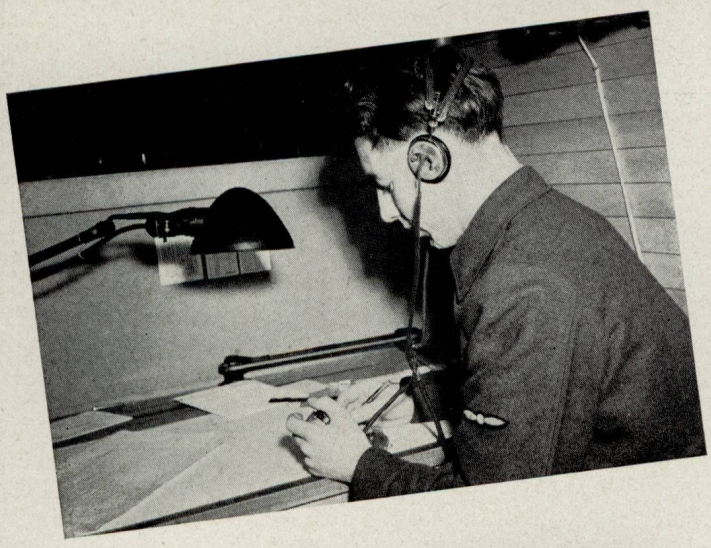
NAVIGATION INSTRUCTORS: Front row, left to right, F/O H. "Hutch" Hutchinson, F/O Harvey Carmichael, F/L Fred Bardal, F/L Hal Cumming, F/O Jim McCue, F/O H. E. Miller. Centre row, F/L Bob Blackburn, P/O George Carroll, P/O Hank Giesbrecht, F/O Ken Burns, F/O Jack Sword. Back row, F/O John Bradstock, F/L Louis Woycik, F/O George Brealey, F/O Roy McMichael, F/O Joe Price.

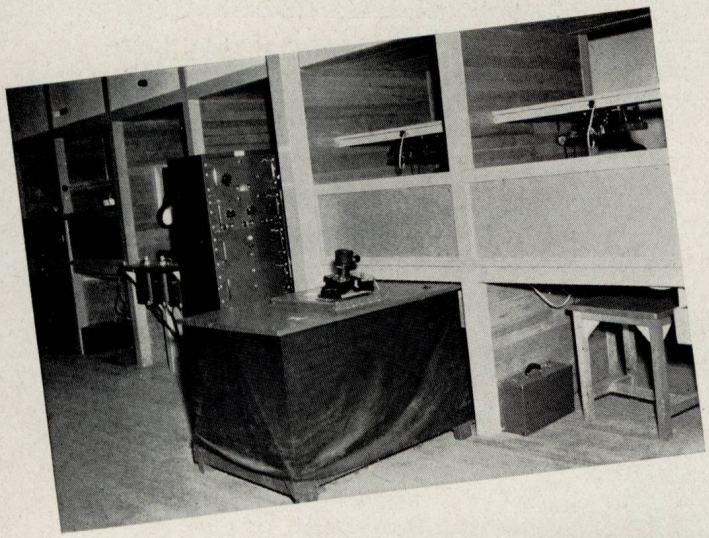


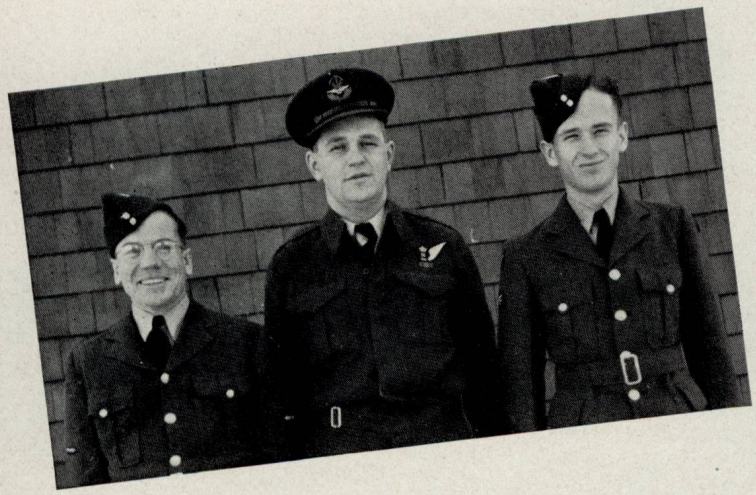
NAVIGATION INSTRUCTORS: Front row, left to right, P/O Norm Reid, F/O Ed Stoltz, F/O Bob Warner, F/L Don Hagel, P/O D. E. Wells, F/O H. "Steve" Stevens. Back row, F/O "Gene" Smith, F/O C. "Wally" Wallace, F/O "Chuck" Williams, F/O Bill Hansen, F/O Roy Hurdle, P/O M. B. "Blacky" Blackwood, F/O R. H. W. Bissonnette.



NAVIGATION INSTRUCTORS: Front row, left to right, F/O Ralph King, P/O Jack Page, P/O Tom Gray, F/O George C. Grant, F/O Hal "Buck" Kelly. Centre row, F/O Jack Fargey, F/L Stan Hepher, F/L Herbert Grantham, F/O Ed Scammell, F/O W. T. Newnham. Back row, P/O Bill J. Maxted, P/O Art MacFarlane, F/O Clarence Lister, F/O Jack Gracey, P/O Jack McAlpine.







Top—A "Navigator" at work in the S.D.R.T.

Second—S.D.R.T. cubicles, from the gangway.

Third—S.D.R.T.: Left to right, LAC Howard Klassen, F/L Louis "Lucifer" Woycik, AC1 Dave Cordingley.

SYNTHETIC TRAINING

S.D.R.T. and C.N.T. were economy moves. A student learned the theory of navigation in a classroom from Navigation instructors. The S.D.R.T. and C.N.T. sections rehearsed him on the ground in navigational skills, under conditions as nearly as possible like those he would meet in the air. Through the work of these sections, fewer aircraft and crews, less gasoline and other supplies were needed for training purposes.

S.D.R.T.

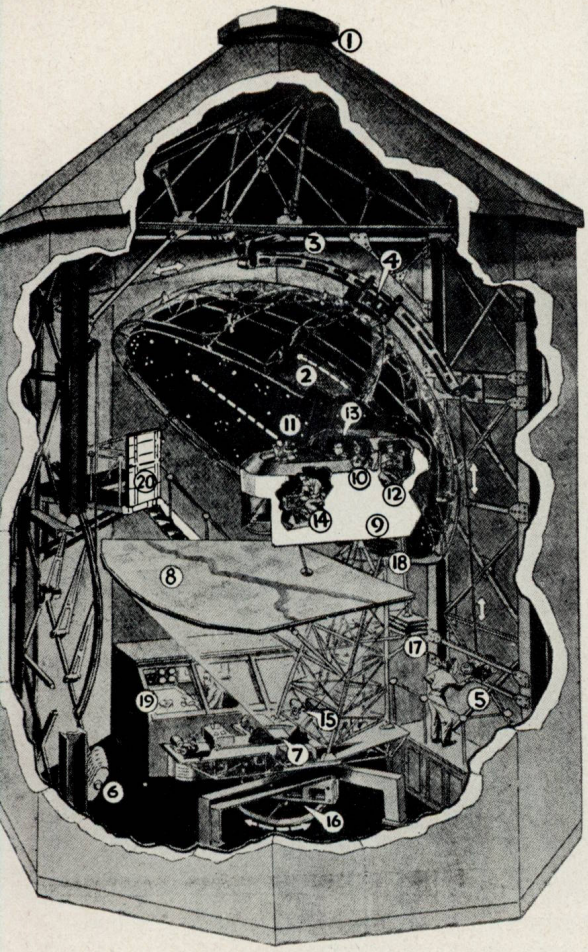
S.D.R.T. stands for Synthetic Dead Reckoning Trainer. The basic skill in all navigation—in the air or at sea—dead reckoning is the process of deducing one's present position from one's last known position, by mathematical calculations using, in the air, course, known air speed, wind direction and wind velocity.

The S.D.R. Trainers, housed in the G.I.S. building, were a series of cubicles. Those on one side were occupied by students taking the part of "Pilots"; on the other, by "Navigators." On the front of the Pilots' cubicles were the usual instruments found on an aircraft panel, which were clearly visible to the Navigators across the room. A Nav's cubicle contained a Direction Finding receiver, plotting arm, plotting table, and for "night exercises," an astrograph bracket. Pilots and Navigators could speak by means of intercom to each other or to Control, who operated the Drift Recorder.

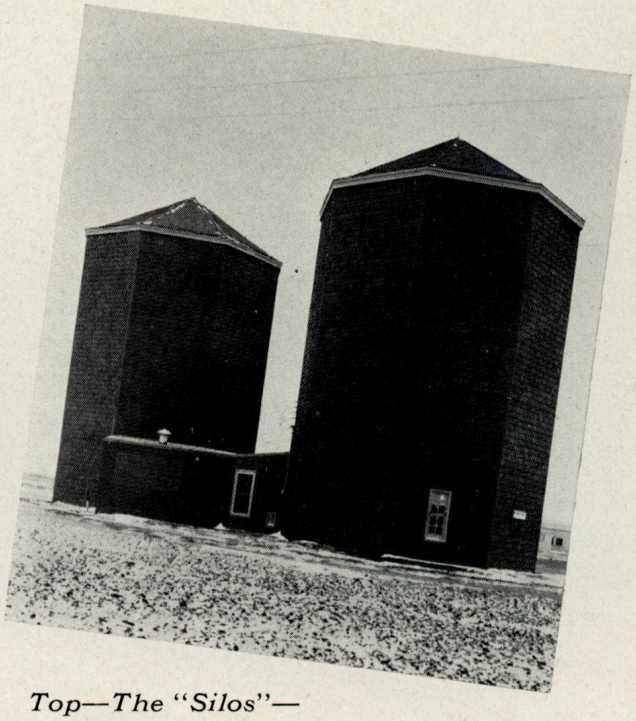
Before each exercise, a class would be split into teams, consisting of a pilot and navigator. At "briefing," a "Pilot" was given complete information about the trip, weather conditions, wind velocities, air speed, cloud, etc. A "Navigator" was given the route and predicted weather. On an exercise, the "Pilot," governed by the time shown by a large clock on the wall, fed navigational data to his "Navigator" by means of the instrument board, intercom, drift recorder and astrocompass settings. As the student's experience grew,



In the Astrograph room. (Australian students in dark uniforms).



1 Ventilator excludes daylight.
2 Lights in dome represent navigating stars.
3 Heavy, curved steel rail supports dome.
4 Gear box moves axis, motor rotates dome.
5 Motor winch and cable move dome along rail.
6 Weight counterbalances load of dome.
7 Projector throws image of terrain on screen.
8 Terrain plate receives projected image.
9 Fuselage mounted on universal joint.
10 Pilot uses standard instruments, controls.
11 Navigator takes bearings from "stars."
12 Radio man sends and receives messages.
13 Copilot or other crew member.
14 Bombardier uses sight. Hits are shown.
15 Smoke blower produces cloud effects.
16 Turntable revolves as pilot uses rudder.
17 Bellows tip fuselage for dive or climb.
18 Bellows bank fuselage as ailerons are used.
19 Operator rules sky, earth, and radio.
20 Crew enters fuselage via loading bridge.



Top—The "Silos"—
Celestial Navigation Trainers.

Left—The anatomy of a "Silo."

C.N.T.

he was required to use advanced navigational equipment and technique. Instructors supervised each exercise to correct his technique.

To imitate flying conditions, standard patter was used on the intercom, and information for the Navigator was available to him only, just as it would be in actual flight. For "night flights," the rooms were darkened and the students worked by table lamps. Astro fixes were completed by means of the astrograph. There were even machines to create aircraft noise. In short, there was almost everything but the smell of an Anson.

F/Lt. A. W. T. Martin headed the section when it began operations in 1943, his successor being F/Lt. J. C. H. "Blackie" Blackburn, D.F.C.—who, incidentally, along with WO.1 Crawford, was in part responsible for the introduction by the R.C.A.F. of the Astro-Compass in S.D.R.T. work.

THE C.N.T. was The Mystery of the camp, from the time the two "silos" beside the main entrance road were built in 1943.

The initials "C.N.T." stand for Celestial Navigation Trainer—a trainer in which students, grouped as air crews, could practice on the ground the flight routine and the skill in navigating by the stars which they would use on operations along with dead reckoning, ground fixes, wireless, radio and radar. The trainer could be set up for the skies or terrain of any part of the globe, or of any flight range, and all the conditions met with on an actual bombing mission could be presented by ingenious electrical and mechanical gadgets.

With the aid of the cut-away diagram above, let us join a crew on a typical exercise in a C.N.T.

A few hours before "take off" time the crew is briefed by an instructor in exactly the same manner as on an operational flight.

EARLY STAFF, C.N.T.: Front row, left to right, WO2 Joe Harrison, F/L J. C. H. Blackburn, F/O Bert Marion, F/L Art W. T. Martin, WO2 Jim Martin. Back row, F/S Al "Quinn" Cohen, Cpl. W. G. Heath, Sgt. Carl J. J. Wright, Cpl. Hal Mackey, Cpl. Jack Watts, F/S Russ Walker, F/S Roland Bourgouin.





"Bombing up" an aircraft.

Fusing bombs, in the fusing hut.



The crew climb into the "aircraft." Pilot, navigator, wireless operator and bomb aimer take up their respective positions and make their usual checks.

In the meantime, the dome has been set to the latitude and longitude of the point of start. The terrain plate has been adjusted to coincide with base. Clocks have been set, and magnetic variation controls have been introduced by the instructor.

The crew test the intercom. And the pilot informs the operator that they are ready to go.

The operator throws a switch and the problem begins. The pilot revs his motors, takes off, and climbs to the required altitude by means of his instruments. The navigator hands him a course to fly and they are on their way.

Meanwhile the operator has introduced a synthetic wind velocity, which the navigator must find before he can reach his target. At first, he is able to check his drift on the terrain passing below and even pick up a few landmarks, although this can be made more difficult by the operator introducing any degree of cloud density. Gradually the ground below dims out and the stars begin to appear, until astro and wireless become the only means of navigation.

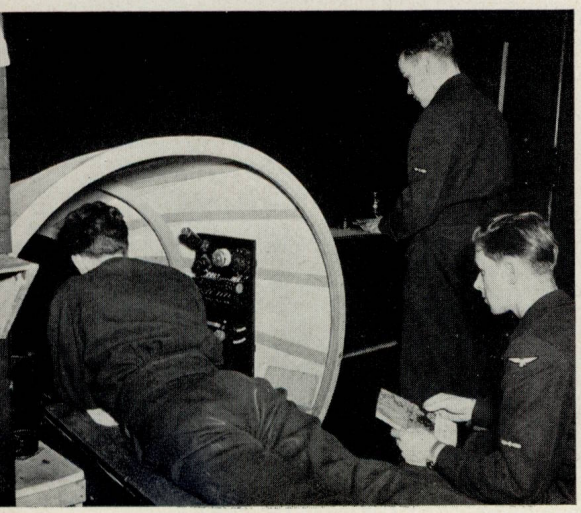
So the hours go by, with every member of the crew so absorbed in his own job that he has forgotten that he is not actually in an aircraft in flight.

Down below in the control room a "Crab" crawling slowly across a large-scale map traces the track of the aircraft and records every alteration of course. After the problem is over the crew descend; and by means of the track duplicated on the operator's map, the trip is analysed and marked.

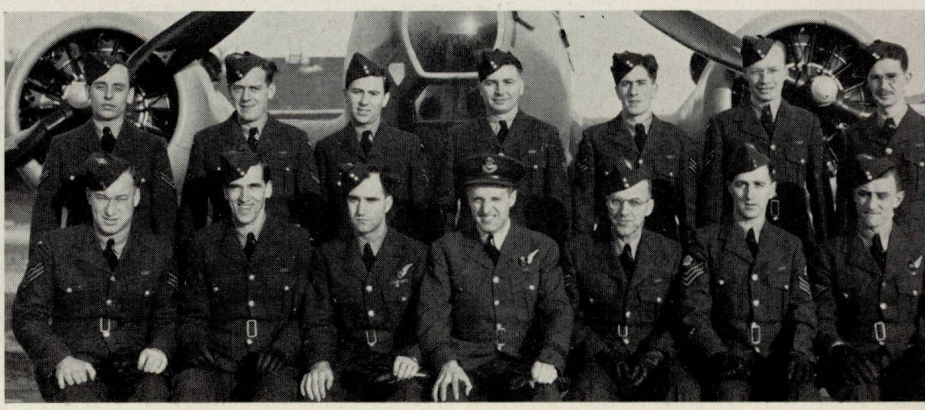
Each student received some eight hours in the C.N.T. This kept the trainers operating eighteen hours a day, with the remaining hours for maintenance and overhaul.

The operators, who changed frequently, all were repatriated personnel, former Observers and Navigators, most of them with operational experience.

In the "Bomb Teacher."



ARMAMENT INSTRUCTORS: Front row, left to right, Sgt. John A. Ward, Cpl. A. W. "Slim" Banick, WO2 Don M. Coates, F/L Johnny M. Cruse, F/S Jock C. Williamson, F/S J. Art Maddin, Sgt. Sam Tchir. Back row, Cpl. Vic McIntosh, Cpl. Bob Stark, Cpl. Mel Lands, Sgt. Alex Leysak, Sgt. Bob Bentley, Sgt. Jack Dunlop, F/S Jack Reeves.





At the machine-gun butts.

In the Armament classroom.



ARMAMENT

BOMBS away!" was the purpose and climax of all bomber operations. Gunnery was the bomber's means of defence. And the Armament section was responsible for training and practice with both bombs and machine guns, and for the upkeep of equipment, including the fusing and loading of bombs.

An 11½-pound practice bomb was used in flying exercises. In the early years, these were filled on the Station, with a liquid that exploded and made a smoke marker, on impact. Later the bombs were assembled on the Station, by the insertion of an explosive smoke cartridge and a detonator. The live, fused bombs then were conveyed to the aircraft and loaded in the bomb carriers.

Small though the bombs were to look at, when fused they were not to be trifled with, as a bulged fusing hut and a damaged aircraft wing demonstrated on occasions.

The Section comprised two groups of staff, the Instructors and the Armourers. The Instructors were classed as Bombing or Gunnery Instructors, according to specialty. The Armourers were responsible for the care and supply of bombs, bomb carriers, bomb sights, machine guns, etc. They did the assembly, fusing, loading and unloading of bombs, with a healthy respect for their charges.

Air Bomber students got their first practice in the "Bomb Teacher," a synthetic bombing trainer where, lying prone in the mock-up of an Anson's nose, the student aimed by electricity at targets on the floor a storey below him. Bombing became real on the bombing range, a section of pasture land seventeen air miles north-east of the Station, near Poplar Point. The spotters in the range hut there could talk to pilots in the air by radio, and to the Station by telephone, for direction and speedy reporting of exercises and results.

Gunnery was practised at the gun butts in the camp —and the whole camp was well aware of practice hours. Repair shops were in the Armament rooms in No. 2 hangar.

The first Armament Officer on the Station was F/L Jack Adams, an original who later became Armament Officer on a base overseas. Of his successors, F/L "Johnny" Cruse served longest on the Station.



ARMOURERS: Front row, left to right, Tom Milligan, Joe Prevost, F/S Harry Barnes, F/L Johnny M. Cruse, Norm Louttit, H. "Rip" Van Winkle. Back row, W. D. Pattenden, Ralph Thomas, Ed Currie, William Ferens, George Henwood, Steve Gledhill, Ed Diemert.

SIGNALS



Signals practice —Spark.

SIGNALS are the nerve system of aviation, for without them the long-range operation of aircraft would be impractical. Weather information, position reports and bearings, reconnaissance data, crew consultations —all the gen by which operations are conducted flows by electricity back and forth between aircraft and base, and within the aircraft.

In a bomber, Signals routine was handled by a Wireless Air Gunner. But the WAG might be knocked out in action, or in smaller aircraft there might not be room for a WAG. The rest of the crew had to be able to fill in if needed. So the Observer, Navigator and Air Bomber were required to be able to handle eight words a minute in code, by key or lamp, on graduating from A.O.S.

The Signals section not only trained the students. It also kept the pilots practised up to speed in signals, for emergencies; and it directed the scores of WAGS and later WOGS who manned the keys and radios of the training aircraft on the Station. During operations on the Station, three WAGS were killed in crashes—Sgts. Raisin, McIntyre and Opie.

F/S "Ted" Gibbons, one of the originals who arrived in April, 1941, was the old reliable of Signals through the whole history of the Station. He was in charge of the section until August, 1942, when the first Signals officer arrived, F/O "Smoky" Robson, D.F.M.



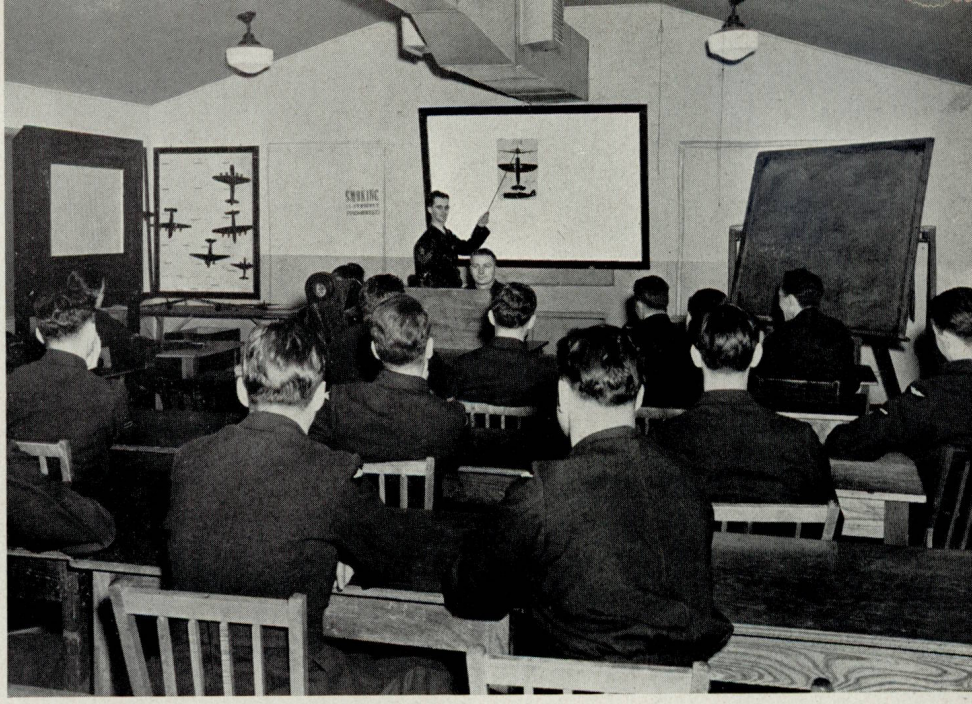
SIGNALS STAFF: Left to right, Cpl. Wes. W. Groves, Cpl. E. A. Durand, Cpl. Mike Boskwich, F/S A. E. "Ted" Gibbons.



Signals practice —Lamp.



The continuous A/C Rec. contest.



"Now you see it—now you don't."

A/C REC.

FRIEND or foe?" The answer to that question meant life or death, when an airman on operations sighted another aircraft in the air. Sometimes friend was as dangerous as foe, for more than once, friendly aircraft were shot down by our own guns, from the air or the ground. Thus the subject of Recognition—of aircraft, ships and vehicles—was found ever more important as the war went on.

Endless practice in recognizing models, silhouettes, pictures on slides, photos with or without the aircraft in cloud cover, or use of the "electric spotter," was the means of training. An "aircraft of the day" was posted daily for identification, on a notice board where all students would pass it. And a weekly competition was run, with theatre tickets as the prize for the high scorers of the week. Unofficially, a "rumble fund" was operated. Any student or instructor who could not name the aircraft of the day when challenged had to pay 25 cents to this fund, for the refreshment of the course at their graduation dinner.

A/C Rec, as it usually was called, operated as a branch of the Armament section. Magazines had to be guarded in the vicinity of A/C Rec. instructors, for they were always on the hunt for pictures showing aircraft in postures or from angles that their students had not seen before.

PHOTOGRAPHY

WHAT is the enemy doing?" "What did we do to him?" These questions are the basis of all war planning. A photograph could give the most exact and detailed answer in 1939-45. So it was the duty of the Station photographic section to train students in the use and care of aerial cameras.

The standard Air Force aerial camera could be used in three ways—for hand-held oblique "shots" at the subject; for verticals, for which the camera was fixed in a frame that pointed it through a hole in the floor of the aircraft; and for overlapping exposures, to be used in constructing a "line overlap" to be re-photographed as a single picture.

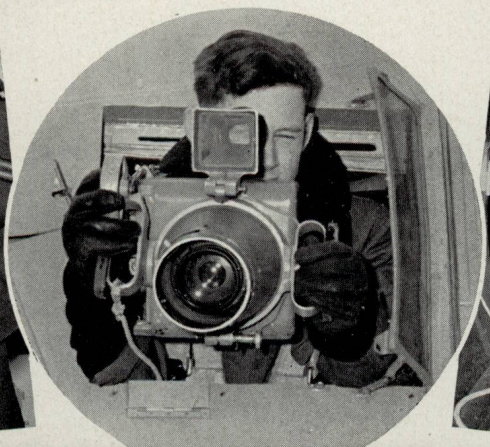
The student had to know the parts of the camera; its common troubles, in order to fix them in the air; what views to look for; types of filters, length and frequency of exposures to be used, according to height and speed of the aircraft and atmospheric conditions.

When aerial photography was transferred to the syllabus of other schools, pictures still had to be made at No. 7, to identify positions and turning points on training flights. This was so, particularly, in training for the square search, a system of searching for something lost in which the searching aircraft fly in ever larger, broken squares around a central point, until the area is covered or the lost is found.

Left—Checking an aerial camera on the test stand—F/S "Mickie" Potoroka, Cpl. C. J. Gingras.
Centre—Taking a "hand-held oblique" from an aircraft in flight.



Right—Fitting the camera through the floor of a Mark V Anson for a vertical "shot."







A. L. T.

ED. OFFICER

The Airmen's reading-room.



AIRCREW LEADERSHIP TRAINING: Left, F/O Jack H. Sword; right, AC2 Ronnie Griswold.

MORE than any other service, the Air Force operated, in combat, in small groups—the crews of aircraft. When the skipper of an aircraft was knocked out in action, some one had to take over, if the crew was to have the best chance of returning to base. So Aircrew Leadership Training was added to the syllabus in the major revision of 1942.

A.L.T., as it usually was called, centred on giving the student experience of responsibility. For this purpose, students were assigned, in turn, to perform the duties of Station officers up to the rank of Wing Commander. During their tour of such duty, these students wore the insignia of their temporary rank in a special form. Parades, inspections, barrack rounds, orderly duties, etc., were carried through with notable smartness under the command of these student officers. And those with potential qualities of leadership showed up clearly.

Closely related to A.L.T. was the work of the Education Officer, who kept the students up to date on Progress of the War; managed the library, and Intelligence room; and supervised correspondence courses for anyone able to fit them into a crowded timetable.



EDUCATION STAFF: Left to right, F/O Al Ryckman, F/S Everett Eno, Cpl. Jack E. Lewis.

In the Airmen's library—Cpl. Jack Lewis, librarian.



P.T. & D.



Physical jerks in the drill hall.



P.T. & D. STAFF: Front row, left to right, Sgt. Roy Fleming, WO2 Bob Bibby, F/O Gord Aitchison, P.T. & D. Officer; F/S Les Bentley, Sgt. Earle Eisenstadt. Back row, Cpl. Sam S. Cohen, LAC Les Baxter, Sgt. Doug I. Peterson, Cpl. Lee Farber, Cpl. Ralph W. Brown, Cpl. Jim King. Missing, Sgt. Wilf Foucault.

DUTY fitness" was the vivid phrase used by the Air Force for keeping fit. In practice this meant games, drill and the old familiar P.T., along with various tests.

Physical fitness always is part of service life. But it was not until 1943 that it moved into the limelight. Then, "alarmed by the results of a series of tests at embarkation depots, A.F.H.Q. decreed that no fewer than five hours per week should be assigned to regular training."

Things began to hum. The first result was a shortage of trained instructors. So the P.T. Instructors and the Disciplinarians, previously separate trades, were combined into the Physical Training and Drill section, and all were given courses to fit them for any type of work in the combined trade.

Another result was the Harvard Step Test, of blessed memory. After a year, the Harvard Test was abolished and a series of three achievement tests was substituted, which remained in use for the rest of the war. The new system graded a man by a number of push-ups and sit-ups, and by his time on a 300-yard run.

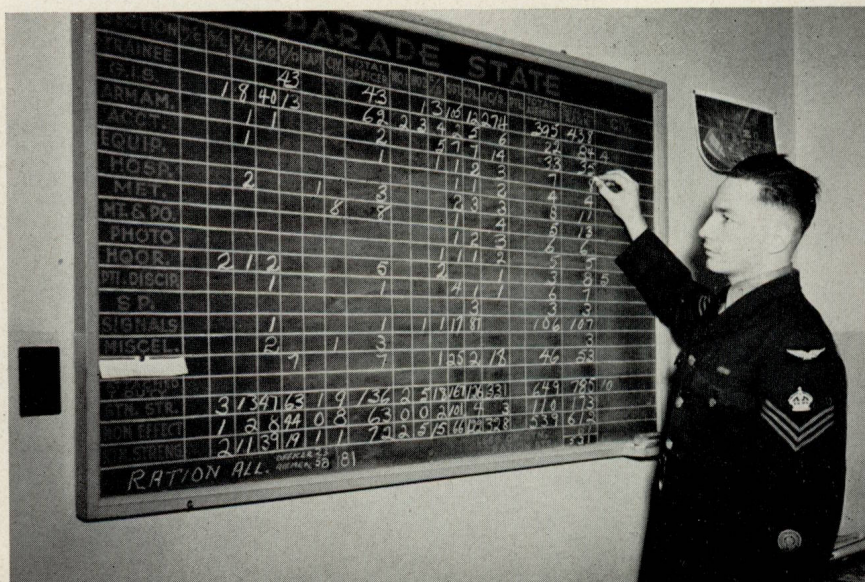
Still another result was the provision of indoor drill space. Previously, in rainy weather or during the winter, all P.T. had been dropped, apart from skating and route marches, which were not enough. In January 1944, a drill hall 176 by 112 feet was opened, complete with hardwood floor, shower rooms, dressing rooms, storage space, and equipment. At the same time, the P.T. and D. staff was increased.

With the new facilities, in an average week, besides routine parades, more than 4,000 men were exposed to the tender mercies of the P.T.I.'s. While another 2,000 men "enjoyed" the pleasures of infantry drill under the same instructors.

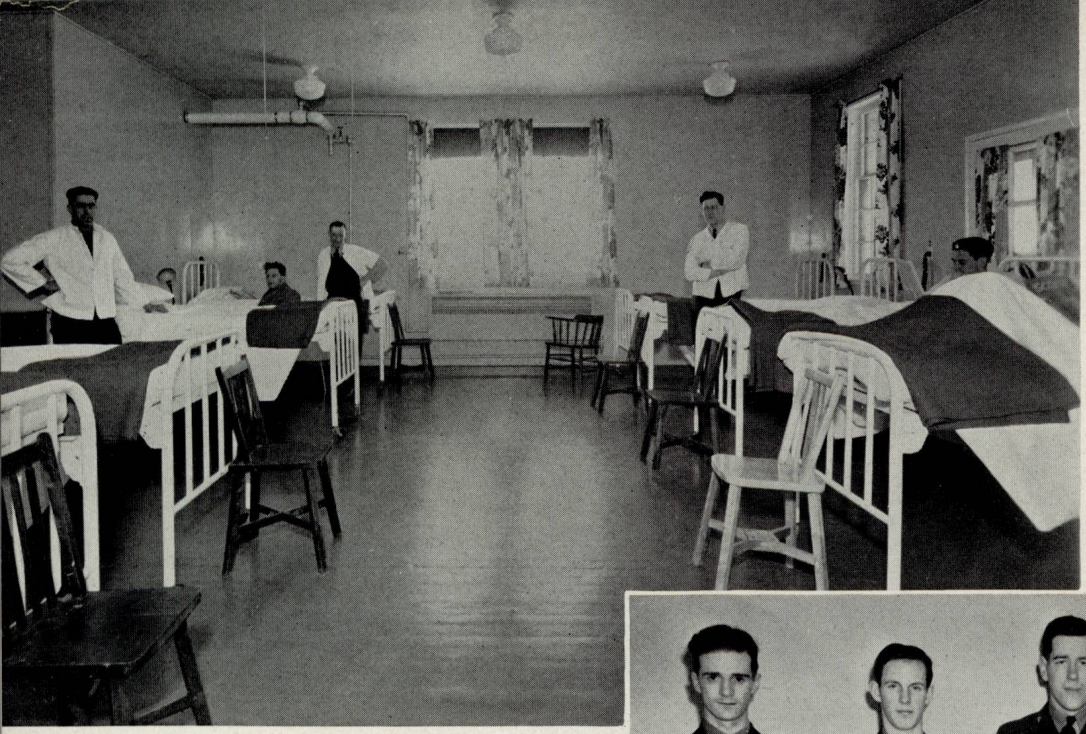
What the O.O. rarely saw.



F/S Knight posts the daily Parade State.



MEDICAL and DENTAL



The Hospital ward.



HOSPITAL STAFF: Front row, left to right, Sgt. Jack Leech, F/L E. R. G. Brown, F/L F. R. Attridge, Sgt. Leo Foucher. Back row, Cpl. Geo. Kilgour, AC1 Frank Fairburn, LAC Ian Mackenzie, Freddie Gregory, LAC Grant Dahl, Cpl. Al Rudolph.

GOOD health was the foundation of all training. And the foundation was kept in good repair at No. 7 by the Medical and Dental sections. These were housed under one roof, in the hospital building.

A 15-bed hospital was maintained for the care of ailing airmen, except those requiring surgery. Surgical cases were sent to other service hospitals that were suitably equipped. The hospital had examination rooms, a well-stocked pharmacy, private and public wards, a small kitchen; and a crash ward, reserved for use in emergency. A Medical Officer and attendants were on duty twenty-four hours a day.

Besides care of hospital patients and routine care of all service personnel, the medical staff also checked sanitation, water supply, food and food handling, and the general cleanliness of the camp.

The Dental section consisted of a Dental Officer and Sergeant Assistant, with a Corporal in charge of records, the three being a detachment of No. 38 Company, Canadian Dental Corps. All service personnel had to be examined regularly, and the necessary work done to keep their teeth in good shape. The size of the Station and the continuous change of personnel rarely left the dental chair unoccupied. Senior Medical Officers who served on the Station included F/L's Alvin Cohen, Gordon Sprague and Frank Attridge. Dental Officers stationed in turn at No. 7 were Capts. J. R. Day, H. M. Hamilton and W. A. Marquis.

DENTAL STAFF: Left, Cpl. Vic Carroll; right, Capt. W. A. Marquis. Missing, Sgt. Art Green.



In the Hospital pharmacy.





GENERAL OFFICE: Front row, left to right, Muriel "Mick" Cunningham, Esther "Wes" King, A. Myren, accountant; C. W. Hanna, (assistant) treasurer; Shirley Dann, Kay Rusaw. Back row, Tony Ukno, Gordon Anderson, bookkeeper; George Anderson, paymaster; Mrs. A. R. Ross, Ryta Gentes, Mrs. M. Bailey, J. McConnachie, H. D. Sparling.

ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATION was the clearing-house for all other divisions of the Station.

At the Service end of the Administration building, personnel, pay and uniform clothing records were kept, postings recorded, discipline supervised, D.R.O.'s issued and details handled for the orderly living of 1,000 men.

At the civilian end, personnel and pay records of the civilian staff were kept, and the general accounting for the Station was done, including the canteen, theatre and bowling alley accounts. As the Station grew, it became big business, and comprehensive financial statements, audited every four weeks, were forwarded to Ottawa and Montreal. In addition, representatives of the Auditor-General checked the records.



HEADQUARTERS ORDERLY ROOM: Front row, left to right, Gwen MacDonald, Wilda Cook; Ruby Echlin, Ruth Hourie. Back row, Hattie Smith, F/S "Ted" Crowston, Merle Delong.

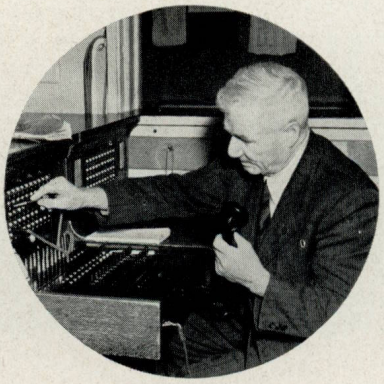


SWITCHBOARD: Left to right, Mrs. Doris Byas, Mary Ryder, Mrs. Tressa Cook, Winifred Seales.

RCAF ACCOUNTS SECTION: Front row, left to right, Cpl. Max Tenenbein, Lillian Atkinson; F/L J. K. Morrison, Accounts Officer ("Have you got your P.T. in yet?"); F/S W. D. Iverach; Cpl. J. T. "Kelly" Cahill. Back row, LAC O. R. "Bing" Miner, Cpl. F. E. Gibbs, Sgt. J. C. MacDonald; LAC G. O. Ferguson; LAC Sawtell.



NIGHT OPERATOR: W. Stewart on graveyard shift.





In the Airmen's mess hall.

SUPPLY – MESSING

SUPPLY was the most varied of the three divisions of the Station—varied in the number of departments and sections it took in, in the range of their duties, and in the ways they were staffed and supervised.

From the viewpoint of the students and staff, the most appealing work of Supply was the provision of food and recreation.

* * * *

MESSING, a civilian operating responsibility, was handled throughout by a contract made by the operating company with R. Smith & Co., Winnipeg, boarding car contractors since the early days of the West, who did the catering for several of the air training schools on the prairies. Mrs. M. N. Smith was their supervisor on the Station after November, 1943, following Miss Evelyn O'Donnell in the post. General supervision was maintained by the Management.

In the early days of the Station, one mess, apart from a small officers' mess, was able to handle everybody, in the building that later became the Sergeants' Lounge.

The big expansion in 1942-43 led to hectic meal hours, for the old mess was designed to serve only 120 men, whereas close to 800 had to be fed there for a time, until the new O.R. mess building could be opened in June, 1943. The feat was accomplished by staggering meal hours, as many as six meal "parades" at midday being necessary to take care of the rush.

Four messes were operating when building at last caught up with the need—the airmen's, sergeants' and civilians' in separate parts of the big O.R. mess building, all served from the one kitchen; and the officers' mess with its own kitchen, across the camp.

Rations for 1200 people in all four messes were being drawn in January, 1944. Regular service rations were obtained from the Army Service Corps depot at No. 3 Casualty Retraining Centre at Portage la Prairie.

A typical ration indent for one day's meals would show fifteen to thirty items requisitioned, in quantities varying from eight pounds of cheese to 825 pounds of potatoes, 800 pounds of raw apples, 696 pounds of beef, 350 loaves of bread, and so on through bacon, butter, milk, fruit juice, sugar, vegetables, jam, tea, and the rest.

To these rations, the catering company added 10 cents per person per day for buying extras—sauces, soda biscuits, ice cream, fresh fruits—and additional milk, eggs and fowl. Turkey or chicken was served on two Sundays a month from these extra messing funds, taking 600 or 700 pounds of fowl per Sunday. Oranges, bananas, grapes or pears gave variety in



Buns by the gross.



The Civilian mess.

fresh fruits. Ice cream for desserts vanished at the rate of forty gallons per week. And fresh frozen corn on the cob appeared at the Christmas dinner.

Even with these extra provisions, messing sometimes offered problems, with so many to satisfy. In the later months of the Station, a students' committee was consulted periodically by the caterer. At one of these meetings a student remarked that he found the porridge too salty. At once, another member of the students' committee remarked that he had been just about to say that the porridge was not salty enough!

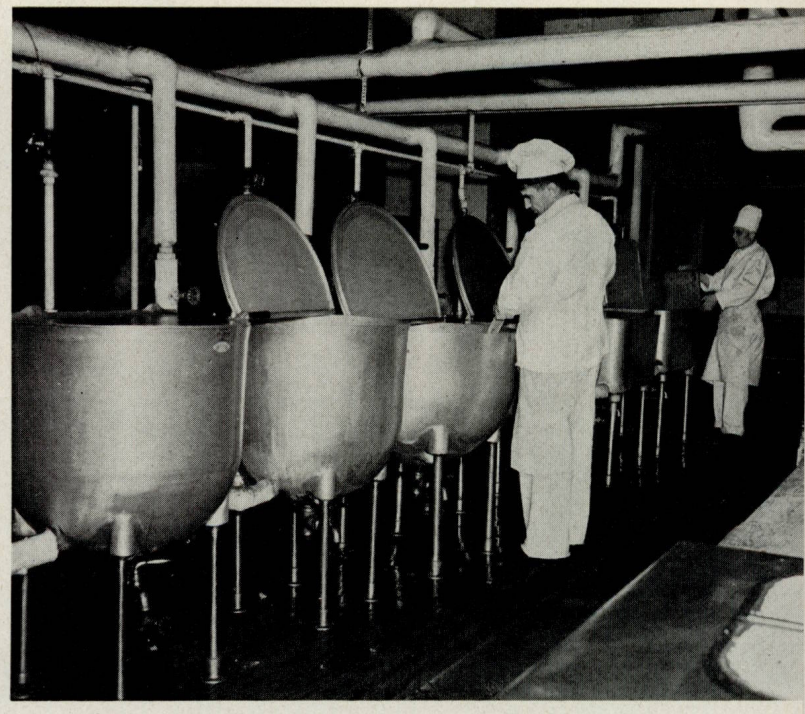
When the Station was in full operation, 96 cooks, helpers and waitresses were employed in the four messes. Many of them were from around Portage la Prairie. Some had worked in hotels, some on boarding cars, while others had worked in stores or had come from home.

Among the notable achievements of the messing staff were the great spreads they put up for the Station parties. Len Moores, chef of the O.R. kitchens, had a long experience in staging big dinners. And his menus, and above all his decorated tables, with boars' heads complete, were memorable features of every big social event. To serve 1000 people at an annual Station dinner became a recognized feat of the messing staff, the record being the anniversary banquet in May, 1944, when tables were set for 1300 Station personnel and guests.

Pie by the square yard.



Soup by the cauldron.

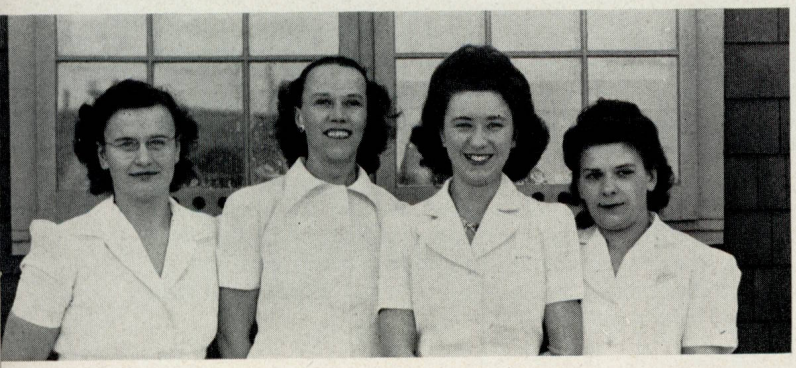




R. N. Smith,
messing contractor.



Len Moores, chef, and
Mrs. Margaret Smith, supervisor,
with one of his famous decorated tables.



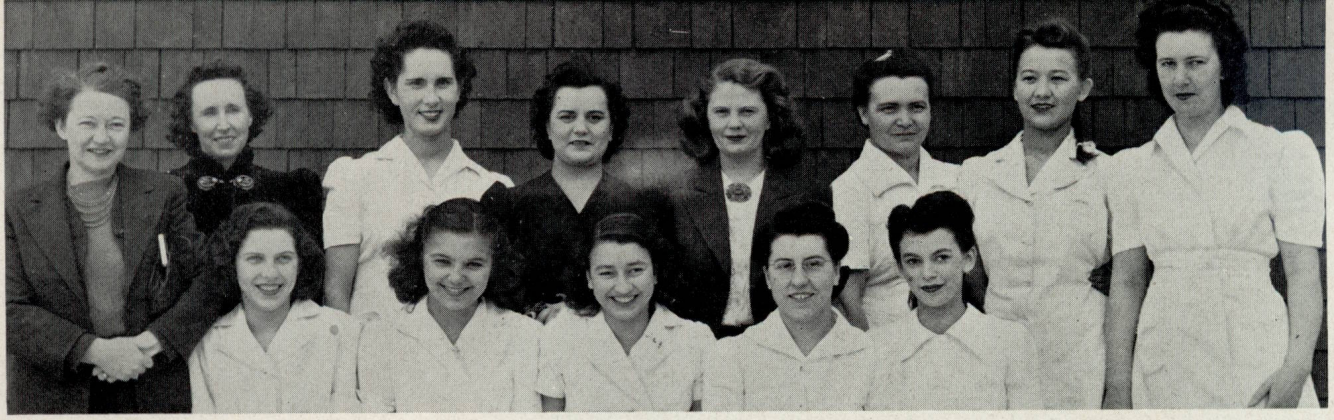
SERGEANTS' MESS: Left to right, Frances Folgizan, Mabel Evans, Betty Ward, Lillian Olynyk.



NIGHT STAFF: Front row, left to right, Mrs. K. McKumber, Alice Delorme, Dan Turaski, Edith McKumber, Barbara Carlson. Back row, Mrs. A. Fenske, Len Moores, Kay Forcusa, H. Cosick, Ella Fydena.



KITCHEN STAFF: Front row, left to right, Bill McLennan, Harry McLennan, Len Moores, Stanley Dudka. Back row, Carlyle Prout, Walter Hrycyna, Dan Turaski.



CIVILIAN MESS: Front row, left to right, Margaret Owen, Frances Sterrachot, Vicky Bulback, Nell Zedan, Dot. McLennan. Back row, Mrs. Margaret Smith, Mrs. Mina Middleditch, Thora Asham, Marion Bandura, Mrs. Mary Coombes, Mrs. Doris Rzepa, Kaye Turko, Pearl Hodgins.



OFFICERS' MESS: Front row, left to right, Ann Kucian, Ruth Shearer, Mrs. A. "Ma" Jackson, head cook; Mrs. Margaret Smith, Edith "Bonnie" Bonner. Back row, Mrs. Mary Schwark, Doreen Delorme, Ann Pelechaty, Betty Antonshyn, Hazel Westerley, Mrs. Audrey Lutz, Mrs. Josie Glogowski.

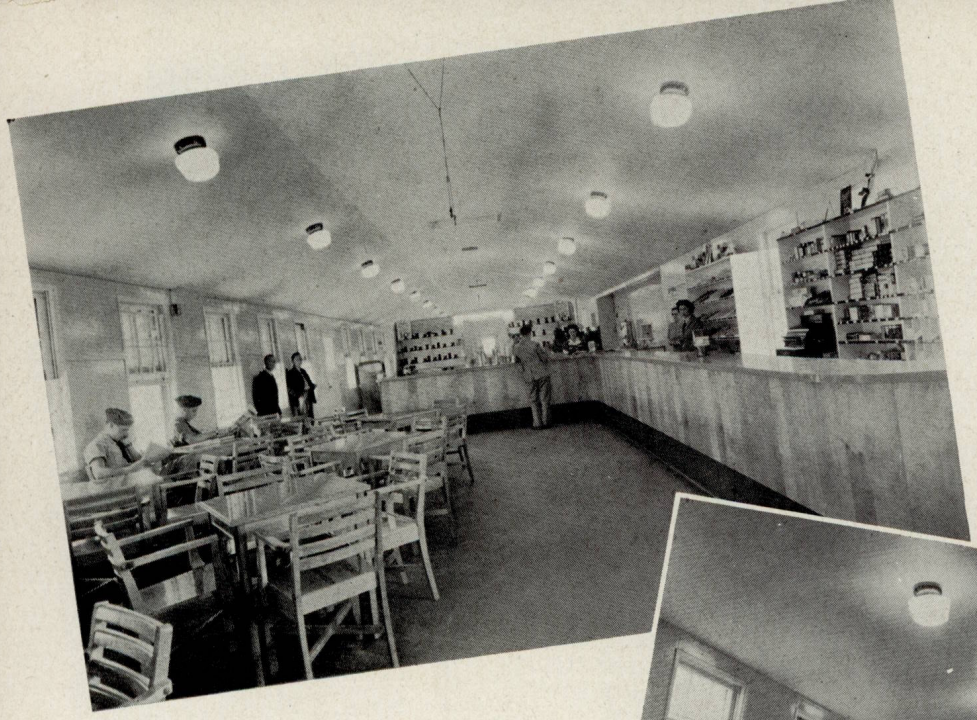


KITCHEN HELP AND COOKS: Front row, left to right, Mrs. E. Marks, Evelyn Knox, Mrs. B. Vivier, Mrs. G. Barrault, G. "Pop" Barrault, Mrs. F. B. Vivier, Mrs. Vicky Sharpe. Back row, Mrs. Emily Lapinsky, Mrs. Ann Sufruik, Melda Delorme, Barbara Asham, Georgina Campbell, Ruth Asham, Edna Sanderson, Sue Rodericks.

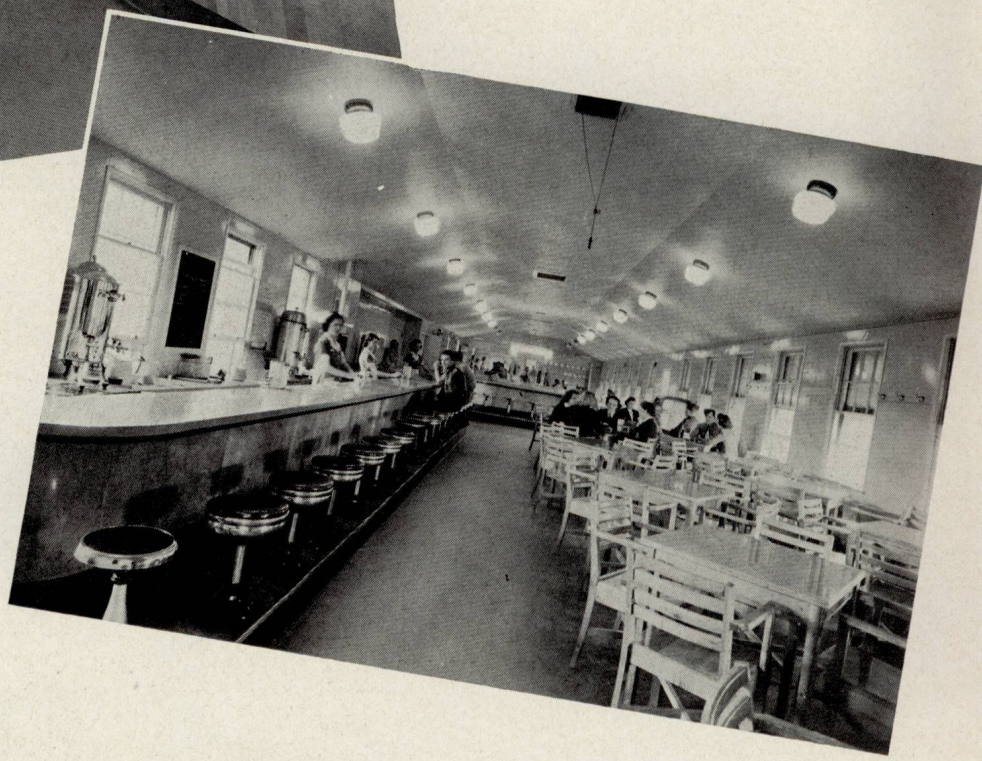
AIRMEN'S MESS: Front row, left to right, Ivy Smith, Loreen Stewart, Phyllis Hewitt, Edith Schofield, Rose Fydena, Bernice Lemiski, Mrs. Ann Prout, Agnes Kinson. Back row, Ann Juzyk, Minerva Lilley, Elsie Bullock, Mrs. Elsie Ward, Mrs. Mary Coombes, Kathleen McKay, Mrs. Verna Becker, Nora Aymont, Margaret Nelson, Lillian Aymont.



CANTEEN



The Canteen—
Soda fountain and "store."



The Canteen—
Lunch counter.

THE canteen at No. 7 operated as both canteen and restaurant. Some 300 civilian personnel lived on the Station. As they worked in three shifts, the canteen met their needs for late breakfasts and light meals, besides offering light lunches for those living off the Station who did not want the heavier-type meal served in the mess. "Snacks" were sold to everyone. And, particularly after the show, how the place could be jammed! After being enlarged in 1943, and serving all shifts 24 hours a day, the canteen was the most popular place in camp.

The quality of the home cooking in the canteen was the special pride of Miss Norma Harrison, the supervisor, and her staff. On many items they often could not keep up with the demand. Out from the kitchen would come 60 pies, 40 cakes, and 50 dozen cookies a day—and not be enough. To make cookies, the baker would take a home recipe, multiply the quantities by five, make eight a day of these big mixings—and still be sold out.

Every day, six gallons of fruit salad were eaten. Twelve dozen scones would last an hour. Eighteen dozen was the—reduced!—day's baking of bran muffins. Not to mention the cheese or raisin tea biscuits, the muffins, pancakes, toasted bacon sandwiches, fried egg sandwiches or roast beef sandwiches with gravy that were always in demand. Milk went at the rate of 40-50 gallons a day. When the fountain was opened in July, 1944, there were 6000 milk-shake cups on hand—they lasted ten days! Oranges went at the rate of 20 cases a week, and apples the same when they could be had.

The staff that dealt with this demand numbered 36. Half of them were from around Portage la Prairie, with some from Neepawa. Only four or five had experience before coming to No. 7, the rest being trained on the Station.

Walter King on the job in Central (canteen) Warehouse.



CANTEEN: Front row, left to right, Isabel Miller, Thelma Miller, Jean Machan, Betty Sue Mayers, Margaret "Molly" Jones. Back row, Doreen Norman, Alison Milne, Norma Harrison, supervisor; Rose Derkach, Mrs. Marion Bailey, Edna Lavallie.





CANTEEN: Front row, left to right, Mrs. Evelyn Pringle, Marion Crewson, Fern Cooper. Back row, Mrs. Mary Blanchard, Mrs. Jean Gibson, Mrs. Martha Patton, Mrs. Maggie Setter.

CANTEEN: Front row, left to right, Merry Block, Mary Woychyshyn, Reta "Wimpy" Page, Mabel Dell. Back row, Hazel Taft, Bernie Crosby, Lila Koski, Ollie Stewart.





CANTEEN: Front row, left to right, Bernice Bruce, Mrs. Bernice Warner, Stella Bruce. Back row, Mrs. Phyllis Moon, Lillian Rubachuk, Eileen MacDonald, Shirley Pfiefer.



MAIN STORES: Front row, left to right, John Meng, Doreen Cairns, Evelyn Scott, Maxine "Mac" Watters, Cec. G. Tarbuth, chief storekeeper; Jean McKenzie, Mrs. Marj. Broadfoot, Mrs. Betty Smith Price, Johnnie Swan. Back row, Dave Lyon, Mrs. Vivian Houston, Tess Franta, Margaret Mills, L. "Mike" Sullivan, George Llewellyn, Mrs. Pearl Krokosh, Mary Frazer, Erma Townsend, Dan Kennedy.

STORES

THE Stores department was the abode of people with card index minds, who slept with inventories for blankets and ledgers for pillows, dreamed of equipment ordered or to come, and started awake from nightmares to cry "And did you sign for it?"

The duty of Stores was to requisition or purchase, receive, issue, keep track of and sometimes get back everything that came on the Station except consumable supplies and RCAF uniform clothing.

For the issue to students of clothing, boots, and other personal items, Clothing Stores was a small section with its own building, staffed by service personnel and supervised by RCAF Administration.

The equipment on loan from various RCAF depots and handled by the people of Stores was valued at approximately $15,000,000, so they were kept reasonably busy.

Yet they were surprisingly calm and cheerful—most of the time. Their Kardex system recorded 6,582 kinds of items on loan from service depots—from a haemoglobinometer to nail brushes, with Ansons, furniture, bedding, etc. in between—and another 560 ledger sheets filled in to cover items acquired by direct purchase.

These 7142 items were divided in 39 inventories and loan cards. Stores was fairly emphatic about requiring these inventories and cards to be well and fully signed for, and physical checks of inventories were made continually. So that Stores claimed to lose surprisingly little sleep—until the Disbandment Board came around in the closing days. But that is another tale—yet one of credit to the Stores staff.

"Cec" Tarbuth, once of the Winnipeg Grain Exchange, and then of No. 2 A.O.S., Edmonton, was Chief Storekeeper from February, 1943, with George Bishop before him. At the beginning there were four on the staff, which gradually expanded to 21—in the main Stores building, No. 2 Stores, and in Technical Stores in No. 5 hangar. Notable among the staff was Johnny Swan, one of the faithful from the early days, and known throughout the camp—"When Esau saw the buck saw would not saw the wood."

The pride of Stores? Their system—worked out by trial and error in face of changing methods of service accounting.

Motto? "If we run out of paper, the war is lost."

Problems? "Shortage of equipment" and—Oh yes: "Impressing their liability on inventory holders."

CLOTHING STORES: Sgt. Ernie Eaton, Cpl. Geo. Dalby, LAC Ray McKenzie, LAC Farrell Murray, LAC H. Chow.

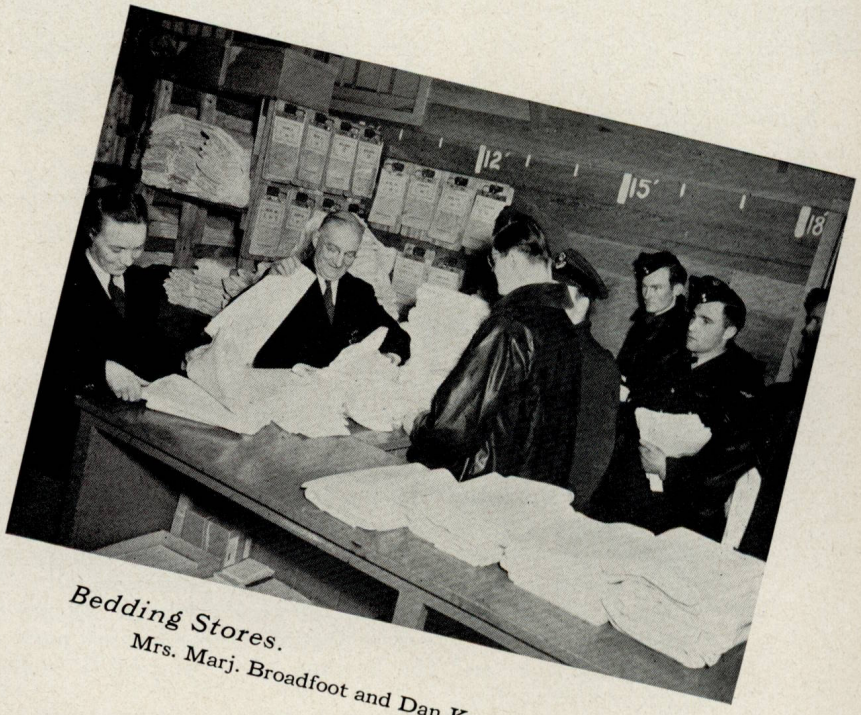




Receiving Supplies. "Mike" Sullivan, left, and George Llewellyn.



Hangar Stores.
Erma Townsend and John Meng, behind the counter.

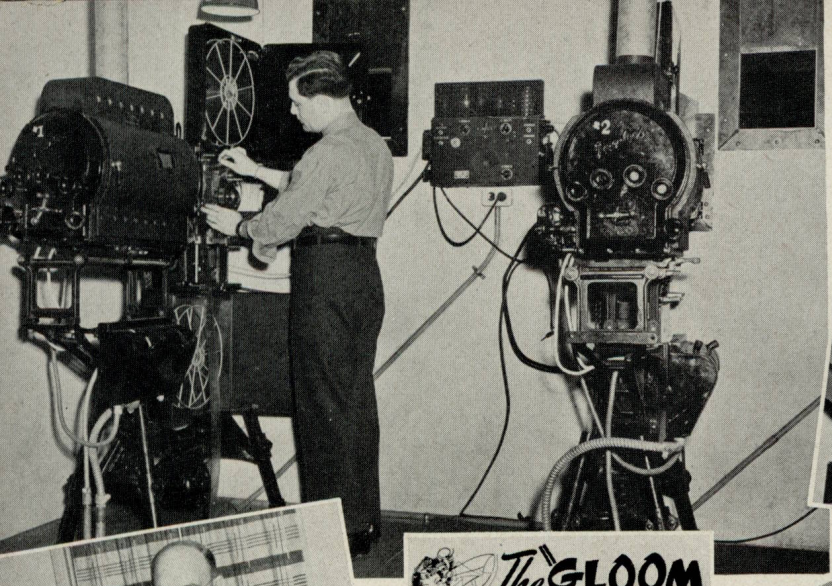


Bedding Stores.
Mrs. Marj. Broadfoot and Dan Kennedy, issuing sheets.



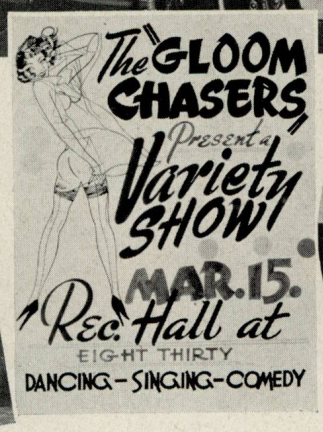
Disbandment—arguing it out.

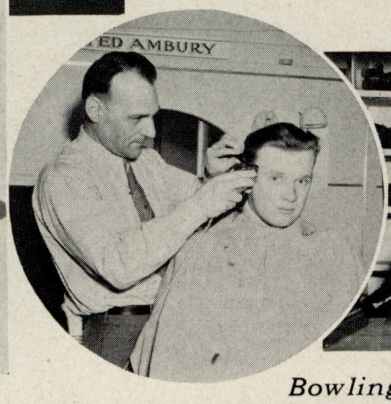
Left to right, Bill Deck, of No. 7; F/S B. A. Erickson and F/L Russ Prowse, of No. 2 Command H.Q.; and Cece Tarbuth.













Bowling Alley: Buzz Gordon, Ford Lorch

Top (left), LAC Dave Steiman, projecting.
Top (right), "Blackie" Kroff—himself!

Stan Smith.

MORALE BUILDERS

RECREATION on the Station took many forms, and the direction of it lay in several hands.

Sports and exercise of one kind and another filled many an off-duty hour, and for the students these were directed by F/O "Gord" Aitchison, the Physical Training & Drill Officer. Yet it was hard sometimes to say where lay the line between "Aitch's" province in recreation and that of Stan Smith, the Y.M.C.A. Special Services officer, and his predecessors.

Parties organized or impromptu were a regular feature of Station life. Then there were Station dances, concert parties, the skating rink, and the bowling alley to provide further change and relaxation.

When all this is said, though, perhaps it is little more than preface to the joys of the Recreation Hall and the fame of one Cpl. Blackie Kroff, impresario extraordinary, and man of parts.

When the new Recreation Hall was opened on August 16, 1943, was it opened with a picture not even Winnipeg yet had seen? It was. And the picture? "Stage Door Canteen!" And was it but the first of many "previews" booked for the camp by our hero of the crackling dark eyes? "You can say that again."





POST OFFICE: Front row, left to right, AC1 H. G. Cre man, LAC Floyd King, LAC J. A. L. J. "Charlie" Gobe Back row, AC1 B. "Andy" Anderson, LAC Tom Seepis Cpl. Fulton J. Tanton, LAC G. K. "Red" Braybrook.







"Main Street" (Administration Road).

WORKS AND BRICKS

WORKS and Bricks did the maintaining and housekeeping of the camp—and a shining job they made of it, as everyone knew, in spite of mud, dust, continual construction, snow, broken storm windows, jamming hangar doors and similar headaches.

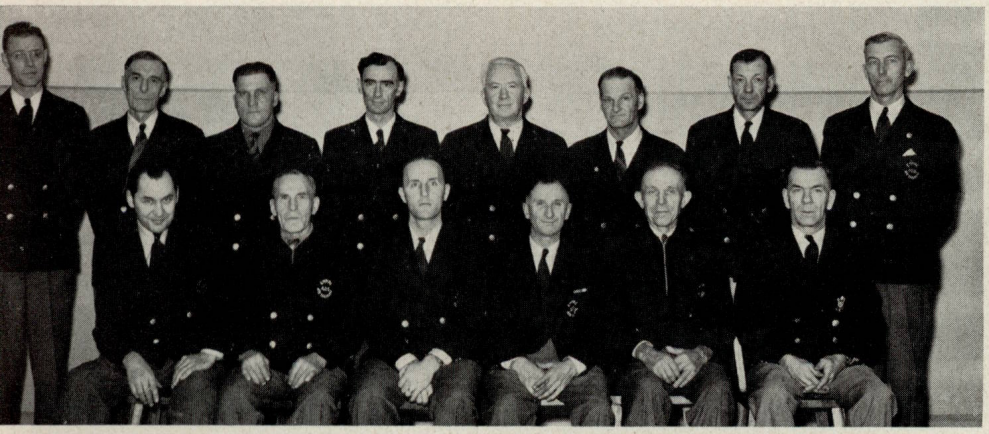
Between Works and Bricks and Airdrome Maintenance lay credit for the neat upkeep of 106 acres of buildings, 90,000 square yards of gravelled areas, 27,000 square yards of cement, concrete and black top on tarmac, runways and taxi strip, 6,650 square yards of black-top roads, and 597 acres of grass.

Wilf Ellwood, an early arrival, who came to the camp as foreman carpenter, was camp superintendent from 1942 on, with a variety of sections clearing through him.

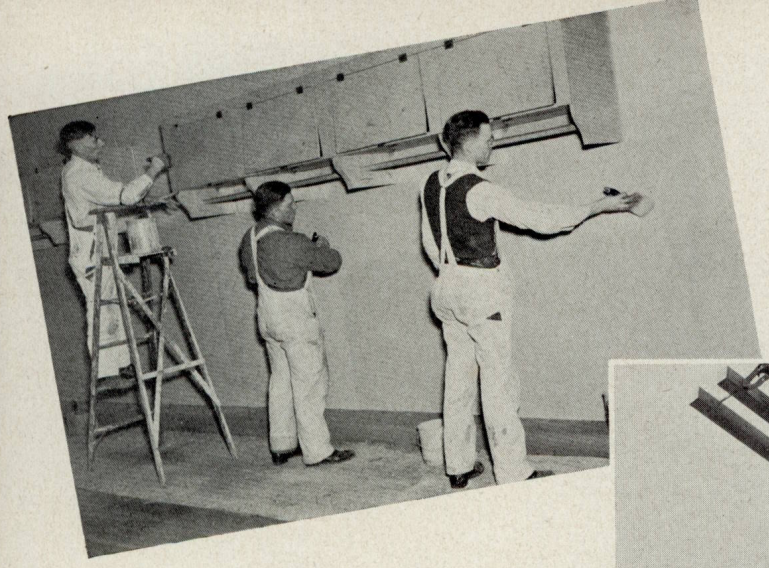
Carpenters were the first big need—to make the buildings and grounds usable. Sidewalks were needed, counters, stationery cupboards and cabinets required in offices, blackboards and notice boards for general purposes. And with the growth of the Station, buildings had to be altered to meet new needs.

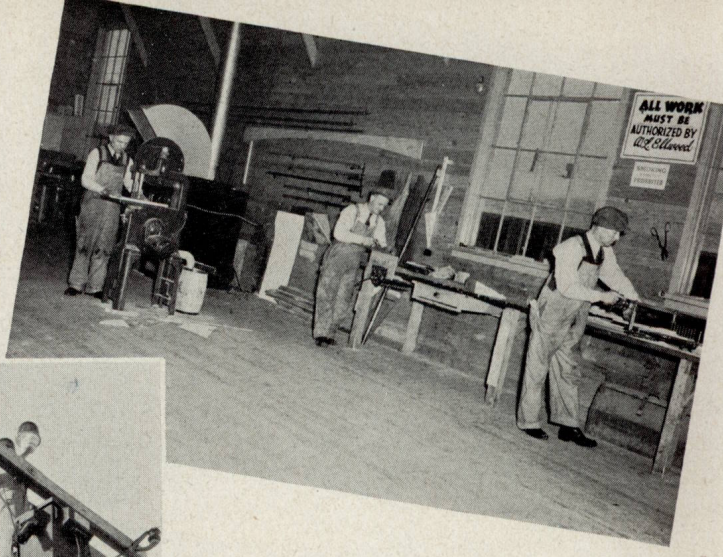
Much of this changing was done by Station personnel. For example, the former E.F.T.S. Administration and Ground School building was arranged as the Administration building by our personnel, requiring the skills of carpenters, electricians, heating staff and painters. Before the new G.I.S. building was ready, temporary classrooms had to be provided in barrack blocks, and partitions and blackboards erected—later to be torn down and the buildings again made presentable as barracks, as classrooms became available. The canteen was formerly a three-division dining room for E.F.T.S. and much face-lifting was required to provide the cheery, spacious (?) canteen ultimately achieved. The work of the carpenter was never ending—always with demand ahead of supply—but under George Ellwood, foreman carpenter, the staff satisfied everyone.

Rudy Houle and his little gang of painters were never out of work, first to cover all unpainted walls, then on conversion of buildings, then back again to re-cover the first coat. Outside trim, doors, and roofs faded and needed re-doing. While Arnold Russell's poster-painting was a feature of Station life.



"WORKS AND BRICKS": Front row, left to right, Arnold Russell, Bill Moffat, Dave Stevenson, Rudy Houle, Ness Horbay, Wilf Ellwood, camp superintendent. Back row, Bill Braden, Sam Salter, Bill Demman, Chas. Duncan, Russ Walker, Ross Curtis, Zeph Bourgeois, Bill Macdonald.







Works and Bricks *on the job.*

HEATING and ELECTRICITY

NO one ever loved a space heater. Noisy, dusty and cantankerous, space heaters were a feature of life on the air training stations that will not soon be forgotten.

But within the limits of that "grief," No. 7 had much to be thankful for in the way the Station was kept warm by Joe McInnes and his staff, which varied from 20 up to 52.

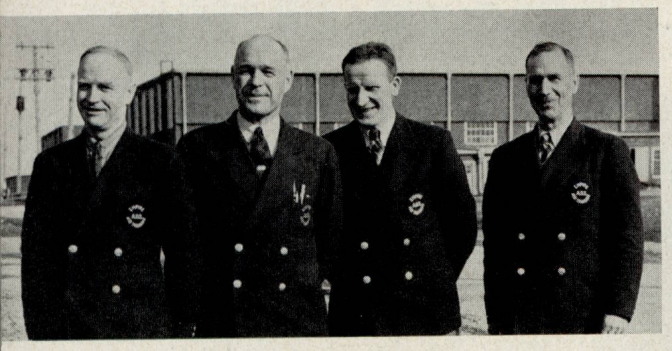
There were 67 space heaters on the Station, 11 boilers in nine boiler rooms, 9 small hot-air furnaces, 19 condensator pumps, and 9 jacket heaters. Between them they burned 9500 tons of coal a year, of which 3000 tons were stockpiled each summer on the camp, against emergencies.

So much equipment, and the long haul for fuel from the railway, could easily have meant trouble in Manitoba winters and wild blizzards. But thanks to the heating crews, the camp was always comfortable, and the boilers were described by inspectors as one of the best-kept units in the country.

WITH 467 electric motors to be cleaned and checked regularly, thousands of lights and miles of wiring, Dave Stevenson was kept fairly busy as camp electrician. The W/T generator, the pole line bringing current to the camp, the W/T set at the bombing range, the air-conditioning equipment in the Celestial Navigation Trainer, the fire alarm system, heating controls, and the beacon on the Control Tower all were in his care, besides re-wiring, inevitable in alterations.

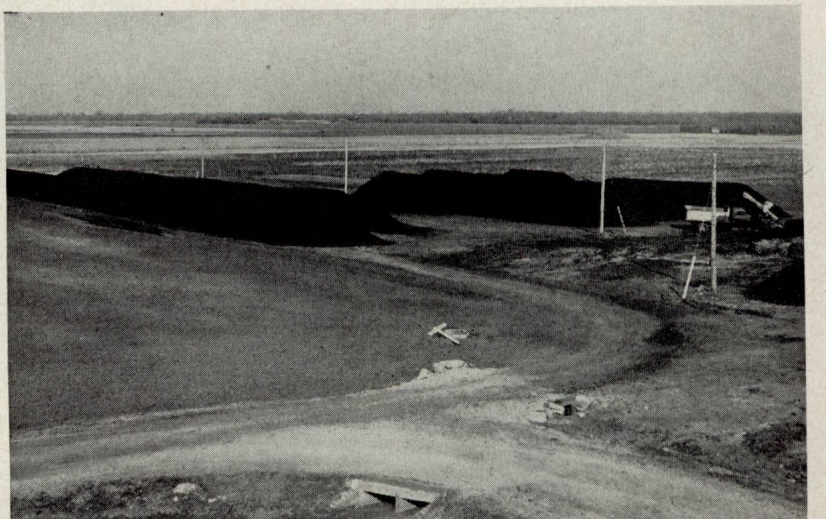
Dave Stevenson was one of the originals on the Station, having come "in a howling blizzard" on December 5, 1940, as electrical inspector for the Department of National Defence, when the contractors were putting up the first buildings. Taking over later as camp electrician, he knew all the trials of trying to keep motors dry in face of spring floods that persistently swamped them in their pits. And in four years, he had to move the electricians' shop thirteen times.

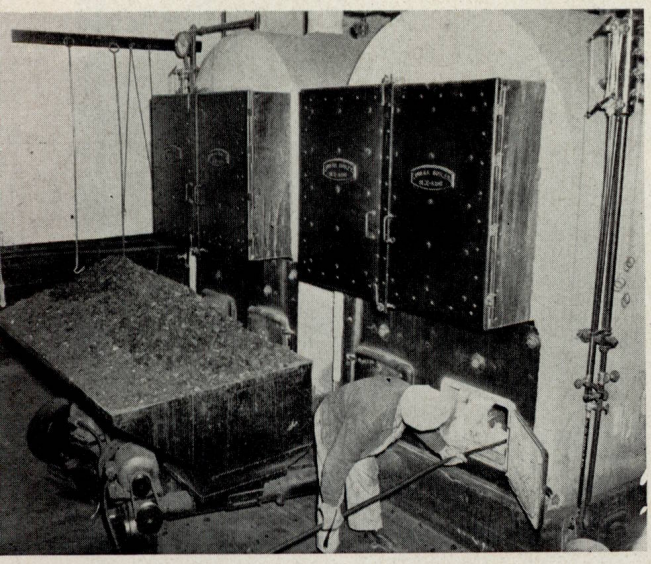
But No. 7 held the record in No. 2 Command for the smallest number of burnt-out motors—thanks to the regular care given them by Dave and his four helpers.



HEATING: Left to right, Jack Armson, Jos. C. McInnes, superintendent, Clint Fraser, Ab. E. Moffatt.

The reserve coal pile.

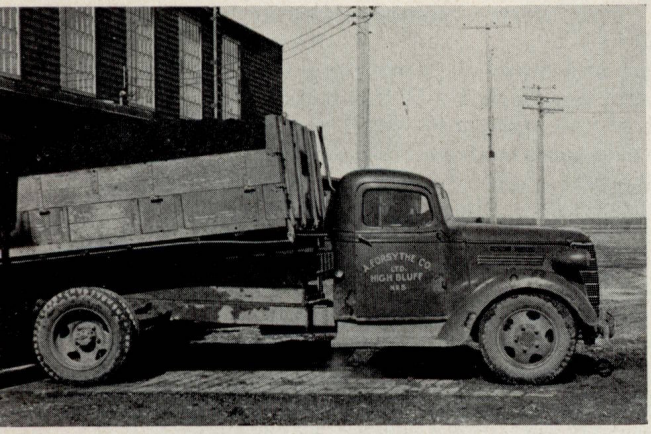




The Boilers—No. 2 Hangar.



*"That . . . * * * . . . space heater!"*



Re-fuelling.



HEATING: Front row, left to right, Bob Cottam, Harry Buzan, Chas. Askin, Nick Boyachek. Back row, Jack Matheson, Joe Gardiner, Walter Bird, Tony Rzepa, Ron Carscadden.



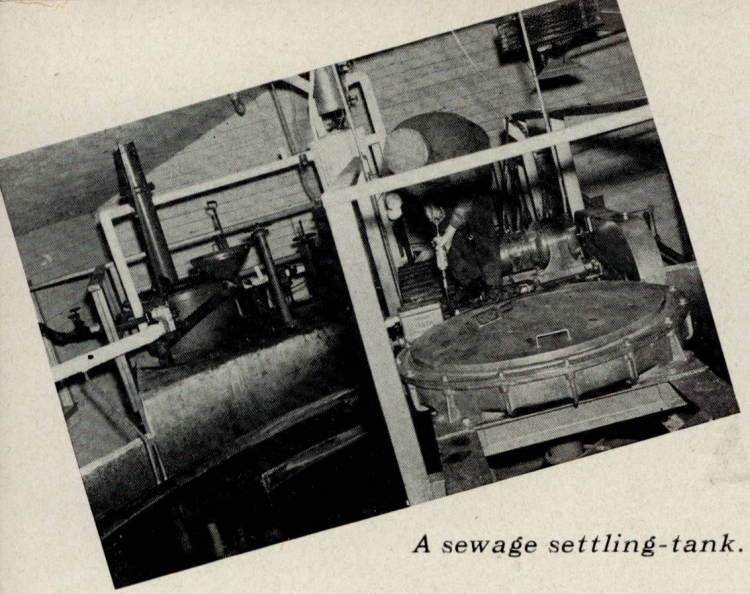
HEATING: Front row, left to right, Bill Lawson, Stan Riggs, John Gordon, Warner Stewart. Back row, Harry Karpik, Jim Anderson, Bill Sharp, Jack Ferrier, Pete Sweeney.

HEATING: Left to right, J. McDonald, N. Giesbrecht, J. Blanchard, A. Deman, Bert Thompson, J. Vivier.

HEATING: Front row, left to right, Jack Sanford, Bob Finnigan, Herb Nentwig, Cliff Evans (plumbing). Back row, Mike Sulima, Mike Safriuk, Dan Kenny, Orville Nentwig, Bert Pate.







A sewage settling-tank.



WATERWORKS AND SEWAGE DISPOSAL: Left to right, Al Wishart, superintendent; Jim Mackie, Chas. Warren, Russ Wishart, George McConachie.

WATERWORKS

WATERWORKS and sewage disposal were in charges of Al Wishart, one of the earliest of the originals, who came to the Station in September, 1940, as inspector for the Department of Transport during construction of the water line connecting the Station with the Portage la Prairie waterworks.

Six miles of water main, two miles of sewer main, the water pump house and the sewage disposal plant served the Station. Besides general upkeep and repairs, it was the duty of this section to keep fresh the water in the reserve tanks, which held 150,000 gallons; to man the booster pump in case of fire; and to chlorinate the drinking-water supply, using 150 to 200 pounds of liquid chlorine per month. Among their problems were plugged and broken mains, deterioration of concrete in the tanks, water hammer in the pumps, and one troublesome fire in the pump house.

The sewage disposal plant, which was trebled in size during the Station's growth, was regarded as one of the most efficient in the Command, measured by the low bacterial count and lack of odor of the liquid run off after treatment.

CLEANING

THERE were 58 buildings on the Station, and to keep them clean took a staff of 114 under the direction of "Cec" Forbes, another early arrival on the Station.

Batmen and Stewards, performing their restorative duties, also were included in this section.

Most of the staff came from around Portage la Prairie, with some ten from other schools in Saskatchewan. A great many of these men and women had sons in the forces. Their pride was to keep the buildings shining and spotless, thereby doing their part to maintain health and morale and bring credit to the Station.

In a year, the cleaners used 260 100-pound drums of sweeping compound, 300 corn brooms and 200 push brooms, and large quantities of scrubbing materials. Barrack blocks, messes, classrooms, offices and hangar floors reflected the "elbow grease" and supplies which waged relentless war against constant traffic, mud, gravel, snow and dust.

Apart from their regular duties, the staff of this section was the Station spearhead in all the Victory Loan drives. Under dynamic Cec. they always led the way and dared the other sections to make an equal showing.



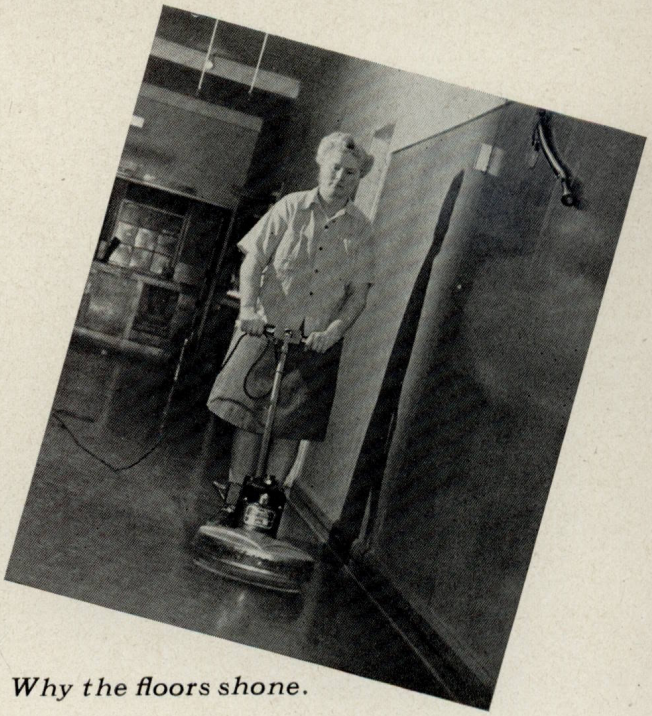
JANITORS: Front row, left to right, Mrs. Ethel Bereskin, Diana C. Verwey, Mrs. Nellie M. Campbell, Mrs. Elsie M. Clibbery, night janitor foreman; Mrs. M. Schokowski, Mrs. Sadie O. Stewart. Back row, S. Frank Parenuk, Sam Fydena, Ivor Bird, O. Pettit, Bob Dunnett, John Kosteniuk, Nick Kosteniuk, Fred Garychuk, Dan Sokolosky, Lewis Young, H. A. Bakewell.



JANITORS: Front row, left to right, Jack T. Johnston, Harry A. Holmes, W. George Ezzard, George Wright, Sam Makichuk, Alex. McCosky, Frank Tryhurn. Back row, Harry W. Jones, Hans Nissen, Percy A. Lytle, Bert Shenton, John Rybotycky, Bill Wasylyczyn, Walter L. Peake, Peter Laschuk.



BAR STEWARDS: Left to right, Gwynne Dutson, Cec. Forbes, Sam Mitchell, Art Smith, Alf Neale, Billy Miller, Stan Stocks.



Why the floors shone.



JANITORS: Front row, left to right, M. Joe Wright, J. Cec. Forbes, foreman; Mrs. C. Maude Charlton, Mrs. Tessie Anderson, Mrs. Malvina Ryder, Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper, Wilf L. Ellwood, camp superintendent. Back row, Bill G. Thynne, Herb Hall, Ollie Stebeleski, E. "Trudy" Knott, Joe L. Caister, A. Lorne Sharp.

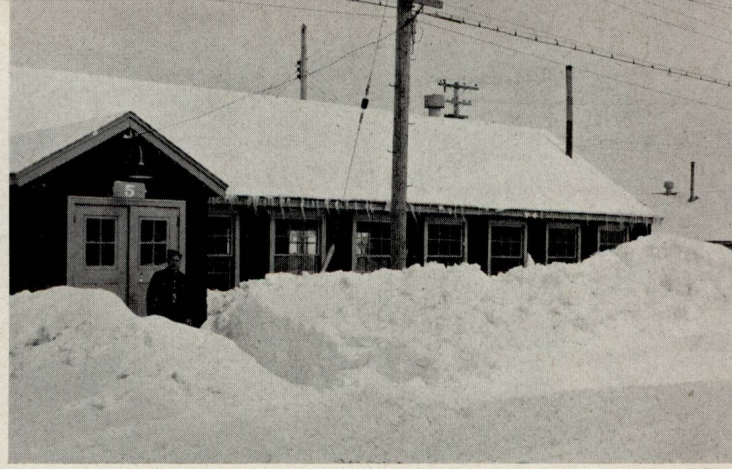


JANITORS AND BATMEN: Front row, left to right, Bill J. Marks, John Lezun, Tony Dolinski, Phil Cwiak, Alex. Forkotza, George Fotheringham, Roman Branchuk. Back row, Ambrose Mason, Ed H. Cleef, Bert Olmstead, Chas. E. Denslow, Harry K. Stevens, Alex. Fotheringham, Jack Harvey, Bill Stanger.



JANITORS: Front row, left to right, Wilf L. Ellwood, camp superintendent; J. Cec. Forbes, janitor foreman; Andy Ferguson, Dan Mandrusiak, Tony Smith, George Morrison, Jim G. Nordal. Back row, Tom J. Wrenshall, Newt Irwin, Joe H. Thompson, George E. Carter, Jim Williams, Fred W. Gregory, J. Herb Lucas, Bob H. Rehill.





"Unusual weather—the only kind offered by the West. . . ."

GROUNDSMEN

GRASS and flowers meant much on a Station, and Len Carter and his groundsmen knew this, to the good fortune of No. 7.

An oldtimer at gardening, Len began in 1941, with seven men, to sod the front of the Administration building. The sod was trucked from Portage la Prairie, where he had persuaded the owners of vacant lots to allow it to be cut.

From that beginning, the men of the section sodded more of the camp each year, or seeded down crested-wheat grass, until green lawns around the buildings took the place of mudholes and dust.

A greenhouse was operated to supply the many flower beds, so that the original rough and unsightly camp was transformed into a place of beauty.

Besides cutting grass and watering lawns, the duties of the 22 groundsmen included daily removal of ashes, paper and garbage, trimming ditches, taking away the huge drifts piled up by the yearly blizzards, and serving as general handymen.



GROUNDS: Front row, left to right, Bob Thomson, Fred Morrow, Geo. Gordichuk, Len Strilec, Joe Aymont, Octave Aymont. Back row, John Gladue, Jack Peffers, Vic Coburn, Jack Wood, Len Carter, Mac Paraneck.



"Puffing Billy" thawing culverts in spring.

M.T. and Aerodrome Maintenance "on parade."

MOTOR TRANSPORT

THE Motor Transport section literally kept things moving on the Station.

Every day mail, rations, freight and express had to be hauled from Portage la Prairie and supplies distributed on the Station. Local pickups, airmen's baggage, runs to the Bombing Range, transport of sports' teams to other units and sometimes to Winnipeg, disposal of ashes and garbage—all were part of the day's routine. The staff car was always on call, and a driver always standing by for the ambulance.

Mechanics were required for the cleaning, repair and general maintenance of the section's equipment, besides wrestling with the troubles of scooters, tractors and other vehicles turned in for repair from other departments.

When the school first opened, transport equipment consisted of one station wagon, one two-ton truck, an ambulance, a fuel tender and two tractors. From these beginnings its growth is shown above.

Expansion was a special headache for the Motor Transport section, for their workshop had to be moved to make way for the new O.R. mess building before the new garage and compound were ready. Even when the new garage buildings were occupied, it was some time before the gas pumps were installed and the cement floor laid in the compound.

Gordon Grant was M.T. foreman, assisted by senior mechanics Gordon Cox and Dave Wood, all Station originals. All other help was recruited locally and trained on the Station.



MOTOR TRANSPORT: Front row, left to right, Gervis Fries, Bill McLeeson, Jim Fidler. Back row, left to right, Mike Yasiniski, Bill Wood, Harry Lequier, Harvey Freed, Morris Lequier.



MOTOR TRANSPORT: Front row, left to right, Marg. Mills, Gordon Cox, Marg. McFarlane, Gordon Grant, Marie Thompson, Mike Yasiniski. Back row, left to right, Gervis Fries, Harvey Freed, Frank Richardson, Sterly Cuthbert, Art Anderson, Vern Bowman, Dave Wood.

POLICE



The civilian guards march to duty.



SERVICE POLICE: Left to right, Cpl. Dave Morris, Cpl. Allan C. Bond, Cpl. Harold G. Browne.

THE security of the camp was watched over by civilian guards.

Under Sergeant-Major Tom Leigh, a group of veterans of 1914-18 looked after admittance at the gates, and generally performed the duties of police within the camp boundaries, maintaining a continuous patrol of the area. The staff of 38 was recruited mainly from the Portage la Prairie district.

There was also a small staff of RCAF police, whose duty was control of service personnel, checking of leave-passes both on exit and entry, and general discipline.

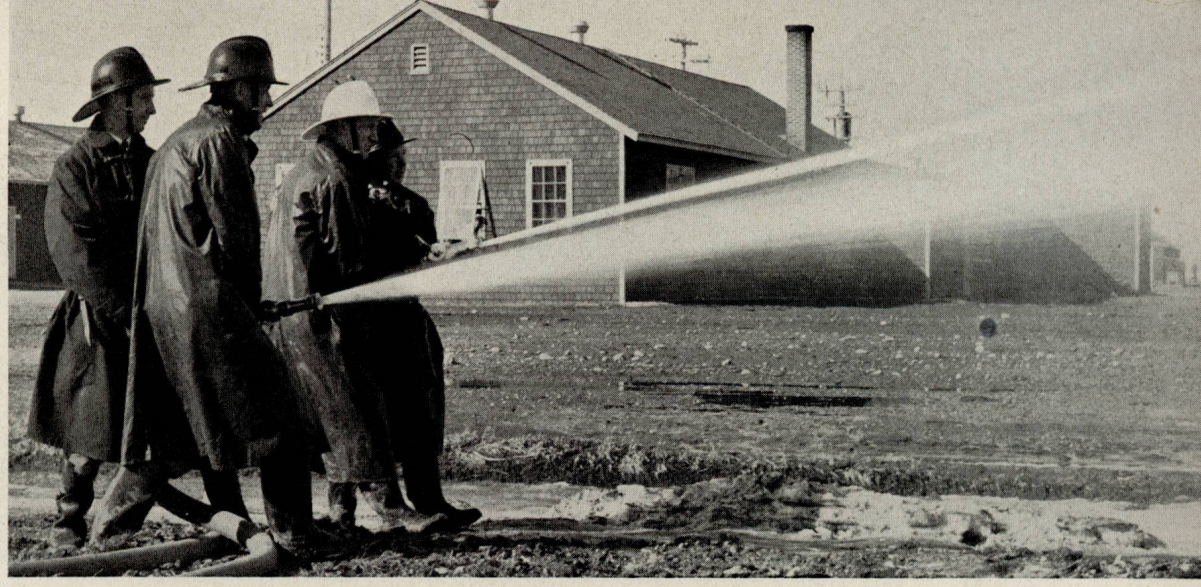


GUARDS: Front row, left to right, Bill Saunders, Sgt. Art Clibbery, Sgt. Maj. Thos. Leigh, Chas. Welton, Sam Stubbs. Back row, Harold Ackerman, Art Cooper, George Whitelaw, Jack Allen, Bill McKay.



GUARDS: Front row, left to right, Dick Ellis, Sgt. Norman MacLean, Sgt. Maj. Thos. Leigh, Walter Clark, Dick Ryder. Back row, George Moffat, Vic Rands, Roy Catt, Bill Clark, Sid Harrison.

FIRE DEPT.



Hose drill.



FIRE HALL: Front row, left to right, Dave Pearson, Garnet Henderson, Peter Ross, Roy Charlton, fire chief, Alex Brydon, Robt. McCowan, Roy Grantham, Geo. Pennell. Back row, left to right, Wm. Pigg, Joe Herner, Bill Moxam, Roy Wood, Elmer Wood, Ford Lorch, Steve Kowalchuck. Crash truck driver, standing, left—Tony Bazuk.

THE Fire department, under Chief Roy Charlton, also was staffed from the Portage district. The Chief was the only one of the 15 men on strength who had outside training, having taken a course in Air Force fire-fighting at No. 1 C.F.S., Trenton, Ontario.

The rest of the fire-fighters at No. 7 were trained on the Station. Their pride was in fire prevention; but, like the Parachute section, they sometimes were accused of regretting never having a chance to show what they could do. For the only big fire in the history of the Station occurred before the booster pump was connected, and before the Station Fire department was organized and equipped.

Continuous inspection of buildings for fire hazard and regular inspection and re-charging of fire extinguishers were major items in preventive routine.



GUARDS: Front row, left to right, Sgt. Ray Hawkins, Sgt. Major Thos. Leigh. Back row, Fred Laidlaw, Elmer Ferguson, Russell Shaw, Jim Cleaver.



GUARDS: Front row, left to right, Thos. Chanin, Sgt. George Hanna, Sgt. Maj. Thos. Leigh, Bob Garrioch, Roy Brydges. Back row, Bill McDonald, Rowland Hill, Newton Jones, Robbie Robertson, Ira Frank Tryhurn.

The Station Diary

NO. 7 A.O.S. opened on April 28, 1941—the seventh to open of the ten Air Observer Schools required for the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, and the third to open in No. 2 Training Command.

Several months of preparation went before the opening. When leading air transport companies were invited to undertake operation of Air Observer Schools, Yukon Southern Ltd., of Edmonton, pioneer of the Alaska airway, was assigned the Portage la Prairie school to operate. In February, 1941, Portage Air Observer School Ltd. was incorporated, with the directors of Yukon Southern as the directors of P.A.O.S.—Chas. "Cy" Becker, as president and managing director; Grant McConachie, president of Yukon Southern, as vice-president of P.A.O.S.; F. J. Mitchell and Bernard Phillips of Edmonton, and J. H. O'Connor of Calgary, as directors.

On March 5, 1941, a contract was signed between H.M. the King per Department of National Defence for Air, and the Portage Air Observer School Ltd.

The same month, the company opened a temporary office in the St. Regis hotel, Winnipeg. There Mr. Becker; A. M. "Matt" Berry, operations manager; D. W. "Scotty" Moir, chief pilot; J. R. Giles, treasurer; and C. W. Hanna, secretary, had their first headquarters, until the first office space at the Station was ready at the end of March.

As on many of the early stations, No. 7 was to share the same air field with an Elementary Flying Training School, No. 14. Formed on Stevenson Field, Winnipeg, in 1940, No. 14 E.F.T.S. moved to the Portage la Prairie field early in December, 1940, and had been operating there three months when the staff of No. 7 began to arrive at the camp late in March.

The boundary between the two stations was "Administration Road," running south from the old guard house, which later became the Station post office when No. 7 was enlarged. No. 14 occupied what later was known as No. 3 hangar and other buildings then standing west of this road. No. 7 took over Nos. 1 and 2 hangars and the other buildings east of the road, as the contractors completed them.

1941

THE first year was one of trial and error for the staff—of finding out what was wanted, what was available, what was lacking, and how lacks could be supplied.

"Everything was a problem," as one of the original civilian officers said. "We all were new to both the Station and No. 2 Command." And Command was strange to the supervision of Air Observer Schools, for the three in the Command—No. 5 at Stevenson Field, No. 6 at Prince Albert, and No. 7—opened within a short time of each other.

* * *

The first impression of the staff of No. 7 as they arrived, the first problem that every department and section had to cope with, and the steady refrain of all reminiscences of early days on the Station, was MUD.

"It was something scandalous" in the words of one of the first arrivals. The site of the camp and field was low—10 feet below the level of the Assiniboine river bank a mile away to the north. So that frogs and lizards were familiar visitors in the hangars all through the Station's history! The drainage at first was poor. The campsite had been prepared in necessary haste during the previous winter, and the camp roads and the entrance road leading in from the highway had been built after the frost came. The road grades had been heaped up of lumps of frozen clay, with gravel piled on top. In the spring of 1941, the melting of heavy snows was followed by heavy rains, and the roads went to pieces, melting into ribbons of sticky, clayey mud.

"Anyone without rubber boots was very foolish—the camp was a quagmire," another early arrival recalls. To move along Administration road between the two Administration buildings was to have to leave the road and pick the dry spots along the building walls. "There was nothing but a sea of mud."

Staff living in Portage la Prairie left the busses and their cars along the highway near the bridge and walked in, for most of the first summer—giving rise to the legend that that stretch of road is now ballasted with lost rubbers. Much of what traffic had to reach the camp chose the roundabout route of the old dirt road along the section line on the west side of camp. Two caterpillar tractors sometimes were required to haul the gas tender through the mile of ooze from the highway to the school. And at times, even the tractors could not get through.

But in face of the mud, on April 28, the Station opened and Course 23—"22 Canadian and 20 United Kingdom trainees"—began training as observers. "The duration of the course is 12 weeks," it was recorded. "Three courses will run concurrently, there being an intake of 42 aircraftsmen every four weeks."

"Due to the condition of the grounds, it was impos-

MUD!



sible to hold parades, but other routine was carried out" was noted the next day.

At the end of that first month, the Station had 40 students, 12 aircraft, 22 service personnel on staff, and 100 civilian personnel.

On May 9, "ten aircraft flew the first air exercise with Course 23, section two." And the day following, "eleven aircraft flew the first air exercise with Course 23, section one."

* * *

While the Station originals were shaking down, and growing web feet to cope with the mud, fire added to their problems.

On May 13, an overheated stove pipe caused a fire in the roof of No. 23 civilian quarters, which was extinguished easily. With this warning, connection of the Station booster pump was hurried, to raise the pressure of the water supply for firefighting.

About then, No. 2 hangar was ready, and aircraft were moved into it. But occupation of the Control Tower on the hangar was delayed.

A few days later, at 0900 hours on May 21, a solo student from No. 14 E.F.T.S. was taking off, when his Moth stalled at 200 feet, directly over No. 2 hangar. Falling, the aircraft crashed into the hangar roof near the vacant Control Tower. The nose of the engine smashed a hole through the boards, the gas tank broke, and the fuel caught fire. Flaming gasoline dripped through the hole on to an Anson parked below, which had been refueled only an hour before. The Anson's fuel tanks blew up, "and in five minutes you couldn't get near the hangar."

But in that five minutes, much happened. Bob Shearer, of the Station radio department, a son of then Air Commodore Shearer, Air Officer Commanding, No. 2 Command, was near the hangar, enjoying his day off. Racing up the wooden stairs to the roof, he reached the wrecked Moth, to try to open the coupe top and rescue the unconscious pilot. But the flames were spreading so fast that he could not get to the lad.

In the Radio room at the north end of the hangar were four transmitters, each weighing 800 pounds. In the wild rush to save equipment, Barney Barnstable, of Radio, and Jack Dame, a pilot, without help, somehow put three of the four transmitters through a window. Yet afterwards it took four men to lift each of the transmitters, when they were moved to safety in Stores! The fourth transmitter was so wired in that it could not be saved.

A dozen Ansons were in the hangar. The six on the north side, farthest from the fire, were wheeled out safely. But the other six went up in a furnace of exploding gas tanks and blazing timbers.

A 30-mile-per-hour west wind was blowing, which slowed the spread of the flames towards the west end of the burning hangar, but blew them eastward



What a Moth did—

towards No. 1 hangar. There was no booster pump and no fire truck—just hydrant water at the pressure of Portage la Prairie city, five miles away. With this scanty help, No. 1 hangar was saved after a hard fight. But two hours after the crash, No. 2 hangar was a mass of glowing embers level with the ground.

After the fire, the aircraft had to be left out until late in the fall, and pegged down during the frequent high winds, while No. 2 hangar was rebuilt.

On June 2, two flights took part in the Portage la Prairie "Torch parade," and on the 8th, forty students marched in the Portage Decoration Day parade. On the 9th, play began in the softball league arranged by the newly organized Portage la Prairie and District Services Athletic Association. A parade preceded the first game, which was played between the N.C.O.'s of No. 3 B. & G. at Macdonald, and of the Military Training Centre at Portage. A board of officers convened to take over the Station buildings from the contractors, on the 12th, and on the 13th, the officers' mess was opened, officially.

Exceptionally fine weather on the 15th greeted 42 New Zealanders who arrived from Vancouver for Course 27. A chartered bus met them at the railway station and "the men were gratified to learn that modern plumbing had been installed, as they had not bathed for 21 days. The hot water tank proved to be most inadequate." The same day, the Island Park Tennis Club entertained Service personnel.

* * *

Bad weather, though, was to be the chief feature of Station life through most of that first year.

The summer came in very hot and stormy. "There was a terrific number of thunderstorms, lasting day and night—more than in any subsequent summer" one of the early pilots recalls. "We seemed to dodge a storm on every flight that summer. We'd be running into the evening storms before they were dissipated in the morning."

"The air was so rough that the aircraft were bumped all over the sky" in the words of another pilot. "The students often were made so sick that they couldn't navigate; and the pilots would be nearly sick, as well. There were heavy cumulus clouds, with their bottoms at 2,000 feet—you'd have had to go to 20,000 to get over them and get into smooth air. The last half of June and through July and August of '41 were terrific." The records carry frequent entries, "Flying suspended on account of adverse weather conditions."

On June 17, "a terrific electric storm forced four of our aircraft down—two at No. 12 S.F.T.S. at Brandon, one at No. 33 S.F.T.S. at Carberry, and one at Treherne—all safely. The deluge almost inundated the Station. Drains

—to No. 2 hangar



were blocked, the sewage disposal disrupted, to the inconvenience of personnel.

"During the storm, the siren was hit, a short circuit resulting, which caused said siren to sound. Thinking that a fire had been started, personnel rushed out into the air, only to be drenched."

"Everybody was still jittery from the hangar fire." And J. R. Giles, then treasurer of P.A.O.S., unwillingly provided comic relief, when he left the Administration building so fast in response to the siren that he skidded across the road and ended full length in the rain-filled ditch on the other side.

"Aerodrome u/s" was the terse entry next day.

The same day, the first of many R.N.Z.A.F. liaison officers arrived to inspect the New Zealand students and to discuss personal problems with the men. Three days later, 40 R.A.F. and R.N.Z.A.F. students were entertained by the Canadian Legion at Roland, assisted by the Roland Red Cross and the Cheerio club. The men returned to camp "full of praise for the hospitality shown them."

On the 23rd, "drying racks have been installed in the airmen's barracks. Now the men can do much of their own laundry. Wash tubs, wash boards and an electric iron were donated by the T. Eaton Co. Ltd."

That day, the original students, Course 23, section one, took on a mixed team of Station officers and N.C.O.'s at softball. "The game was fast and close until the last half of the last inning. The aircraftsmen, *due to their superior condition*, had withstood the pace better, and in the closing half they put on a drive, winning the game 12-8."

The weather only got worse as June wore into July. "Intense heat" on June 26 forced the Station to "alter daily routine to avoid working hours during the heat of the day." Next day, "reveille advanced to 0430 hours, with work ceasing at 1230 hours."

Added to bad weather upstairs was discomfort on the ground. The camp area was newly broken, and none of it was grassed. In the hot, dry weather, the mud of the spring turned to fine, powdery dust that nothing could keep out of the hangars and offices, not to mention the barracks, where the dust piled up in gritty layers on pillows, bedclothes and floors.

Fire in the roof of building No. 6 caused an alarm on June 30, but it was "ably extinguished."

The month ended with 129 students, 18 aircraft, 34 service staff, and over 150 civilians.

* * *

With so few aircraft, operations on No. 7 in these early months were small compared to their later size. But "there was a good deal of activity, thanks to No. 14 E.F.T.S. On a good day, the field was alive with yellow Tiger Moths interspersed with occasional green-and-brown camouflaged Ansons, all taking off and landing on the grass or, if it had happened to rain, on the mud—or in it.

"Great excitement arose whenever high winds struck and caught the Moths outside, throwing them helter-skelter around the field or on their backs. On several occasions, the boys had to pull them out of the air when they attempted to land in a high wind. Ansons, being heavier, swung nose into the wind and usually rode the gales without damage."

The first graduation dinner took place on July 16, when Course 23 held revel at the Mayfair hotel, Portage la Prairie, with the C.S.O., S/L K. J. McDonald, R.A.F., as chairman.

Next day, 11 aircraft took off on a long-distance navigation exercise to Prince Albert, followed a day later by other aircraft flying an exercise to Regina.

The weather remained fiercely hot. So on Sunday, July 20, "three officers and 29 trainees enjoyed a swim at Delta. The Portage Air Observer School Ltd. supplied the transport." After that, in hot weather, swimming parties at Delta were a weekly fixture.

Dust or mud was the poor choice all that summer. On July 28 it was wet again. And that day an Anson from Carberry forced-landed with engine trouble. "The aircraft became mired in the landing field."

But the Station now was three months old and was getting into stride. Graduations and weather were becoming routine incidents, along with the occasional forced landing. On Aug. 12, an aircraft from the Station forced-landed at Lake Frances when the port motor seized. Next day, it was repaired and returned to the Station. Course 25 graduated on the 14th—with "all passed"—and left for No. 7 B. & G. at Paulson, Manitoba, on the 18th. A month later Course 27 went to No. 5 B. & G. at Dafoe, Sask.

Epidemics in the province caused the cancellation of church parades in early September, owing to an order forbidding airmen to assemble in meetings. But a week later, church parade was restored.

An aircraft ran out of fuel and forced-landed near Roland on Oct. 14. On the 28th, the Station was inspected by the Inspector-General of the R.C.A.F., A/V/M G. M. Croil, A.F.C., accompanied by G/C D. W. F. Bonham-Carter, from No. 2 Command H. Q.

Three days later, winter announced its arrival. "The C.O.'s parade was cancelled due to heavy snowfall." And Course 31 had to have its graduation dinner on the Station. A week later, the C.O.'s parade again was cancelled—"parade ground u/s."

Late in the fall, No. 2 hangar again was ready for use, rebuilt after the fire. The number of aircraft on strength increased to 25, double the opening number.

The year ended with Christmas dinner on the Station for the airmen, served by the C.S.O. and the officers not on leave. "Recreation was provided jointly with No. 14 E.F.T.S. later in the day."

The First Graduating Class—Course 23, July, 1941



1942

THE second year began as one of consolidation—and ended in hectic months of expansion.

The year opened with the staff shaken down into their duties, and the basic lessons learned, but with two changes in management.

In January, Yukon Southern Ltd. became one of the companies grouped to form Canadian Pacific Airlines Ltd. Responsibility for Portage Air Observer School Ltd. passed to Canadian Pacific Airlines, and the school came under the general supervision of W. R. "Wop" May, of Edmonton, as supervisor of western air training schools operated by C.P.A.L.

In the course of the organization of C.P.A.L., Mr. Becker was transferred to Edmonton. And in January, Mr. Berry stepped up from operations manager to carry on in his place, as manager. In turn, "Scotty" Moir moved up from chief pilot to be operations manager.

February was a quiet month. The winter had been mild so far, and routine went on as usual.

* * *

Then the March lion roared in, bringing "The Big Blizzard." On March 25, "a very severe blizzard started at 1100 hours, suspending all operations." Next day, "blizzard still continues, growing in intensity." The day after, "C.O.'s parade abandoned due to storm. Blizzard still continues with unabated fury." The fourth day, March 28, "Late in the afternoon the blizzard stopped. Snow drifts eight to ten feet high are piled up on various parts of the Station. Flying has been totally suspended since the start of the blizzard."

Thirty aircraft had been in the air when the blizzard closed in suddenly, without previous warning. All but seven managed to get back to the Station before the swirling snow closed in the field. The other seven were crowded away to the east, and forced-landed at Winnipeg. Most of a week passed before they could be allowed to return.

After the three-day blizzard stopped, it took another three days to dig out the Station and the road to Portage la Prairie. And two days more, to dig out runways and the taxi strip.

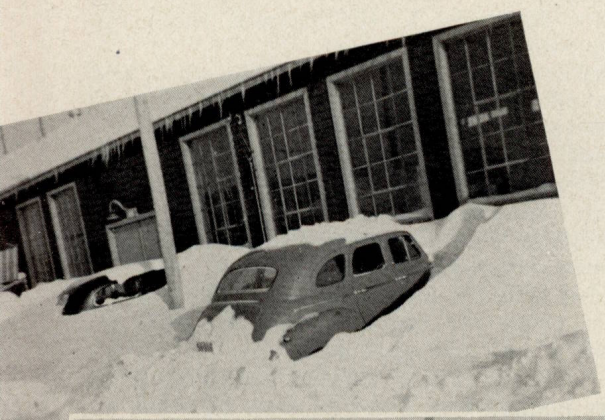
Pilots jumped "without parachutes and without injury" from the catwalk of the Control Tower into the huge drifts piled up to the second-storey windows of the Tower. On the taxi strip, the snow was as high as the Sno-go, which raised a minor blizzard in removing it. And on the runway after it was cleared, the snow was above the wing tips of the taxying aircraft.

It was almost an anti-climax on March 31, when "an aircraft was grounded at Kenora due to engine trouble. It returned late in the day."

The month ended with students 178; aircraft 25; service staff 69; civilian staff 230.

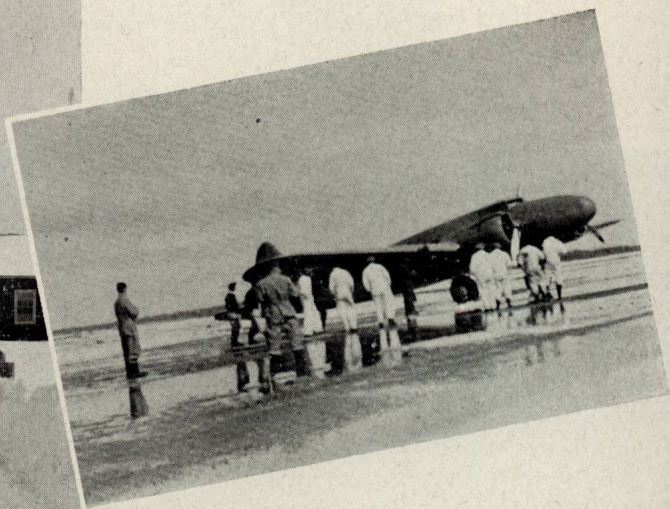
Mr. Berry followed Mr. Becker to Edmonton at the end of March. He was succeeded as Manager by W. L. Parr, from No. 2 A.O.S., Edmonton, who remained in charge of the Station until the end.

April, as usual, was dominated by weather. The drifts left by "The Big Blizzard" melted with a rush. Water ran a foot deep over the road from the Station to the highway, at one point. The Oakville road flooded. The Assiniboine rose to within three feet of the top of its bank. For a while it seemed that all traffic to Portage la Prairie would be cut off. And there was a good chance that the whole Station would be flooded, if the river went over its banks. But the rising flood stopped in time.



Weather!





May was quiet, for a change. The event of the month was the first visit of a concert party to the Station, on May 23, when the Great West Life troupe played in a barracks cleared of bunks, on a temporary stage with sheets for walls and half cans for footlights.

On May 25, S/L L. E. Ellis, D.F.C., took over as C.S.O.

Inspections and postings began to come fast, in June. On June 6, the Station was visited by Capt. the Rt. Hon. Harold Balfour, Under-Secretary for Air of the United Kingdom, who was accompanied by A/V/M Shearer, Air Officer Commanding No. 2 Training Command, and G/C D. W. F. Bonham-Carter, Senior Air Staff Officer at Command. Two days before, the Deputy Inspector-General, A/C A. E. Godfrey, had inspected the Station.

On June 5, F/L J. S. Nutt arrived to take over as Chief Instructor from F/L D. B. Riddell, who had been C.I. since the Station opened. And on the 26th, F/L E. H. M. Crawford, who had been Senior Administrative Officer since August, 1941, was posted to A.F.H.Q. for staff legal duties.

* * *

Change was in the air. No. 7 was going to be greatly enlarged.

Until the end of May, 1942, the total R.C.A.F. personnel on the Station never had been more than 250 or so, of whom 179, at most, were students.

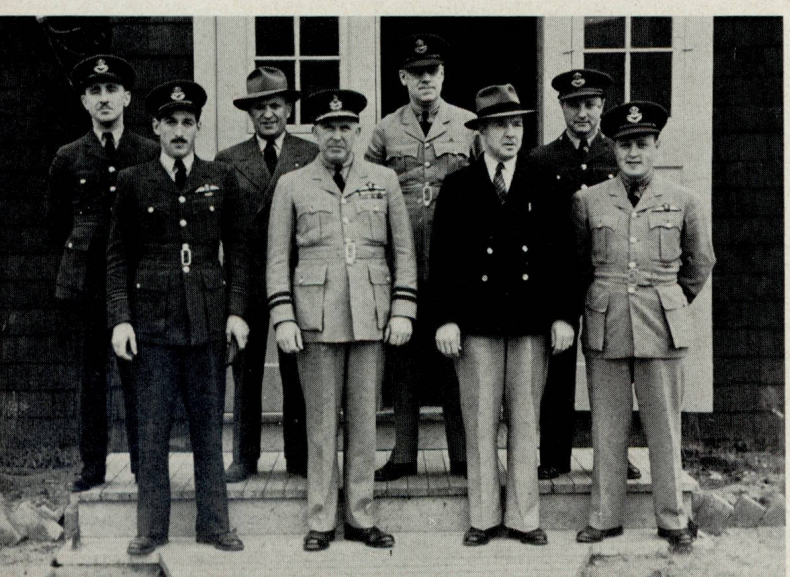
Now the Station was to be enlarged month by month to over 900 service personnel—a maximum of 676 students, with the rest on staff—who would require some 800 civilian personnel as well, in operations and supply. The increase was to begin in July, with the student strength rising at once to eight courses of 26 men each, continuing to rise to 11 courses in October, and then increasing by 26 men every two weeks as accommodation permitted.

So on June 30, No. 14 E.F.T.S. was disbanded at Portage la Prairie and its civilian personnel moved to Assiniboia, Sask., where they resumed operations as No. 25 E.F.T.S., an R.A.F. station.

At Portage, No. 3 hangar and the other buildings west of Administration road that had been occupied by No. 14 were transferred on July 3 to No. 7, which from then on occupied the whole camp.

At the same time, the former Air Observer aircrew trade was divided into two new trades, Air Navigator and Air Bomber. And the course was changed, so that instead of going to a Bombing and Gunnery School to graduate, the students in future would complete their training and receive their wings at No. 7.

The D.I.G. inspects





Rt. Hon. Harold Balfour looks us over

The first Wings Parade on the Station—the result of the new training program—was held on July 31, with one R.C.A.F. and 18 R.A.F. men of Course 47 graduating as Air Navigators. The eight students with the highest standing also received commissions on graduation. The wings were presented by A/C T. A. Lawrence, of No. 2 Training Command.

Before the month ended, the weather was at it again. A terrific cloudburst hit the Station.

Water was running freely over the one runway then completed, when the storm ended. Jack McConnachie swore till the Station closed that on that day he saw a fish trying to fight its way upstream, through the water flooding over the runway. And even some of the sceptics were willing to admit that he might have seen a muskrat. In the hangars, water ran inches deep over the floors.

For a day or so after the cloudburst, the whole field was an unbroken sheet of water, and aircraft had to land on the tarmac in front of the hangars.

The second concert party to visit the Station, the Winnipeg Repertory troupe, was enjoyed on July 16, again on an improvised stage.

"A refresher drill course for all officers" was a happy item announced during the month.

July ended with the increasing size of the Station showing in totals of: Students, 224; aircraft, 38; service staff, 99; civilian staff, 461.

The first crash in sixteen months' operations since the Station opened took place on Aug. 13, when an aircraft returning from a night flight crashed 1½ miles north of the field, killing the crew of four.

"The largest graduation yet" took place on Sept. 11, with eight R.A.F. and 38 R.C.A.F. students from Courses 50 and 51 graduating as Air Navigators. This Wings Parade was the last at which Air Observer wings were presented to Canadians.

"With the increase of trainees, the unit is still extremely under strength in staff," is the note that ends the September records. The condition was to be familiar during most of the rest of the Station's operations. The month ended with 282 students on strength, 50 aircraft, 141 service staff, 530 civilian staff.

Graduates of the Air Training Plan were beginning to arrive as instructors. On Sept. 21, the first three Air Navigators had been posted in as instructors. And on Oct. 9, P/O's W. A. Moore and D. J. Evans, graduates of No. 7 in Course 49 Air Navigators, were posted in from Rivers as navigation instructors.

A second aircraft from the Station crashed on Oct. 9, near Darlingford, killing the crew of four.

"Due to insufficient accommodation in the airmen's, N.C.O.'s and officers' messes, it was necessary to have six meal parades per day for three meals" it was noted on Oct. 26.

* * *

The winter settled in cold. The winter of 1941 had been very mild. But in 1942, mechanics, pilots, instructors and students began to learn the hard way how bitterly cold a man could be when Mark 1 Ansons were used in a prairie winter. The cold was particularly hard on the Aussies and New Zealand students, used to milder climates.

In November, a Royal Australian Air Force liaison party visited the Station.

The month ended on a note of triumph. For on Nov. 19, "A/V/M Shearer presented the Efficiency Pennant for Air Observer Schools." Award of the pennant had just been begun, and this was the first Efficiency Pennant awarded to an Air Observer School. At a special parade, the pennant was received on behalf of the Station by Mr. Parr and S/L Ellis.

The pennant parade was S/L Ellis' last official act on the Station. The same day he handed over as C.S.O. to S/L H. G. Malcolmson, who came from No. 5 A.O.S., at Winnipeg.

Until now the Station had been flying four flights of 13 aircraft a day—one flight at a time, morning, afternoon, evening and night. On Dec. 1, to ease working conditions in the intense cold, the Station "started flying 26 aircraft in each flight—one in the afternoon, and one at night. The results were very satisfactory, considering that this is the first unit in this Command to fly this schedule."

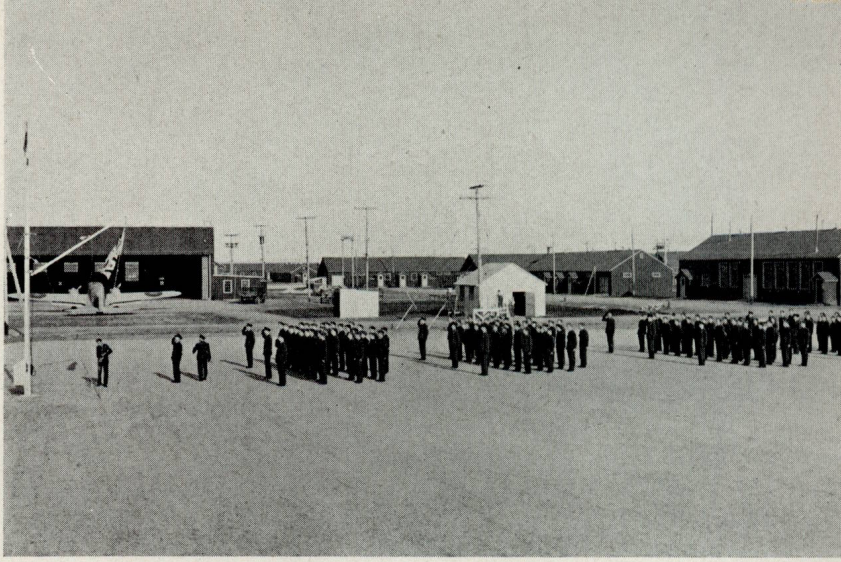
Next day, H/F/L the Rev. J. Blewett took over as Station padre, succeeding H/F/L the Rev. G. W. Abernethy, who had served the Station as Protestant padre part-time since November, 1941.

A whole flight was up on Dec. 13. Without warning, the weather suddenly closed in. Heavy snow began to fall. Ice formed on the aircraft and in the engine carburetors, forcing down nine of the aircraft away from the Station, "in various stages of disrepair." No one was hurt. "But a considerable amount of repairs were needed to nine aircraft." The other 17 aircraft got safely back to base.

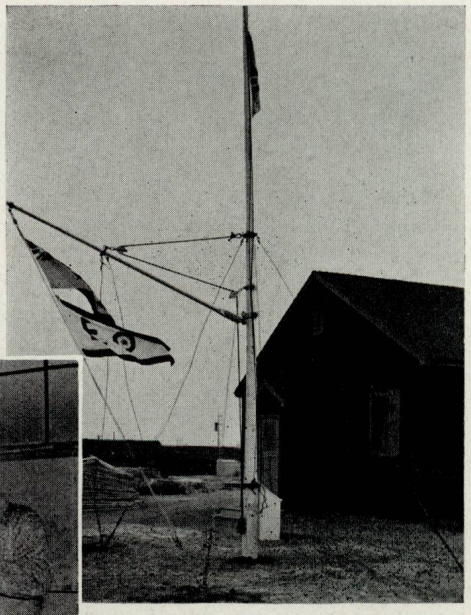
A week later, the third fatal crash in four months saddened the Station. "The aircraft burned on hitting."

On Christmas Day all service personnel not on leave sat down to dinner served by the officers in the airmen's mess.

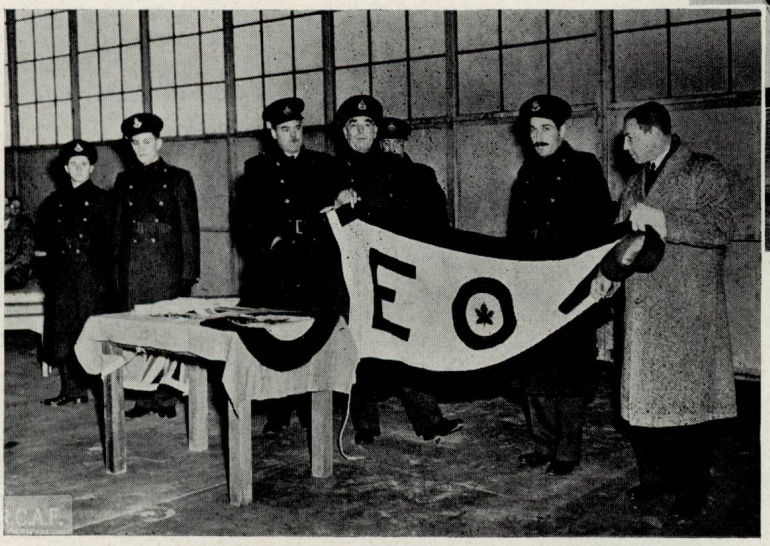
The year ended with 272 students on strength, 39 aircraft, 185 service staff, and 588 civilian staff.



The old Parade Ground



The first Efficiency Pennant for an A.O.S.



1943

CONTINUOUS expansion, with all its satisfactions and discomforts—that was 1943.

The great work being done by the Air Force overseas and the tremendous number of aircraft beginning to pour from the factories were requiring more aircrew than had been dreamed of two years earlier. The achievements of graduates of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan showed how the new aircrew could best be trained. And multi-engined bombers were needing more specialized trades, including navigators and bombers. So more and more students were sent to the Air Observer Schools.

At the same time, two of the A.O.S.'s were closing—No. 6 at Prince Albert in the fall of 1942, and No. 3 at Regina, which first moved to Pearce, Alta., in late 1942 and then was assigned to close in June, 1943. The closings helped the remaining eight schools somewhat by releasing a number of experienced personnel. But at the same time they added to the training load on the remaining schools.

In this setting, the staff of No. 7 went into 1943 in a mood of seasoned confidence. The work of the Station had been approved, by the order to expand threefold and by award of the Efficiency Pennant. The period of testing and experiment was over.

* * *

A strenuous race with the weather began almost at once. On Jan. 4, two Ansons returning from routine navigation exercises had to crash land on the Station field. No one was hurt.

The Active Service Club in Portage la Prairie was opened on the 9th.

The weather really got down to business on the 17th. Thirteen days later it was recorded: "Due to inclement weather, this unit has been able to fly only 5½ days and 2½ nights since the 17th." The weather cleared on the 30th, at last, and flying was resumed next morning.

Strength at the end of January was 318 students, 46 aircraft, 200 service staff, 593 civilian staff.

"Fire broke out in the contractors' equipment, where they are working on the new hangars" on Feb. 1. In spite of the weather, work was continuing on the keenly awaited No. 5 hangar.

"The new officers' quarters were occupied in building 37" on the 6th.

The High Commissioner for Australia, Maj.-Gen. the Hon. Sir William Glasgow, was a visitor from Ottawa on the 8th.

An aircraft was forced down at Manitou on the 10th. No one was hurt.

"Transport problems are acute" on the 16th. "Motor transport got stuck in snow banks on the ranges."

A combined bombing exercise, working with aircraft from No. 3 B. & G., had been arranged. On Feb. 26th, "Combined bombing raid cancelled because of unsuitable weather to the eastward." Next day, "Combined bombing raid cancelled because of inclement weather and snow flurries." And the third day, Feb. 28, "Combined bombing raid cancelled altogether. Weather changeable. Some snow flurries."

Strength at the end of the month had risen to 342 students, 56 aircraft, 220 service staff, 600 civilian staff.

About this time, the weather again caused anxious hours. One Sunday afternoon, a snowstorm closed in suddenly while a whole flight was out. All but five of the aircraft landed safely at the Station or at Winnipeg. The remaining five forced-landed between Portage and Winnipeg, and three of the aircraft had to be written off as wrecks. But no one was hurt.

On March 1, an aircraft from the Station crashed near Birtle, killing the crew of four.

On March 5, the much-delayed combined bombing raid on the Winnipeg target was brought off, and was won by the No. 7 crews.

The annual March blizzard arrived ten days earlier this year. "Heavy snow fall and blizzard. All flights grounded" was the report for March 15. Next day, "Still snowing and snow ploughs are at work. Airdrome u/s." And on the 17th, "still unfavorable weather—blizzard. But shows signs of changing."

Five days later, the blizzard snowfall was melting too fast. "Owing to the thaw, a Station drainage problem is developing." Also on the 22nd—"mud." Two days later, "Poor drainage conditions becoming acute. Eased somewhat by light frost." Another two days and "Drainage problem improving owing to night frost." And the next day, "Drainage and mud situation clearing, due to light night frost."

Between the blizzard and the thaw, F/L W. J. Hawkins arrived from Rivers on the 19th to be C.I.

* * *

March blizzards—April floods. The annual routine was becoming a formula by now. On April 8, "Assiniboine river threatening to overflow its banks." Next day, "River overflowed at Poplar Point. Ice jam 6 miles west."

The situation soon looked normal—by April 24 it was "Heavy dust storm. All flying cancelled during the day." And two days later it was still "Flying restricted due to weather."

But winter was not through with the Station. The Anniversary party was set for the end of April. Some 500 of the staff would sit down for dinner in No. 4 hangar, and afterwards their ladies would come out from town to join them, for a dance, also held in a hangar.

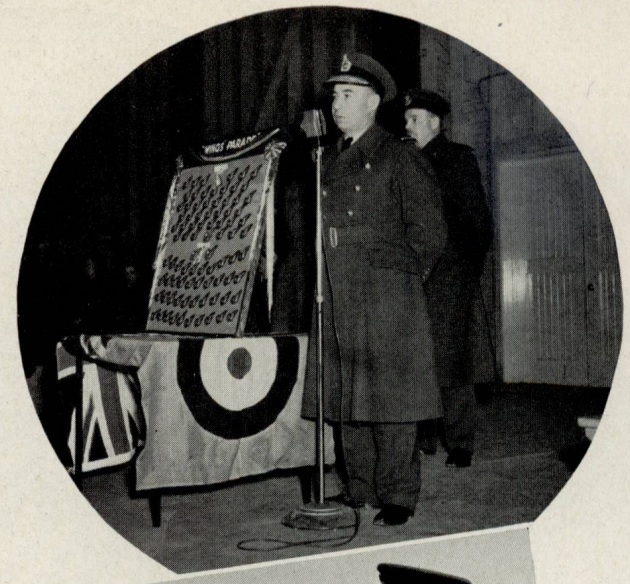
On the night, a snowstorm crashed the party. Snow was beginning to fall when the guests gathered for dinner. In the middle of the speeches following the meal, the lights went out, leaving Hon. D. L. Campbell, Manitoba Minister of Agriculture, and the Mayor of Portage la Prairie to deliver their speeches in the dark. A transformer five miles away on the power line had burned out.

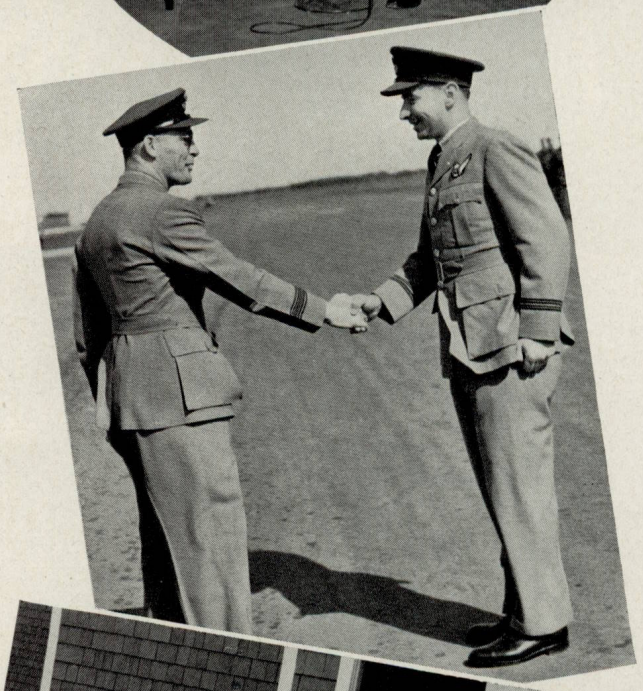
But that was only the beginning. While the dancing was going on, the storm was getting heavier. Heavy, wet snow piled deep across the road to Portage la Prairie. And before the merrymakers could get home to warm beds in the very far hours of the morning, the tractors from the Station had to pull one car and bus after another from ditches and snow banks on the soft and slithery road to town.

The end of April found only 4,095 hours flown during the month.

Blood donors were enrolled among the Station staff during this April, to give blood regularly through the Red Cross collection clinic in Portage la Prairie.

Top—A/V/M T. A. Lawrence
Second—The Old and the New C.I.'s





May rains delayed the start of the Station Victory Garden until June 1. The Station apiary also started in June "under the supervision of the accounts officer, F/O C. Hunsley."

Rehearsals for a Station orchestra began on the 9th.

The first wedding on the Station took place on June 12th, when Sgt. C. M. Given, R.N.Z.A.F., of Class 75 Air Bombers, took as his bride, Muriel Martha Minto, of Wolsingham, Ont. The pioneering couple were married in the lounge room of the Civilian Women's quarters by the padre, F/L J. A. Payton.

Later in the month, Hon. Fred. Jones, Minister of Defence of New Zealand, R. M. Frith, acting High Commissioner to Canada for New Zealand, and their party arrived to meet New Zealand students.

Sportswise, the month was hard on No. 7, which was defeated at softball 4-1 by No. 3 B. & G. and 20-3 by the 100th Basic Training Centre.

An aircraft from Rivers crashed in Lake Manitoba, west of Oak Point, on the morning of the 22nd. The C.S.O. of No. 7, W/C Malcolmson, guided the Mounted Police to the oil slick and wreckage located from the air by aircraft from No. 7.

Rain was the month's gift from the weatherman. Flying was washed out for part or all of each of four days between the 14th and 20th, first by "heavy rain, low ceiling, poor visibility," then by a heavy electric storm on the morning of the 20th. But flying time for the month rose sharply to 6,223.

* * *

"Firsts" increased in July, with two important ones on the 19th.

On that historic day, two mimeographed sheets, modestly entitled "Here and There About the Station," appeared on notice boards all over the camp.

"The main purpose of this little family journal is to give the men a chance to keep up-to-date on the intramural sports and prevent any disappointment when a team fails to show up for a scheduled game," said the opening issue.

Soft, mild, sheep's clothing! But the man behind the "little family journal" was Aitch—otherwise, officially, F/O Gordon Aitchison, Physical Training officer for the Station. Which should have been warning enough. The next issue was entitled "Goings-on About the Station." In the fourth issue, of Aug. 2, the wolf threw off his disguise—"YE WEEKLY SCANDAL SHEET" blared forth from the masthead of the paper. And for the remaining seventeen months of its publication, the "family journal" became a lively, running record of doings—and personalities—which added to life on the station.

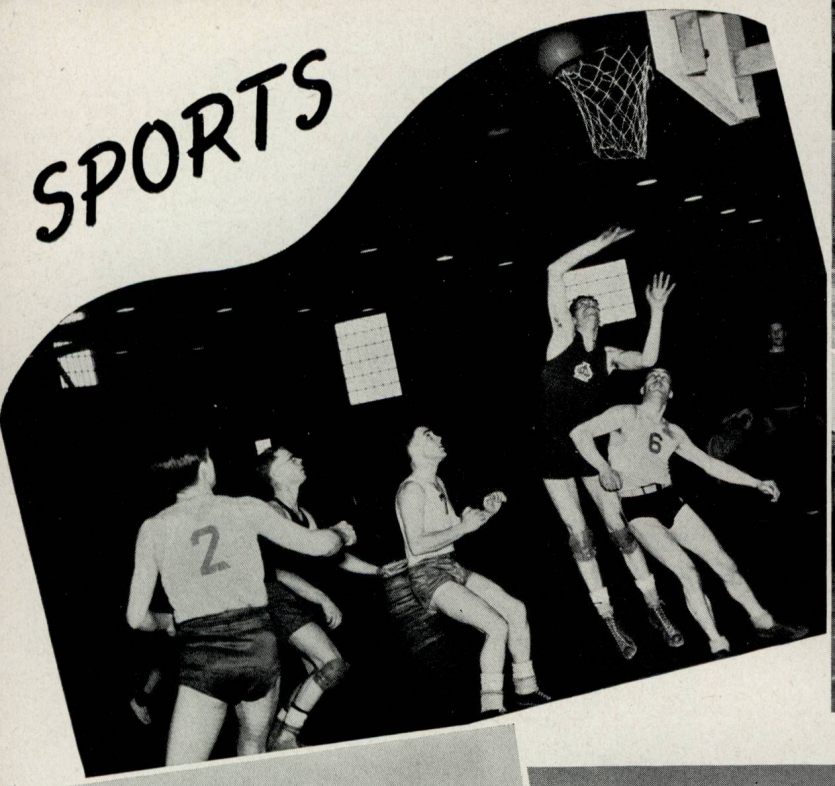
The other great "first" in July—"the BIG EVENT OF THE WEEK," as the journal reported—"was the big Station dance in the new airmen's mess. The Station orchestra, the brain child of the SWO, WO2





Third—The Wedding
Bottom—Over the Top Again!

SPORTS

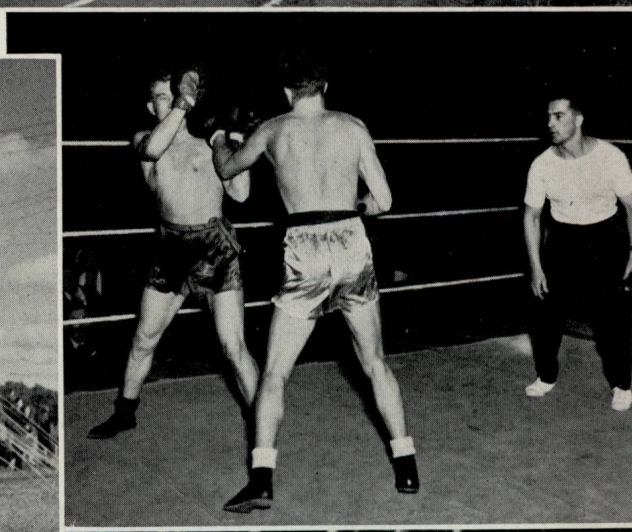


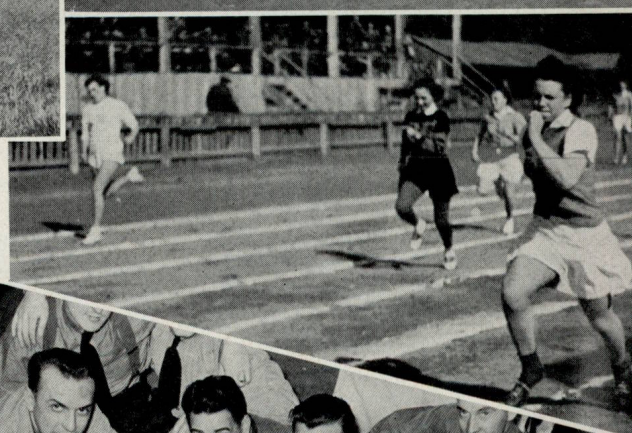


















Gilmore, provided the music, and did a grand job. With the opening of the new recreation hall, these dances are to be a regular part of the Station program."

Another first—On the 28th "be it known by all and sundry that the oft-despised station softball team doooooooooooed it. When the shades of eve had fallen over the diamond in Portage, the figures of the erstwhile kings of the diamond, the men of the 100th Basic Training Centre, the lordly leaders of the softball league, slunk silently and sullenly back to their lairs, degraded and humbled to the tune of 12-3 by our own team."

A new Protestant chaplain, F/L A. Patterson, was posted in on July 23rd. An overheated chimney in the north end of the civilian mess caused some excitement on the 24th.

There were the usual extreme heat and electric storms of July, the storms at times preventing night flying. But the total flying time still was climbing, this month to 7,479 hours.

More "firsts" highlighted August.

The Station picture show opened in the new Recreation Hall on the 16th, with the showing of "Stage Door Canteen."

The presence of wives and mothers of graduating students added to the regular wings parade on the 19th.

A few days later, a storm grounded five aircraft at Winnipeg and one at Pembina, but "all came home safely" when the storm died.

The first annual Station sports day was run off on the 21st. "Probably the biggest crowd pleaser in the opening events was one LAC Bill Roney, Course 77N, who sped to victory in the 100-yard dash and the 220. This bespectacled speedster whipped around the track like a student navigator with two seconds to briefing, and turned in a hundred mark of 10.3 seconds in his first heat of the century . . . Almost as spectacular was LAC McMillan, Albert Hugh . . . the bright and shining light for the winning course, Course 80N, and runner-up in aggregate points . . . Netting 29 points, LAC Mike Hawrylak topped McMillan by a slim margin of two points."

An aircraft was forced down at Rivers on the 26th. No one was hurt.

Flying time for the month rose again, to 7,587 hours. There were now 648 students on strength, 79 aircraft, 301 service staff, 763 civilian staff.

* * *

September saw—and heard—the first "making of braves" through the ordeal of the Harvard Step Test of endearing memory.

For the benefit of the lucky who never endured it, this was a test of physical condition done by stepping from the floor to a 20-inch high bench and back again, "Up—Down" 30 times a minute for five minutes by the clock, with the pulse rate being recorded three times afterwards, after one, two, and three minutes' rest.

In the words of the Scandal Sheet, "With one accord the students can say, with justifiable pride, that they have had their ups and downs. Witness to this claim can be found on every hand, as once sprightly trainees hobble gingerly about their daily chores, with every once in a while an involuntary wince of exquisite agony, as still another muscle adds its complaint to the general symphony of anguish. To the undying credit of the Station, it may be said that one and all came through nobly."

In this month also, the students began handling drill, instead of the Station officers, since the best students might now be commissioned on graduation. "There are the usual comical incidents . . . as flights go merrily on into a wall or a hangar, while a rookie squadron commander watches helplessly, unable to frame any command that will save them from their doom."

The surrender of Italy on the 13th was celebrated by a parade and ceremony attended by all service and civilian personnel, followed by parties in the evening.

The weather was up to its usual tricks, only more so. "The ever-present problem is whether to wear a greatcoat, a raincoat or a sarong, as the temperature swings convulsively from deep bass to a shrill soprano."

The contractors were at work all the time on new buildings, but the steady increase in number of students and staff kept ahead of them. On the 20th, "Due to alterations of buildings, Barrack block 41 had to be brought into use. As yet there is no hot water in this building. What water there is, is a temporary set-up."

No. 41 was the big new two-storey barracks on the west side of camp. The "temporary set-up," the brain child of Joe McInnes, superintendent of heating, was "Puffing Billy," the ancient steam threshing-machine engine used every spring by Len Carter and his groundsmen to thaw out frozen culverts. Run in behind building 41, coupled to the building's pipes by a hose, and with steam up, "Puffing Billy" puffed heat and hot water for showers and shaving right nobly for some time, until the heating installations in the building were completed.

The first concert party to appear in the new Recreation Hall, and first to visit the Station in fifteen months—the Winnipeg City Hydro troupe—played on the 26th "before a very enthusiastic crowd. Any girl just had to stand on the stage to get a thunderous round of applause."

The first Open Day for the public was held on Sept. 29, to aid recruiting for aircrew. Some 450 visitors were taken on conducted tours of the Station.

Next day, an aircraft from No. 7 which had landed at No. 17 S.F.T.S., Souris, to refuel, had its motors cut out on take-off, at 100 feet off the ground. It crash-landed in a rough field and the undercart folded, but no one was hurt.

About this time, the Victory Garden was back in the news, for the chores it offered the duty watch in taking up the crop, at all hours of the day—or night—and with a variety of means of transport, including on one occasion the Station bulldozer.

* * *

October had so much excitement that even the official scribe remarked on it.

The month opened with the Station soccer team going to Osborne stadium, Winnipeg, and handing a 3-2 defeat to the No. 5 A.O.S. team, "who had managed to make the Manitoba semi-finals."

Next evening, the Raffians concert party from No. 35 E.F.T.S., Neepawa, entertained the Station in the Rec. Hall.

Experience overseas was showing that more care was needed to keep aircrew students and instructors in good physical condition. Introduction of the Har-

vard Step Test had been an early result. Now, on the 5th, "the physical training has been increased to five periods per week for each course, with a stiff commando run or obstacle course in the offing to make things even more miserable for the trainees."

"Thanksgiving, but civilian personnel working," was noted on the 11th.

A pre-graduation dance in the Rec. Hall for the graduating class only, and the serving of lunch in the Sergeant's mess after Wings Parade for the graduating class and their guests, were two welcome innovations on the 11th and 14th.

The Station soccer team held Carberry, the provincial champions, to a 2-2 tie on the 12th.

The Ladies' Auxiliary—"The Gals' Gossip Group"—for some weeks had been cleaning and ironing the airmen's flashes for them. Now they came forward with an additional offer to retoe and reheel socks for the students.

The Station soccer team—made up mostly of R.A.F. students from the United Kingdom—added to their laurels on the 16th, when they defeated the noted Winnipeg team, United Weston, by 1-0.

On the 19th, "C.O.'s inspection on sports field. Very dusty. Parade square far from being ready."

On the 24th, four men had extraordinarily lucky escapes, when their aircraft crashed three miles west of Austin and was completely wrecked. "The pilot was coming down under fog, had his flaps down, and flew into the ground." The aircraft was washed out, but the crew had only "very minor injuries."

That evening the Hudson's Bay Company concert party played at the Rec. Hall.

Two days later, "One of the Armament boys working at the fusing point let a bomb roll off a cupboard. The explosion that followed blew a door off the shack and also bulged the walls somewhat. Two men received bad, painful cuts and were flown to Deer Lodge hospital. The third escaped injury."

"Nothing much happened today, in comparison with the early part of this week," the official scribe let himself go to remark on the 27th. "A grass fire was started at Poplar Point bombing range as a result of bombing exercises. The flames got quite out of control by 1700 hours, so the Duty Watch (Course 87 AB) were called into action, went down, and finally got things under control"—after several hours' hot work.

To keep themselves warm as winter approached, the New Zealand students on the Station had broken out in a rash of rugger games. The first was played between Course 86N and 79N, who fought to an 11-11 draw, wearing only shorts, a pair of running shoes "and a heavy head of hair" in the October chill.

* * *

The Scandal Sheet also took a dim view about this time. "The recent sample of 'most unseasonable weather' dished up for us by the Met Section has caused the formation of a very unique organization on the Station. This little band of men (who shall remain veiled in anonymity) set out on Tuesday for the Indian settlement down the road with the avowed intention of using every ounce of guile at their command to strike a bargain with the noble Red Man. In short, they are attempting to give the country back to the Indians. Their offer was refused politely, with the gratis information that the Indians themselves had almost given up hope of getting rid of it until the white man came along, and they certainly weren't going to be stuck with it again."

"The sergeants had their first dinner and dance, which was highly successful," on the 30th. "The second Station dance also was well attended by an enthusiastic crowd of civilian employees and airmen."

The same night, the main building at the 100th B.T.C. on the road to Portage la Prairie burned down. "The fire truck from here went to assist."

"Most unusual weather—which is the only kind offered by the West" had been the sour comment of the Scandal Sheet during October.

November opened with the same. "The weather still very unsettled and flying is very irregular" was recorded on Nov. 1. "But they are in the air as much as possible." On the 5th, "Night trips are still uncertain." Next day, "cold and raw. Flying about the same. Just a usual day."

An organization meeting for an Interprovincial Service Hockey League was held at Brandon on the 19th, with representatives present from Nos. 10 and 11 S.F.T.S., at Dauphin and Yorkton, No. 7 B. & G. at Paulson and No. 7 A.O.S.

"It is understood our training strength will be considerably increased 29 Nov.," the scribe notes, and adds wryly, "Additions to staff strength would be a considerable help, too."

The big "double-double" hangar, No. 5, was opened in this month, ending more than a year of impatient waiting for the long construction job to be finished. With the new hangar in use, Operations could be divided better and working conditions improved greatly.

"Two aircraft on the last flight were forced to take refuge in Winnipeg and Brandon" on the 20th.

Flying time for the month told the weather story, with 6,161 hours. The month ended with 701 students.

Students were flooding in. "On Nov. 27th," said the Scandal Sheet, "we were given our first experience with the new Super-Dooper classes which are to be our lot for the next month or so . . . The new courses come trooping into the Station in a never-ending stream. Due to congestion at Malton, Toronto, the incoming classes were switched to St. Johns, Que., and Portage. Consequently the new section of navigators number 78 bodies, divided into 90N1, 90N2 and 90N3. The Air Bombers present the same problem, with 25 additional personnel camouflaged under 90A, 90B and 90C.

"Net result of the inundation is a gradual widening of the bald spot on the Wingco's pate, added gray hairs in the thatch of the CI and a few more wrinkles and furrows in the bland countenance of the ACI. Chief problem is that of accommodation, trying to fit 150 airmen into the space formerly occupied by a scant 95. And, contrary to all the laws of physics, it's being solved in some miraculous way."

"A blizzard grounded all aircraft till mid-afternoon" on Dec. 1.

A mild influenza epidemic ran through the Station during the month.

"Eastbound and westbound TCA's landed here for two hours or so" on the 31st. "Winnipeg was closed in."

But in spite of the weather, flying time for the month was kept up to over 7,000 hours.

The year ended with 665 students, 77 aircraft, 312 service staff, 888 civilian staff.



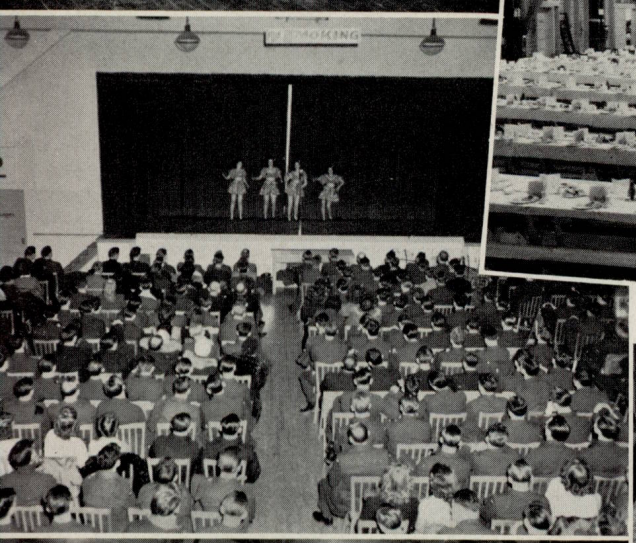



















A.O.'S
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1944

THE year of climax. In 1944, No. 7 reached the peak of its work, in number of students and staff, expansion of plant, and hours flown.

The greatest number of flying hours ever flown in four weeks by any Air Observer School in Canada was piled up by No. 7 between March 27th and April 23rd of this year—a record of 7,827 hours and 10 minutes. The nearest total elsewhere was 7,724 hours and five minutes, the record at No. 9 A.O.S., at St. Johns, Que.

No. 7 also had its greatest flying day in this year, when 389 hours and 30 minutes were flown on Nov. 30.

The greatest number of students in the Station's history was on strength in January-February, 1944—a total of 775—a far cry from the 42 with whom the Station had opened three years before.

* * *

The winter of 1943-44 was "very cold"—and the unfortunate pilots and students found it harder than ever to keep even the memory of warmth in the unlined cabins of the old Mark I Ansons.

The year opened with thrills and heart throbs—the posting-in of the first nursing sister to be attached to the Station hospital—N/S A. N. Smith, who arrived Jan. 24 from No. 12 S.F.T.S., Brandon, on one month of Temporary Duty.

"The snow plows and blower are working for the first time this winter" on Jan. 26.

The sergeants held a house-warming on Jan. 28 in their new mess, the former airmen's mess.

February came in with a rush. "After months of comparative inactivity, during which time the life of the Station seemed to be firmly clutched in the doldrums, the pent-up flood really burst its bonds during the week past," reported the Scandal Sheet on Feb. 4.

"In the short span of seven days the records show two station hockey games, one station basketball game, one graduation of nearly 120 men, one concert party, one station dance, the opening of the new sergeant's mess, and last, but not least, the arrival of the first nursing sister to F/L Gord Sprague's dispensary. So it would appear that things are definitely on the upgrade, with more and better to follow." And the squash courts and bowling alleys were now in use.

The Station hockey team had tied 1-1 with No. 3 B. & G., then "hung up their second win of the season on Saturday evening by downing Portage Terriers to the tune of 10-3,"

"The coldest day this winter" so far was Feb. 10, with -22 degrees. Next day, -24 degrees. "No flying in the morning, due to the cold."

During the month, the Rec. Hall held appreciative audiences for two visiting concert parties, one from the Winnipeg Police Athletic Association, another the "Thumbs Up" party—"good show."

Sensation of the month was a bomb explosion on the Line, on the 20th. "A bomb fell out of the bay of 6596 parked near Nos. 1 and 2 hangars. Considerable damage was done to the main spar of the starboard wing. No one was aboard and no one was injured."

The Station basketball team lost to the U.S. Army team, Winnipeg, on the short end of a 33-32 score, with Ken Wright, the Auxiliary Services officer on the Station, starring.

The G.I.S. was divided into two squadrons for easier administration. No. 1 squadron, with F/L Bob Proudfoot commanding, was assigned offices, etc., upstairs in the G.I.S. building; No. 2, with F/L Whit Shannon commanding, was quartered downstairs.

Flying time went to 7,100 hours for the month, with 697 students now on strength, 92 aircraft, 316 service staff, and 918 civilian staff.

* * *

March behaved as usual, except that the annual blizzard arrived earlier than ever.

"Heaviest snowfall of the winter" on the 2nd. On the fourth, "-17 degrees." Next day, "Blizzard." The day after, "Blizzard still rages." But flying was resumed that night.

"A concert by Station personnel played to a packed house" on the evening of the 11th . . . "the largest audience in the history of the Station."

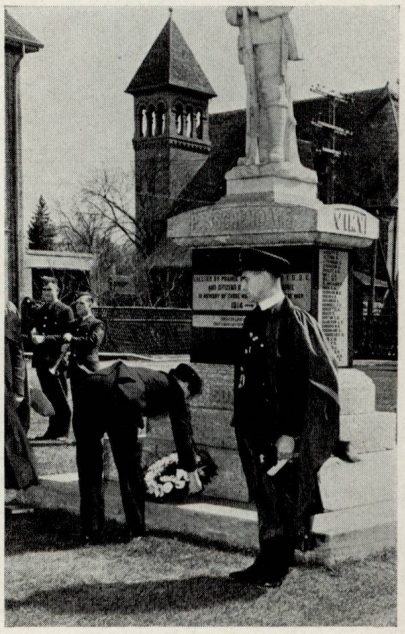
The second annual Station bonspiel was a bigger success than ever, this month, with 35 rinks competing and "Scotty" Moir's rink winning the challenge.

At the Wings Parade on the 9th, "No officers took part except the C.S.O., who presented wings. This is an experiment in leadership in which members of the graduating courses take the parts of all officers from Wing Adjutant and Wing W.O. down. The parade was exceptionally well carried out."

"The largest crowd at the Station movie since it opened—513 paid admissions" was recorded on the 19th. A Station dance in the Rec. Hall during the month was "very well attended." On another night, the Canadian Legion concert party put on "a splendid show."

Glad news—the Harvard Step Test was now to be done every three months, by all service personnel.

"We shall remember them"



The Station concert party repeated its program on the 25th, in Portage la Prairie.

At the end of the month, 733 students were on strength.

April opened with a three-day visit by the crack Swing-Time concert troupe from No. 2 Command, who played for two dances and put on a complete variety show.

Otherwise the month was fairly quiet.

Station personnel put on a show, "Flying High," in the Rec. Hall April 22, to raise funds for the Air Cadets and took in $96.75. Next night the show was repeated in Portage la Prairie, when the house of 500 seats was sold out at $1 per seat.

Christened almost as soon as he arrived on the Station, F/L (A. A.) "Daniel" Boone, affectionately remembered for certain matters concerning "wolves," etc., preached his first sermon as Station padre—otherwise "O/C Souls and Salvation"—on April 23.

Anzac Day was observed with a parade and service at the Portage la Prairie cenotaph.

* * *

"Portage Air Observer School celebrated its third anniversary today," May 6th. "About 1,000 employees sat down to a banquet in No. 4 hangar. Dancing and refreshments were enjoyed by all on the Station. A most successful party." Actually, 1,200 sat down to dinner, including many wives of staff members. The dance was held in the new drill hall, in the greatest comfort yet, with Camp Shilo orchestra playing for the dancing. The decorating committee had outdone themselves, and the decorations drew warm admiration.

"Taking off, 6570 crashed on the field at 0815 hours" on the 16th. "One member of the crew died the same day, the pilot was seriously injured, and a third member of the crew sustained minor injuries."

During the month, "Flying High" was presented by the Station concert party before the personnel at Crescent Lake barracks.

"A Station parade was held to mark the Invasion of Europe" on June 6th. "Short addresses were given" by the Manager and the C.S.O.

"The first outdoor music hour, with recordings, was well attended" on the 8th. Arranged by F/L (Daniel) Boone, the concert was held on the lawn by the Station hospital. Owing to their popularity such concerts were repeated in later weeks.

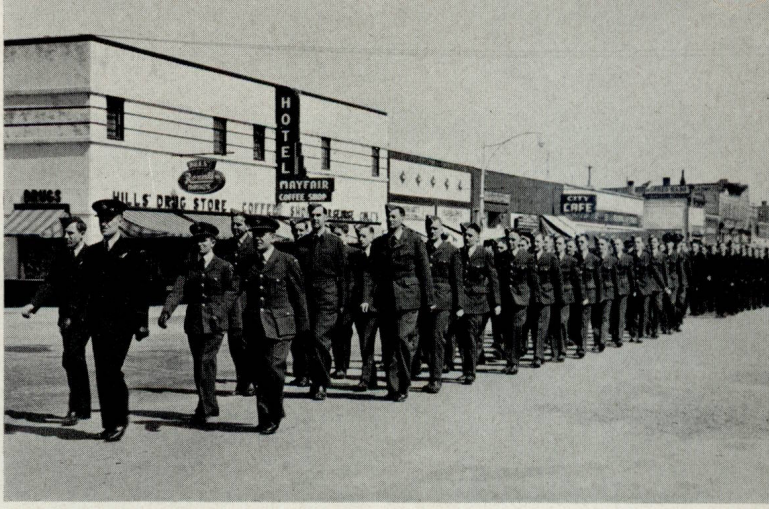
"After nearly a year and a half in our midst, S/L Wilf Hawkins has been recalled from his labors here to take over as Chief Instructor at No. 1. C.N.S., Rivers. In his place, behind the big desk, F/L Bob Proudfoot has taken over the reins of office in his usual masterful style."

The new "tri-weekly P.T. classes for officers" were being enjoyed(?)

"The Station canteen has fallen heir to the wave of alteration which sweeps over our community from time to time. After a week or so of dodging paint brushes and drinking coffee faintly flavored with essence of turpentine and covered with a dismal scum of wood dust, the personnel will be glad to know that the major portion of the face lifting program has been finished."

A terrific rainfall—"3.45 inches in 24 hours"—on the 27th resulted in "all flying W.O."

"It looks like a very remarkable morning indeed," remarked the Scandal Sheet on the 30th. "The sun



Anzac Day

is actually shining for the first time in many a moon."

A farewell for W/C Malcolmson—posted as C.O. to No. 12 S.F.T.S., Brandon, after 19 months as C.S.O. of No. 7—was held July 7.

A/V/M K. M. Guthrie, made his first inspection of the Station as A.O.C. No. 2 Command, on the 21st. A Station parade was held with the band of No. 1 C.N.S., Rivers. "The remainder of the day was a holiday."

S/L R. H. Batty arrived from A.F.H.Q. on July 28 to be C.S.O.

Flying time rose to 7,283 hours for the month. There were 729 students on strength, 88 Ansons and one Moth, 302 service staff, 750 civilian staff.

* * *

A mechanic, Gordon Lee, was struck by a propeller on Aug. 3, and died that night.

The second Efficiency Award received by the Station was presented Aug. 10 by G/C Scott, Senior Air Staff Officer, No. 2 Command.

Aircrew Leadership Training began officially on the 12th, with selected students understudying in the duties of the senior officers of the Station.

Unusual visitors were entertained on the 13th, when a Lockheed from Ottawa forced-landed on the field, carrying a Norwegian major-general and lieutenant, a Czechoslovak staff captain, a U.S.S.R. lieutenant-colonel and a major, a Free French Air Force commandant; and an officer of the Moroccan Camel Corps.

"Two squadrons totalling over 400 men were inspected by the C.S.O." at a Wings Parade on Aug. 15.

Bad news for the officers a few days later—"A drill course for all officers started today, two evenings a week for a month or until they are qualified up to Squadron Drill."

For the next two months, routine went on quietly, with few changes.

"Chortlings of great joy are heard on every hand these fine days as the news drifts out to the staff airmen that they too are to be included in the daily work parades which have proved so popular among the trainees," the Scandal Sheet observed. "Heretofore the lordly members of the headquarters sections have complained bitterly that they are being done out of their chance to display their prowess in drill and suchlike . . . On Monday morning the first parade will form up. It's getting so that the Station is getting just like the Air Force, and that's not good; no sir!

70 lines per pg
50 char. per line



The A.O.C.'s inspection

"The whole thing, of course, is based on recent reports from India and Burma, where it is a matter of statistics that the physically fit men offer more resistance to the rigors of tropical life than the unfit. A man who is in poor condition lasts only three days before turning up his toes, but the man who has taken physical training seriously is good for at least another two days. . ."

Hay rides, corn roasts and other seasonal rites were duly observed, among them a hay-ride organized by the pilots, who "banded together . . . pooled their resources . . . and accumulated the staggering total of eight dollars and ninety-seven cents and two broken poker chips." The corn roast was held by the two orderly-room staffs.

* * *

During September, the first drumhead church service on the Station was held, to mark the anniversary of the Battle of Britain. Similar services were held on all R.C.A.F. and R.A.F. stations around the world at the same hour.

"First bowling league on the Station to start operations, the Officers' Bowling League made its inaugural curtsey" on the 19th of September.

F/L Murdoch Maclachlan, one of the oldtimers of the Station, was transferred to No. 17 S.F.T.S., Souris. " 'Mac' was an instructor on the first Navigators' Course trained on this Station, Course 23N, a matter of three years ago." After several postings elsewhere, he returned to No. 7 in March, 1943. . . . "The Station is losing a real friend."

Long rumored, the new Mark V Ansons at last were arriving on the Station.

The guard house had been moved from the old location to a new spot, a long—and coldly windy—100 yards to the north. Now the celebrated covered walk was being built to provide welcome shelter on the long, chilly hike to the gate.

The Gen club was a new activity established about this time, to keep students supplied with the latest gen on operational experience overseas.

The ducks going south made a mistake this year, and settled in the sandhills south of the field. The mistake was soon corrected when Station hunters found them and got a few good bags.

October ended with a near record for flying time in a month—7,808 hours. Strength totalled 629 students, 92 aircraft, including 12 Mark V's, 331 service staff, 722 civilian personnel.

November was a gloomy month in every respect.

First, the weather went completely dud, as it did at the same time on most training stations in Manitoba. On the 12th, "This is the first day for 14 days that any flying exercises could be carried out, and then only for part of the day." The next three days, "W.O." The 16th, "All but three flights W.O." From the 13th to the 29th, there were only five days on which any flying at all could be done, and then only for a few flights in the 24 hours. On the 30th, "today is the first clear day of sunshine for nearly a month. It is the first full flying day for about 25 days."

The effect showed in the record low total of flying time—1,903 hours—for the month.

* * *

Rumors about the closing of the Station were beginning to fly, and the Scandal Sheet rounded up a choice collection of them.

On the 18th, the other big gloom of the month was received, when "the C.S.O. outlined to all personnel the policy to reduce the B.C.A.T.P. and to transfer" many Air Force students enlisted for aircrew to the Army.

The news was good, being an indication of approaching victory. But the people of the Station had become a team. And from then on, in the background of Station doings was always the knowledge that soon the team would be broken up and scattered far and wide.

Welcome laughs were provided by the Great West Life concert party on the 12th.

"Fire broke out in the Station pump house" on the 16th, but "little damage was done."

During the month, Course 114N was posted in with 126 men and 114AB with 62, "the greatest intake in the history of the school."

One of the first signs of the coming disbandment appeared on Dec. 1, when 14 Navigation General List officers were retired to General Reserve.

News came through that No. 7 would close at the end of March. Staff would be starting to leave almost at once, in all departments, as operations were reduced.

So the Farewell banquet and dance was held on the 16th. Some 1,200 of the staff with their ladies enjoyed dinner in No. 4 hangar and dancing in the drill hall to the music of the Camp Shilo orchestra. Once more the messing staff found themselves faced with a "Bug House Day"; and once more they outdid themselves, for the enjoyment of all on the Station.

"The general state of uncertainty existing in the Air Force" was noted by the Scandal Sheet in mid-month.

During this December, a neighboring farmer filed a claim against the Crown for alleged damage to his crops and stock by waste water from the Station. The claim later was rejected.

With changes and building going on all the time, it was a saying on many Air Training Plan stations that "when the Station is completed, the war will be over." No. 7 A.O.S. was no exception.

The Mark V Ansons, long rumored, had begun to arrive in the late fall to replace those veteran iceboxes, the Mark I's. But as every pilot had to have dual and be checked out on the new aircraft, it was some time before any Mark V's could be passed on from the dual hangar to Flight.

Now, just before the last Christmas of the Station, the Mark V's began to go into service, to the great comfort of pilots and crews, who delighted in the tighter, warmer cabins and better heaters, and in the hydraulic undercarriages, which did away with the 165 turns of the crank by hand that had wearied the muscles of countless observers whenever the undercart of a Mark I had to be raised or lowered.

On the 22nd, the Scandal Sheet signed off. "With this edition, Ye Sheet will become a thing of the past . . . in accordance with the increasing shortage of paper, time and news items . . . and with the gradual shrinking of the Station strength . . . we feel that the time has come to cease firing and lapse into silence."

A/V/M Guthrie arrived on the 21st to convey his personal Christmas greetings to the Station personnel.

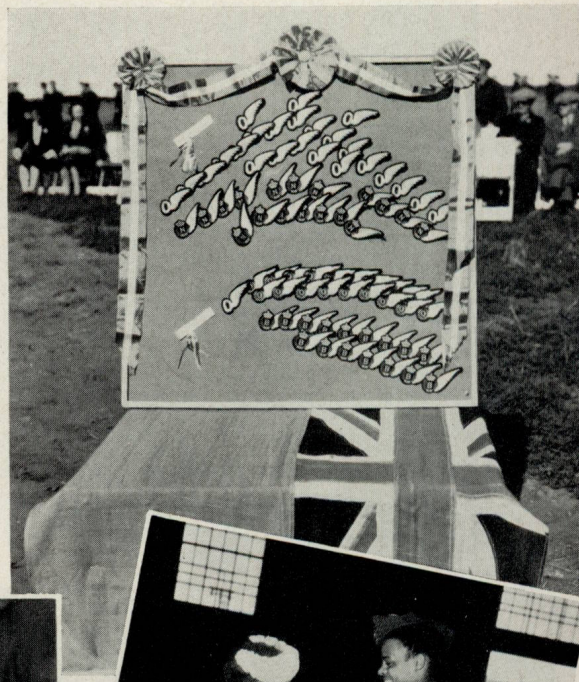
On Christmas Day, "25 officers and 25 senior N.C.O.'s served the airmen with Christmas dinner—turkey, plum pudding, fruit, ice cream and refreshments."

Next day, in the words of the official scribe, "All are carrying on, but some are slightly foggy from overindulgence in the usual festivities of this season."

The new Corporals' Lounge was set up during the month, and opened with a dance on the 28th.

The year ended with some 500 students on strength, 90 aircraft, service staff 330, civilian staff 703.

—Wings!



Mother and Son



Parr's Folly—"and they shall arise to call him blessed!"





The 5,000th Graduate, March 15, 1945



Presentation to the Manager—



—at the last Wings Parade

1945

GOODBYE and Good Luck." The three months of 1945 before No. 7 A.O.S. disbanded on March 31 and handed over to No. 3 Air Navigation School were a time of winding-up and of leavetaking.

The work of the Station had been strenuous, done always against pressure of the enemy, of danger of defeat, of need for haste, of lack of equipment, and the ever-present interference of the weather. To let down from all this and to take in the fact that the Station was closing left many feeling unreal at times.

* * *

If anything, Station festivities were more enjoyed than ever. On New Year's Day, sixty officers' wives and children sat down to dinner in the officers' mess. "A very pleasant evening was enjoyed by all, particularly the children." On the 13th, a Station dance, with hostesses and free refreshments, was enjoyed by 300.

The Station basketball team won 26-22 from the Army team at Winnipeg on the 10th.

S/L M. S. Layton, D.S.O., took over as C.S.O. on the 28th.

Student strength now was falling rapidly, from 629 at the end of October and 571 at the end of November, to 354 on Jan. 31. Flying time was down to 4,800 for the month. And as students left, so did staff.

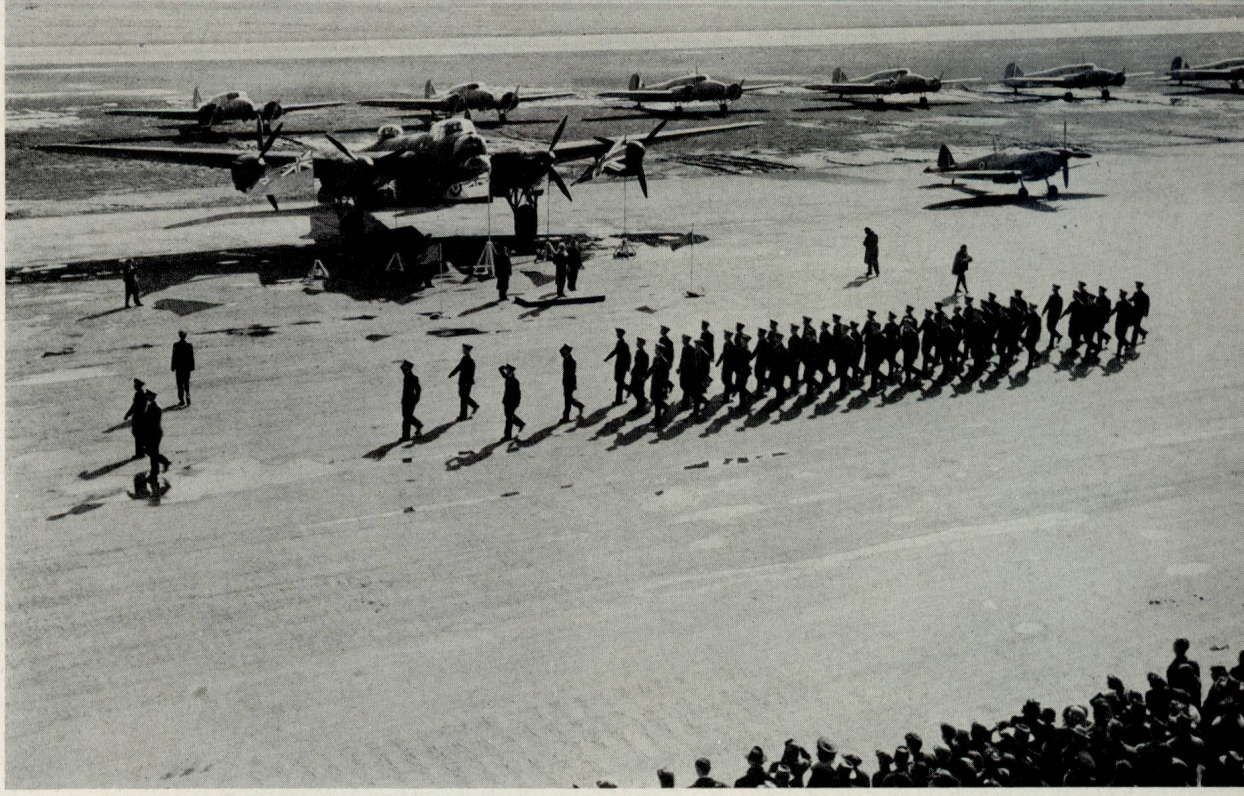
Sports events highlighted February. The first boxing tournament on the Station was held on the 21st, with 10 boxers from Nos. 5 and 7 A.O.S. and one A.B. from the Navy. An audience of 1,000 enjoyed the bouts, in the drill hall. Proceeds were turned over to the Red Cross. The day before, the Station basketball team had lost to the United States army team at Winnipeg, 30-27.

Hundreds of staff members from the Station had been giving blood at the Portage la Prairie blood donors' clinic since April, 1943. Now the clinics were to be held fortnightly on the Station.

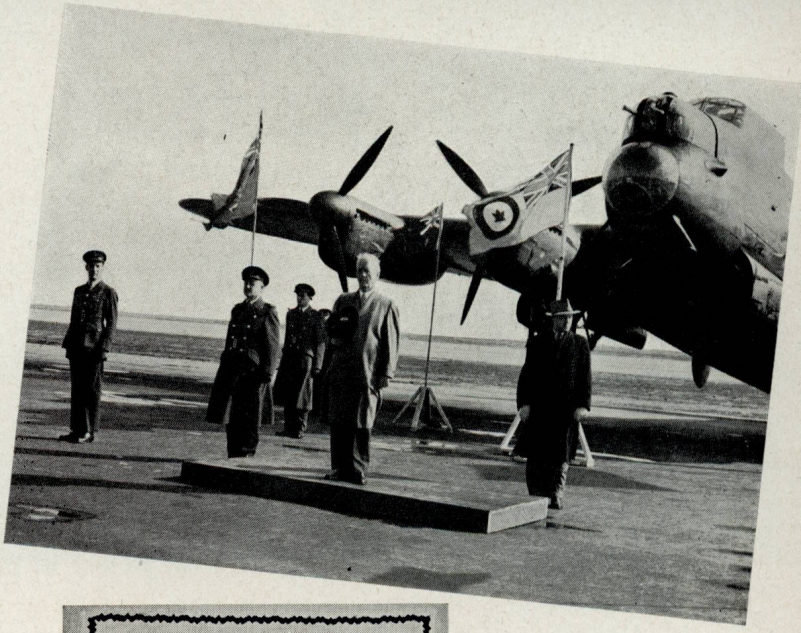
"A Station dance was held with an outside orchestra" on the 24th. "It was so successful that plans are being made to have these dances weekly.

March passed quickly, with No. 7 personnel "putting up the shutters."

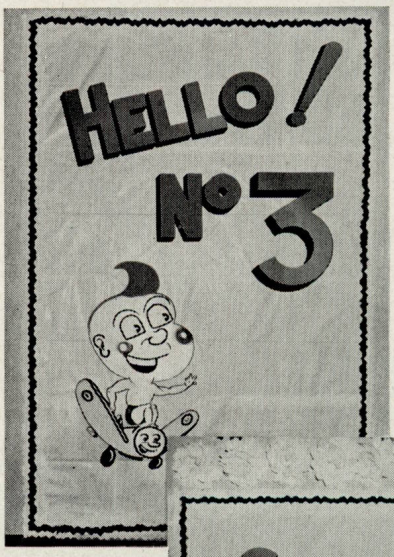
The 5,000th graduate from No. 7 received his wings at the Wings Parade of March 15th.

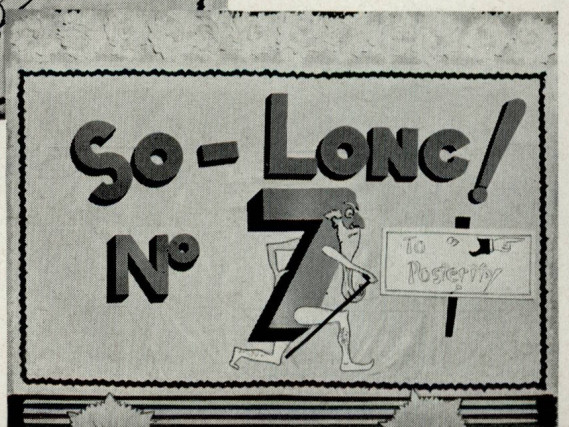


The Closing—March Past



—The Saluting Base





Students' numbers were being maintained at around 400, since the Station was to continue training after March 31 as No. 3 Air Navigation School, under R.C.A.F. management.

But the Disbandment Board had arrived to clear the inventory of No. 7 A.O.S. And, section by section, the work of the groups who had sweated for almost four years to make the Station a success was being wound up, and equipment handed over.

The Station was to be honored once more in closing. On the 29th, His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, R. F. McWilliams, K.C., and the A.O.C., A/V/M K. M. Guthrie, were present for the final Wings Parade of No. 7 A.O.S. The parade was the biggest in the history of the Station, with four flights graduating—nearly 200 students.

The parade day was made another Open Day for the public, with special busses running from Portage la Prairie; and the Portage merchants joined in honoring the Station by closing their stores for the afternoon. Hundreds of visitors from all over the district arrived to watch the Wings Parade and to see displays of formation flying, aerobatics and circuits by a Lancaster, a Spitfire, Harvards and Ansons.

* * *

"You have done a marvellous job," A/V/M Guthrie told the Station personnel assembled in No. 2 hangar for the last Wings Parade.

"Number Seven A.O.S. was one of the earliest schools in the Air Training Plan. And it has had an extraordinarily high record.

"The record of the Station is second to none in the prevention of accidents, for with so many graduates you have had so very few accidents. And the training received by the graduates has been second to none.

"The people of No. 7 have been known as people easy to work with. And the staff have been tops.

"I wish you all the very best of—Good Luck!"

Good Luck!

REMEMBER?

Remember? Of course we'll remember
The hours we all spent here!
Could we think back through life,
And not have Station memories appear?

Laugh? Of course we laughed!
It was fun on a job like this!
There's a lot of jokes we laughed at,
There's a lot of puns, we'll miss.

Fought? Of course we fought!
We squabbled and argued. But then,
When all the scrapping was over,
We were the best of friends again.

Sorry? Of course we're sorry?
With all the fun we've had,
Could we think of the Station closing
And be anything else but sad?

Remember?
Of course we'll remember!
And when we're all far apart,
The work, the play, and good times we had
Will always live in the heart.

—Muriel Jean Scott
Maintenance





"GOOD SHOW!"

On the right, an ex-ops. Observer, of Pathfinder Force, D.F.C., a graduate of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.



Enquiries for this book may be addressed to Portage Air Observer School Ltd., Portage la Prairie, Man.

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