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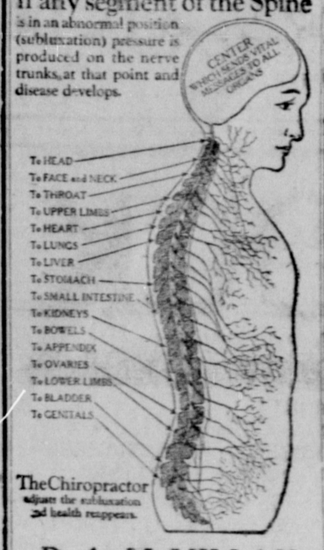

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BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus

Flight Into Cassiar Mining Region and Tropical Valley Described by Colin Caldwell

In the spring of 1925, I joined the expedition of a syndicate of United States mining capitalists, for exploration work in the unexplored regions of the Yukon and Northern British Columbia, as assistant pilot-mechanic, says an article in McLean's Magazine told to E. L. Chicanot by C. S. Caldwell, dealing with the latter's flight in 1925 to the Cassiar district. Incidentally this was, to the best of my knowledge, the first mineral prospecting party to plan the use of the aeroplane. Colonel Williams, who was in charge of aerial transport and I appreciated quite keenly that the territory to be flown over was isolated, largely unexplored, and but very inaccurately mapped, and realized the hazards and difficulties of such an expedition as we were setting out upon. We dug up all the available data on the country but this was painfully fragmentary and it left us little better off. The machine we were to fly, a Vickers Viking amphibian, was shipped by rail from Three Rivers, Quebec, to Prince Rupert, British Columbia, and we were there ready, with the plane assembled, to commence our air trip on June 1. Altogether we made a party of nine.

We flew from Prince Rupert to Wrangell Island where we refuelled, thence directly over the coast range by way of the Stikine Valley, and on to Telegraph Creek. It was a route of exquisite wild loveliness, as we sailed over glittering glaciers, high white-capped mountain peaks, and saw the ribbons of innumerable rivers winding below. We made a landing on the Stikine River and established camp there to await the breaking up of ice on Dease Lake.

On June 13 word was received that the ice on Dease Lake had broken up and on the following morning we made an early start with the entire outfit, consisting of four men, tents, dogs, and other equipment, to fly to our main base which was to be located at the head of Dease Lake. The distance from Telegraph Creek was more than seventy miles over a country absolutely devoid of landing places. A forced landing over this stretch of country would have spelt not only failure to the expedition but in all probability disaster to all of us. We had fortunately no such mishap and the entire miscellany was transported to the head of Dease Lake in forty-five minutes. Ours was the first machine ever to cross this height of land. An altitude of three thousand feet having been maintained after leaving Telegraph Creek we found we were only five hundred feet above water over Dease Lake, as that body is located twenty-five hundred feet above sea level. After having ascended three thousand feet on the take-off we had to descend only five hundred feet to land.

LIKE A DUCK AND GOOSE

Our first trip from Dease Lake was down the Dease River as far as McDames, where there is a Hudson Bay post and where a couple of mining companies are engaged in dredging operations. This distance of ninety miles took up just fifty minutes. We found it quite impossible to convince the Indians of this as it took them one week to make the return trip. They plainly regarded the machine as something diabolical and could not be induced to approach closer than three hundred yards, while they seemed to believe there was something supernatural about us. "It flies like a duck and lands like a goose," one observing Indian put it. It was the sole topic of the tribes and fresh Indians came in from miles every day to view it. The younger set for long periods sedulously practiced the roar of the engine and with their arms imitated the movement of the plane in turning and banking, evidently in order to be able to take back an accurate and convincing story to their brethren in the bush.

While at McDames we chartered a large scow capable of carrying five tons of supplies and had the Indians bring it to the head of Dease Lake, where it was loaded with gasoline, supplies, and equipment and sent down the river to Liard Post, located at the junction of the Dease and Liard Rivers. The trip by scow took twenty days. We did it by plane in just under three hours.

Our arrival at Liard caused excitement enough, the Indians collecting on the river bank very much alarmed. One particularly wild-looking fellow immediately started in a panic for the bush, but as we circled preparing to land, the shadow of the machine intercepted his flight. Terrified, he returned, deciding the river was the safest retreat, and made for it. Just as he got to the bank, however, he realized we were landing there and frenziedly turned again and plunged terror-stricken into the bush. He lay there for some while before slinking forth to secure his pail, rifle and dog, and set about the construction of a rude raft. That evening he set out on a four hundred mile journey to Nelson to tell the big chief of the fearsome thing which had arrived. I still wonder what happened to him.

PERILOUS FLYING

While the scow was enroute, we transported the prospectors by air to various locations. Considering all conditions and the difficulties a forced landing would have put us in, it was not the safest kind of flying to indulge in.

The scow eventually arrived on July 11 and the two redmen who had brought it down intended returning on foot, a matter of five days and nights travel. As we were going back to Dease Lake and had to pass the Indian camp we invited them to go along. At first they would not consider it at all and so strong was their reluctance and so amusing to us the attitude of these two Indians who had piloted the clumsy scow down all manner of rough water that we decided to persuade them to fly if we could. It was hard work.

"No me weak heart. You big man. You strong heart."

We at length managed to overcome this objection. Then it was "Me got dogs. No can take the air."

"Sure we can take them," I said. With excuses running out, they began to look shamefaced, and we summarily bundled them in to the plane.

We had seated them and got as far as putting helmets on their heads and cotton wool in their ears when the nose of one of the two began to bleed profusely. This was regarded as a very bad omen indeed and the trip was nearly off. However, more persuasive eloquence and copious cold water poured down the back of the neck stopped the bleeding, and losing no more time we took off.

These two Indians would have thought nothing of running rapids with a few poles lashed together with moose hide strings, but the plane plainly had them terror stricken. As soon as we left the water their heads disappeared beneath the cockpit and they did not show again until after we had landed fifty minutes later. It would have taken them five days to cover the distance on foot, I will never forget their expressions as they tried to realize the distance they had come. Yet greater, if possible, was the wonder and bewilderment of their friends who had congregated upon the bank to see the big bird land as they saw two of their own people emerge from the bowels of the monster. I am sure they would either be chiefs next day or killed as wizards.

YEAR'S JOB IN DAY

On the evening of July 5 we picked up the prospectors at French Creek, which runs into Dease River some forty-five miles from Liard Post, and flew them to Liard. As the machine approached the post for the first time the whole population, Hudson Bay factor and Indians gathered on the river bank trying to solve the strange noise. Finally they spotted the big bird coming straight for them a couple of thousand feet in the air. The Hudson's Bay man, so we discovered later, thinking the machine was going to pass and get lost, instructed the natives to get their guns and fire a fusilade, imagining that the reports would be heard by us. We knew nothing about this, but a few hours after landing discovered considerable water in the hull of the machine, and on investigation found a fountain shooting up at the bottom just at the rear of the gas tanks. The fact that the hole was clean, and most suggestively about the size of a 30.30 bullet, caused us to make inquiries and we were informed about the shooting. Little damage was done though it is difficult to say what might have happened had the gas tanks been pierced.

When camp was established here at Liard Post, exploration work was carried out in many sections. The prospectors were amazed and gratified at the marvellous manner in which aerial transport speeded up their work. On one occasion in one day we transported seven men with sufficient supplies to last a month, including tents and mining equipment, a distance of two hundred miles over country quite unmarked by trails and without any sign of human habitation. The first men we landed at this point and after cooking breakfast were actually working a couple of miles up the creek by 8.30 a.m. When the operation was completed the whole party was returned to the main base in one day. By any other means of transportation, such an expedition, if not altogether impossible, would have taken them at least a year.

NO SIGN OF LIFE

On the evening of August 17 we departed from the head of Dease Lake and flew to Frances Lake, a distance of three hundred and ten miles, and about one hundred and thirty miles north of the Yukon-British Columbia boundary. There was on sign of human life, white or Indian, here at all, though at an old adandoned Hudson Bay fort on Frances Lake there were several deserted log cabins and a few old caches. My outstanding recollection of that night is of the wolves. They seemed to be everywhere and kept up an incessant howling all night. We did not see them but their unquestionable presence in such numbers was slightly uncomfortable.

The game of that sparsely inhabited country is unbelieveable. The lakes and rivers teem with the finest fish which in addition to being an important article of our diet furnished us with superb sport. Flying over the country it was a common sight to see some, sometimes as many as a dozen at a time, standing at the shore line of small lakes. Sailing along close to the mountains, cariboo, goat, grizzly bear and other animals could be seen at almost any time. Sometime it will be a wonderful sporting country. On one occasion I saw a pure white moose. Another time when I was fishing I saw

(continued on page five)

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BRITISH HOME DEFENCE FORCE MORE THAN HALF ACCOMPLISHED — NEW MACHINES BEING ABSORBED

LONDON, March 31. — (Canadian Press).—A reduction of £450,000 on the 1926 total is shown in the air estimates now before parliament. The comparative figures are: 1926, £16,000,000; 1927, £15,550,000.

The chief points of a memorandum by Sir Samuel Hoare, the air minister, are: There is a reduction of £680,000 in air expenditure in the Middle East. This is due to the reduction of the Imperial Forces in Iraq.

The increase in the Fleet Air Arm represents normal development, in accordance with the Admiralty program of aircraft carriers.

War stocks are on the point of exhaustion, and new types of machines and engines are increasingly coming into use, with the inevitable result of a larger expenditure on the rearmament of squadrons. The Home Defence Force consists of 28 squadrons. More than half the original program of 32 squadrons has thus been completed. It is proposed to increase the strength of the Royal Air Force during the year by the addition of approximately six squadrons (two regular and one non-regular squadrons for home defence).

ANOTHER LONG FLIGHT

Another Cairo to Capetown flight and back will be undertaken. Preparations are in progress for a long-distance flight with flying boats, with the object of developing the service air route between India and the Far East. These boats will be provided this year, and the intention is that in 1928 they should make an extensive cruise as a self-contained unit in Far Eastern waters, visiting finally some of the Australian ports.

Provision is made for the construction of two airships. It is expected that both will make their first flights by 1928. With regard to civil aviation, the work of enlarging and improving the Air Port of London at Croydon is proceeding satisfactorily. A sum of £111,000 for the construction of aerodrome buildings and the completion of the diversion of a public road has been included. The reconstruction of the Air Port should be completed during 1928.

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	19:16 p.m.	2.1 "
SATURDAY, APRIL 2		
High	1:26 a.m.	22.3 ft.
	13:48 p.m.	22.1 "
Low	7:38 a.m.	2.2 "
	19:57 p.m.	2.3 "
SUNDAY, APRIL 3		
High	2:05 a.m.	22.9 ft.
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Low	8:23 a.m.	1.5 "
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