

This research paper was written as background information for the creation of the 2005 "Winning the Prairie Gamble" exhibits at the WDM and is copyright of the Western Development Museum.

“The Sky’s the Limit in Saskatchewan!”
The Role of the Airplane in the North in the 1950s.

**Paper Prepared for Exhibit Development Purposes
for Moose Jaw Branch exhibit module
“Beyond the Grid”
Winning the Prairie Gamble**

**by
Janet MacKenzie**

Western Development Museum

DRAFT

11 December 2003

"The Sky's the Limit in Saskatchewan!"¹ The Role of the Airplane in the North in the 1950s.

The twentieth century, which came gradually to the north in Manitoba and Alberta, was thrust upon northern Saskatchewan in a few short years.
(Saskatchewan Education 1992:viii)

A. Background

1. Air travel came to Saskatchewan's north in the 1920s.

During the 1920s, flight came to northern Saskatchewan. A Vickers Vedette flying boat landed at Prince Albert in the summer of 1924. B. D. Hobbs was its sole pilot and conducted the first long-range air survey over northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba. At the time, this was thought to be one of aviation's top achievements. (Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame n.d.) The next year, a joint RCAF - Department of the Interior project undertook further aerial photographic surveying and mapping. Saskatchewan's Forestry Branch, in co-operation with the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals, set up a forest protection programme based at Ladder Lake, near Big River, using Vickers Vedettes and a Vickers Varuna. (Michel ed. 1967)

By 1930, fresh fish were being transported out of the north aboard a Buhl Airedan to markets in Prince Albert and Saskatoon. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:22) After the transfer of the control of natural resources to Saskatchewan that year, private businesses found that the government was asking them to bid for forest fire patrol and fire fighting contracts in the north. Previously, the RCAF had done this work. When Brooks Airways won the air patrol contract in 1931, its budget was \$70,000, as opposed to the RCAF price of \$112,000. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:23)

That year, M and C Aviation Company (Richmond Mayson and Angus Campbell) began the first privately owned commercial airline service in Saskatchewan. By 1934, "Besides charter flights into the north, the firm carried out two scheduled flights from Prince Albert. One went to Lac La Ronge and Stanley, and the other to Ile a la Crosse and Buffalo Narrows." (Canadian Aviation Historical Society- Regina Chapter n.d.) By 1935, Canadian Airways was operating in the north.

In 1937 Canadian Airways gave reduced freight rate for alcohol, adding about a dollar to

¹Catch phrase used as header on Saskatchewan Department of Highways and Transportation official road map of 1958. On this map, among the small sketches used to illustrate various areas of the province, a float plane hovers over Careen Lake and men are catching fish in the far north near Fond du Lac and Wollaston Lake, demonstrating how much the north has been opened up to tourism. A photo of American hunters shows them with their day's bag of Canada geese.

the price of a bottle. The brewers of Bohemian beer were quick to link their product with the airplane. The Saturday edition of the Prince Albert Daily Herald, which included the Goldfields news supplement, carried an advertisement showing a dock hand unloading beer from Canadian Airways' Fairchild CF-AOP." (Saskatchewan Education 1992:41)

It was in 1937 that the first Norseman brought to the north. This plane was to be a workhorse for next 30 years. It was a natural for the north with its large cabin, wide door which could accommodate fuel drums, its streamlined design and wrap-around windscreen. It was faster and had a higher ceiling than the Fairchild of early 1930s. The German Junkers was also useful for transportation of heavy equipment into remote areas. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:41-44)

During the Second World War, there were many investments made for the war effort, including the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Bush pilots were found to be perfect for instructors and well-known ones in Saskatchewan included Len Waite, George Greening, Lefty McLeod, Ernie Boffa, Stuart Millar, and Floyd Glass. Canadian Airways left the province when Goldfields shut down, leaving M and C as the only private aviation operator. They found a great deal of work doing wartime overhauls out of Prince Albert. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:44-54)

2. The CCF Northern Policies of the late 1940s Demanded Planes

Roads and planes were essential to the new resources development policies and conservation programs of the CCF after 1944. During the post-war period, there were both planes and airmen available: hundreds of Tiger Moths were left over when the flying schools closed.

The government began to buy planes more and more to develop northern resources. They also freighted medical supplies, building supplies for schools, supplied the fish processing plants, carried government administrators, doctors, nurses and teachers, and flew mercy flights. M and C only flew as far as Stanley Mission and La Loche. A wider service was needed to provide regular service to all northern settlements and when the government bought out M and C, it kept on many of the employees. Saskatchewan Government Airways (SGA), a new Crown Corporation, was created in August 1947 and flew passengers and cargo to and from northern areas. The Northern Conservation Service was expanded within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and planes were essential for this. They were leased from SGA and stationed at Hudson Bay, Prince Albert, Meadow Lake and La Ronge; they used radio sets designed and built by the DNR shops in Prince Albert. The peacetime planes were mostly Norseman, Ansons powered by Harvard trainer engines, Tiger Moths, DC-3 Dakotas, Cansos, and Stinson Voyageurs. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:57-63)

B. Flight in Northern Saskatchewan in the 1950s

Although air travel in the north had been a fact of life since its beginnings in the 1920s, new airplane and aviation engine designs, the growth of service industries for landing, refuelling and mechanical work and improvements in communication technology and meteorological information made travelling long distances in remote areas faster and safer. This was just as well, because air service was essential to the implementation of the government's plans for the north.

1. Who used planes in Saskatchewan's North?

Most of our pilots were terrific boys. Good with the native people and carry things for them, you know. Get things for them when they are out in Prince Albert and so on. (Brockelbank 1976)

a. Mineral Exploration and Mining Development ...*these argonauts of the air...*²

Transport: One of the main jobs of the bush pilot in northern Saskatchewan was the ferrying of mineral prospectors in and out of remote lakes and muskeg. This work was further facilitated by the Prospectors' Assistance Plan which provided prospectors with free air transportation to their claim district, and free supply drops and consultation with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) geologists.

...they had a radio so I would tell them ahead of time or, not necessarily tell them ahead of time, but they could let me know if they needed anything. This was the usual procedure knowing that I was coming within a day or two, here or there, one way or another, they would radio in for fresh meat or vegetables or whatever. (Richards 1976)

Mineral samples were flown out for assay and equipment such as diamond drills and pumps brought in. (MacKenzie 2003; Kupsch and Hanson eds. 1984; Saskatchewan Education 1992:76)

Surveys: Several aerial magnetic surveys were conducted in northern Saskatchewan during the mid-1950s. Both Anson twin-engine and Twin Otters were used for this. Geophysical and geological surveys were also carried out, often using the short take-off, short landing Beaver aircraft to move crews and equipment into remote areas. In the late 1950s, helicopters became more common. Their ability to land vertically was invaluable in the northern bush.

Mining: The development of mines required a large amount of equipment to be freighted in to remote areas. If the mine were successful, eventually a settlement of some sort was created. Uranium City, for example, was set up in 1952 on Lake Athabasca, with dismantled buildings air freighted in from Goldfields. The "Flying Boxcar" Junkers aircraft were often used in remote areas for hauling heavy equipment.

²Berrill 1930:21

b. Recreation and Tourism *...the fish line up to bite*³

Guiding and outfitting, hunting and fishing trips, getting away from it all at northern lodges: the bush plane made these possible. With all the fishing boats going out each morning from northern settlements at the “end of the road”, many tourists wanted to get off by themselves and fish in virgin territory. Some enterprising flyers used their planes to reconnoitre good remote camp sites and fly in the materials to build cabins.

We decided to run a string of cabins with boats and motors throughout the north.

It basically started with Backlund’s Camps and Red’s Camps. We went into it more than most of them did at the time. But as the other outfitters saw the business was going this way, more got into it. (Ernie Backlund quoted in Saskatchewan Education 1992:72)

Len Waite, Brooks Airways and M and C Airways were involved early in flying fishing parties in and out : they provided room and board, guides, canoes and outboard motors as well as year-round flights for fishermen and big game hunters before there were roads into the north. Floyd Glass advertised fly-in tourist camps with his Athabaska Airways, and it became a booming business in the mid-1950s. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:71-2,75-76,44; Saskatchewan Department of Highways and Transportation 1958; Kupsch and Hanson eds. 1984:261-267; Lang 1966:185-191)

At first the Cessna 180 was used to transport tourists, and Beavers and Norseman used for hauling supplies. The twin-engine Beech Model 18 was also popular because to could transport a boat under the fuselage between the floats. Then the de Havilland Single Otter became a tourism workhorse in the 1950s: it had more capacity than the Beaver (9 passengers or lots of cargo, folding seats), could use skis, wheels or floats, and had a short 300 metre take-off and landing. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:71-72)

c. Freight of Fresh Fish *You loaded it till you couldn’t take off...*⁴

“We were buying fish from Cree Lake, Thompsons (*sic*) Lake, all over. We had to get the fish out and there were no roads, so we just started flying them out by airplane.” John Midgett of C & M Airways, Meadow Lake, quoted in Saskatchewan Education 1992:69)

Several companies were involved in flying huge amounts of fresh fish to the south in the late 1940s and 1950s. Len Waite bought fish from fishermen around Big River, where he processed them and flew them out.⁵ He also operated filleting, processing and refrigeration facilities at Dore Lake. Species harvested in the north included lake whitefish, walleye and northern pike.

³University of Saskatchewan 2003

⁴(Leo Belanger quoted in Saskatchewan Education 1992:70)

⁵“During the late 1940s and 1950s, Waite’s [fish] company [Northern Airlines Limited] flew an average of 240,000 kilometres annually, handling approximately 270,000 kilograms of cargo, most of it fish.” They later sold the air business to SGA, who continued to freight their fish. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:67-8)

The total fish harvest from Dore Lake, for example, between 1950 and 1959 was 325,435 kg. (Jensen n.d.: Table 1) There were other companies involved in fish freighting, such as Brooks Airways, Carrot River Airways, M and C Aviation and SGA. Pilots often carried huge amounts of cash to buy the fish, and sometimes contraband whisky as well. However, as the roads were pushed farther into the north over the years, this activity declined. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:22-23,68-71,91,93; JKCC Consulting 1998b,1998c; Clancy 1998:24-26,41-42)

Freighting fish by air had its tricky moments. Sometimes, in an emergency, fish cargo was laid out onto ice slush and used to help the planes take off from northern lakes. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:23)

You loaded it till you couldn't take off. You have to make it pay to haul fish. You don't put in 45 minutes extra gas, none of that stuff. You put in enough to get home. (Leo Belanger quoted in Saskatchewan Education 1992:70)

The pressure to overload planes sometimes resulted in dumping fish during flight, in cases of bad weather.⁶ Sometimes, especially in a strong headwind, pilots just ran out of gas. If they were lucky, they were near water.

Over Cowan Lake, near Big River, the gas ran out, so George [Greening] glided to a landing and tied up on the east shore. ...George walked out and hitchhiked to town. He returned with a can of gas, then flew into the company dock. Two hours had elapsed from the time of the forced landing! (Clancy 1998:7)

d. Public Health Nurses and Doctors *We sat on the freight all the way...*⁷

Public health nurses serving in the north put in long hours travelling to remote outposts and settlements by airplane, bombardier, dog sled and motor boat. They conducted "well baby" clinics, immunization programs, venereal disease clinics, tuberculosis testing and school health inspections. They usually worked out of a base outpost hospital, travelling out to settlements to treat a variety of emergencies, such as cuts, gunshot wounds, burns, broken bones, maternity cases, frostbite and diseases such as influenza and measles. Doctors were flown in at intervals to consult on difficult cases and to perform operations.

I boarded the plane for Stoney Rapids... a 5½ hour flight... We sat on the freight all the way. We arrived just as it was getting dark, landing in front of the rapids... Dog teams met the plane for the freight, which the passengers began to climb up hill, over rocks, to reach the buildings of the settlement... (public health nurse Josephine Walz describing an air trip in December 1949, quoted in Larmour 1988:3)

By 1958 the only remaining Outpost Hospital in the province was at Green Lake and the next year, they were discontinued across Canada, most of them having been co-opted by their local communities. (MacKenzie 2002a: Appendix. A Few Saskatchewan Health Care Factoids)

⁶Max Lambert, personal communication, Saskatoon, summer 2001.

⁷Public health nurse Josephine Walz describing an air trip in December 1949, quoted in Larmour 1988:3.

We didn't get our hospital [at La Ronge] till 1960... We only had Indian health nursing stations where there was a [doctor very occasionally] ... the doctors flew in. If it was essential, they'd fly in from Prince Albert, you know. But mostly the patients were taken, were treated by the nurses as best they could. (Beck 1976:29-30)

e. Emergency Flights ...*by moonlight, sure enough they found the wreckage...*⁸
In the 1950s mercy flights into the far north brought so many patients to the hospital at Île-à-la-Croix that it was necessary to convert it to year-round operations. M and C Airways coordinated with the Saskatchewan Air Ambulance in evacuating northern patients to Prince Albert, where they were transferred to the government organization operating out of Regina. The service was especially important in flying polio victims out of the north to the Saskatoon polio clinic where they could be put into life-saving iron lungs or access the rehabilitation program. (Campbell 1993; MacKenzie 2002b:8; Clancy 1998:58-61)

f. Fire Fighting, Smokejumpers [*A] swagger of cocky guys...*⁹
They had the special swagger of cocky guys who knew with supreme confidence that they were the best at their job. Yet they scorned macho posturing: after all, arriving by parachute was simply a way of commuting to work. The real work began when they landed. (Reguly 1997)

Saskatchewan was the first province to use smokejumpers in fire fighting.¹⁰ Crews of eight highly trained and supremely fit Department of Natural Resources men in heavy padded suits were dropped down through a chute between the floats of a Norseman plane to parachute in to control bush fires before they spread. An experienced jumper could land within 200 feet of the target, carrying a two-man fire pack consisting of compass, knife, rope, maps, bedrolls, fire fighting tools¹¹, water, food, first aid kit, mosquito oil and lights. (The Leader-Post 1947) In 1953, forest fires were particularly numerous across the north. Smokejumpers parachuted in when a fire was too far from water to land the Norseman floatplane. If water were nearby, the fire fighters walked in.

We landed right beside the fire and worked all night and the next day, managing to turn it so that it burned back into itself.... In the evening, we received a hurry-up call that a fire was sweeping down on a drilling camp a few miles away. We were picked up by motorboat and ... spent the night throwing burning embers out

⁸George Greening, quoted in Clancy 1998:61.

⁹(Reguly 1997)

¹⁰The deployment unit and smoke jumpers' school was organized in 1947. Based in La Ronge, the unit trained in first aid, fire fighting and parachute jumping. It was disbanded in 1966 or 1967 as helicopters became available. Among the alumni are cabinet ministers, pilots, reporters, doctors, tourist outfitters, corrections officers and hockey players. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:82)

¹¹Tools in the fire-pack included shovels, a six foot cross-cut saw, a pruning saw, "pulaski" tools (combination axe and adze), an axe and radio. (The Leader-Post 1947)

of the fuel dump with gloved hands as the fire crowned and, luckily, roared past, hurling burning chunks of wood a half-kilometre. (Reguly 1997)

After the crew leader signalled "all right" to the plane, it flew off in the direction of the nearest lake, giving the fire fighters a bearing for their walk out to be picked up. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:80)

Pilots of small planes also helped in the fighting of fires, sometimes at great risk of the doped fabric of their planes catching fire. (Clancy 1998:65)

g. Cold War Activities *An active role in defending the continent...*

Post-war fears of Soviet attack on the United States by the shortest route over the north pole and Canada prompted the construction of three east-west transcontinental radar lines set up by the U.S. and Canada, beginning in 1954 and becoming operational in 1957. The Mid-Canada Line¹² of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line crossed Canada along the 55th parallel. This Dopler radar fence was completed a few years later, paid for entirely by Canada to the tune of some \$220 million, and passed near the south end of Lac La Ronge. Air traffic in the area increased considerably in the mid-1950s, freighting construction materials, fuel and personnel. (Canada. Department of International Affairs and Foreign Trade 1954; Saskatchewan Education 1992:82-83)

h. Search and Rescue *Bush pilots risked their lives to pick up people...*¹³

People got lost in the northern bush, especially in bad weather for forest fire smoke: prospectors, fire fighters, hunters, hikers and fishermen. The bush pilot was a life-saver.

And you sit and reason and reason things out. Where did I go wrong, and where did you make the mistake? In my case I, well I walked for two days. ...Oh yeah... They flew right over my goddamn head, you know, and well it was frustrating. And finally one plane spotted me. [It was a good thing] ...I had some of that orange flagging... (Saskatchewan geologist and prospector Art Sjolander 1976)

Another incident ended well when a lost hunter set a hawk's nest on fire in a tree top, attracting the attention of the RCMP and their pilot. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:92)

i. Other Government People *They identified with people and tried to help...*¹⁴

In 1950, the Department of Indian Affairs and the Saskatchewan Department of Public Health

¹²“The primary purpose of the mid_Canada line was to provide a warning to enable fighters to get into the air in sufficient time to meet attacking bombers. It was assumed that the primary targets of Soviet bombers would be the U.S. Strategic Air Command bases. The existence of a line along the 55th parallel would therefore provide an additional hour's warning for take off and dispersal of this Command's aircraft.” (Canada. Department of International Affairs and Foreign Trade 1954) Four unmanned radar installations were serviced out of La Ronge. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:83)

¹³Larmour 1988:4

¹⁴Quandt 1976a

co-ordinated a health survey of the far north. (MacKenzie 2002a: Appendix: A Few Saskatchewan Health Care Factoids) DNR Conservation Officers kept abreast of conditions in the north by flying over large tracts of boreal forest and Shield areas: forest fire spotting, forest disease tracking, surveys of water levels, animal population estimates.

I had to organize, try and get a plane to fly me around in the country. Knowing the country so well and just the general area.... Spotting for moose and count them. So the man that flew me was in an old Stinson... (Carriere 1976)

Sometimes, they were diverted to help with forest fires, search and rescue activities and dropping off supplies. Fur and Fish Marketing inspectors had to travel to remote areas to inspect traps, nets, investigate reports of infractions, find poachers, collect licences. At the same time, they broke the isolation of people who lived their lives far from settlements, bringing mail, food, supplies, equipment.

...fellows who actually were in the department ...had come from backgrounds of trapping and sort of a rugged frontier life, they identified with the country and they identified with the people... I know Frank Clinton, who was just dumped in as the winter freeze-up was taking place. As a matter of fact, the aircraft had to break its way through the first ice that was forming on the bay. And he was just dumped off there with some supplies and dogs and he had to build his cabin, prepare for the winter, and then go up the lake on the first ice. And he just took a map, all he had was a map. And hit all the fish camps, you know, to say that he was there to look after their needs. Sure, collecting licenses and so on, and enforce the regulations but mainly by way of assisting, you know. (Quandt 1976a)

It is unfortunate that, contrary to Mr Quandt's opinion, the Field Officer¹⁵ was not universally beloved by northerners. In the early 1950s, there were no police officers stationed in the remote north: they travelled in by plane and dogsled on the few occasions when they were needed. Other government officials who travelled by plane into the north included officers of the judicial courts and witnesses, Timber Board officials, election and returning officers, air mail carriers.

George Diefenbaker was frequently flown around Saskatchewan's north, as Member of Parliament, as Prime Minister of Canada, and as sport fisherman. His favourite pilot was George Greening. (Clancy 1998:3,57)

j. Missionaries

In the 1950s the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission, founded in 1946 in Meadow Lake and headquartered in Buffalo Narrows, flew to remote villages, summer and winter, to spread the

¹⁵ "We're blind now, they tell us these rats [muskrats] are not class one. We're scared no[w] that damned game guardian is behind us with shotgun. Can't go and take the game like before to make a living for the kids." ("A middle-aged [Métis] man living in a family settlement near Ile a la Crosse" quoted in Valentine 1952:7) "Field Officers are seldom consulted in this capacity [as "people who can assist in bridging the gaps that exist between a [government] program and the Métis idea of it"] because they have been defined by the people as another form of law enforcement." (Valentine 1952:12)

Gospel and ferry church leaders, students and missionaries to Bible schools and conferences. Sometimes they hitched rides with others, helping them with the planes, equipment and medical emergencies. In the mid-1950s, they used their own Stinson Reliant, a Seabee and a Cessna 170B. (Northern Canada Evangelical Mission 2003; Saskatchewan Education 1992:73-74)

k. Supplying the People of the North

Pilots flew fresh food such as fruit, vegetables, eggs and dairy products and other supplies to settlements beyond the reach of roads. Individual prospectors, fishermen, fishing parties, trappers and hunters also received drops of food and supplies, often when pilots were on their way to or from other destinations. Northern pilot and amateur poet, George Greening, for example, was known for his generosity in going out of his way to fly supplies.

Upon unloading their gear, the trapper's wife discovered she had forgotten her needles... Needles are one of the most important of items for a trapper's wife... within a week, [George] was flying a charter taking a provincial Cabinet Minister from La Ronge to uranium City... The flight course took him within fifty miles of the trapper's camp, so he veered off course and dropped in to their camp and gave the lady the package of needles. That he had spent at least an hour and a half flying time - not counting the cost of fuel involved and an important Government official's time - just to drop of a 25 cent package of needles, showed the metal (sic) of the man and his thoughtfulness for the people he served, both native and white. (Clancy 1998:2)

With fish for feed so plentiful in Saskatchewan's north, mink ranching became an important industry in the 1950s for many communities. Caged mink were flown in to supply ranchers in places like Buffalo Narrows, Ile-à-la-Crosse, Deep River, Dore Lake, Smoothstone Lake and Waterhen Lake. The stench from these fishy animals was overpowering. (JKCC Consulting 1998a,1998b; Clancy 1998:10-11)

The CCF beaver repopulation programme was also bread earners for pilots. Sometimes, the beaver were loaded onto the planes uncaged, as "someone had discovered that these animals would go into a sound sleep once airborne." (Clancy 1998:10)

Trappers were also delivered to their traplines in spring and fall, with their equipment, supplies and, sometimes, sleds and dogs.

At about 1,000 feet in the air the sleigh dogs commenced a vicious fight. ... [George Greening] restored order by a steep climb, and then at the point of stall he pushed the stick full forward. He looked back to a comical sight - there were dogs, tin heaters, traps, grub and trappers all on the roof of the plane. He then pulled the stick back and the whole works landed back on the floor. (Clancy 1998:66)

3. What was it like flying in the north?

*The first thing you do is moan like hell about it.*¹⁶

The life of a bush pilot was one of hard work and long hours. The ability to react instantly and thoughtfully in times of difficulty and the ability to make judgements based on a life-time of experience of all kinds of flying conditions were essential characteristics of these men.

The trouble was there were no maps then, nothing to speak of except a map of Canada which showed all the railway lines, but the trouble was, they were all in the southern parts and we were flying in the north. We had gas caches on various lakes but the problem was to find the lake. (Henry *et al*:183 Ken Guthrie)

...the pilot's day began at 5:00 a.m. in the summer and ended late in the evening, often 11:00 or 12:00 at night, during the season of floats. Long days of loading and unloading two thousand pounds of freight or fish on Norseman aircraft six or eight times a day, pumping leaky floats before a take off and fuelling up at remote gas caches where water contamination in the 45 gallon drums was an on going threat. (Clancy 1998:i)

In winter, there were the dangers of asphyxiation under a tarp while the engine was warming up, freezing of fingers while filling with fuel, dealing with bent struts and skis torn off by lake ice, strong headwinds, poor visibility, freezing cabins, getting the plane free of frozen slush. (Henry *et al*.:171-172; Clancy 1998:ii)

Once the pilot thought the engine to be warmed sufficiently, he had to make a mad dash to the shack or tent that he had overnighted in to get the pail of oil (which he had drained the night before) and batteries which had both spent the night near the tin heater. He then must quickly pour the oil back into the engine, attach the batteries, prime the carburetor then hope and pray that when he hit the starter switch, the engine would cough to life before the batteries ran down. (Clancy 1998:i)

In summer, there were fish to fly, often on little more than fumes, electrical storms, high winds on northern lakes, crash landings in the trees, the dangers of getting too close to a forest fire, running out of gas with no lake in sight, radio malfunctions.

4. What were the effects on the north and south in the 1950s?

While the arrival of planes in the north in the 1920s had its effects, they did not change life in the

¹⁶Sam McKnight, Saskatchewan engineer and mechanic, quoted in Henry *et al*. eds. 1983:171.

north in the way that the advent of scheduled flights of the late 1940s and 1950s did. There was a quantum change with the influx of new people in post-war times which altered the north forever.

The thing that had quite an effect on the north was the question of transportation. Airways began to run regular scheduled flights. Some of them were only once every two weeks but there just weren't, practically weren't, any places that were completely isolated and let go for three months without ever seeing anybody from outside [as had been the case in the past]. So [now], the plane comes in today. The plane is coming in tomorrow, are you coming in? And they would all be at the station, or the centre where the train came in. ... So it tied the northern communities to the south to some extent. (Brockelbank 1976)

Northerners felt these effects in their employment. Some people found the attractions of employment in the south too much to resist. In other cases, new work opportunities for First Nations, Métis and non-Aboriginal people grew as a result of increased aviation and new government activities in the north: landing and refuelling stations, air mechanical work, servicing of prospecting and the fur and fish industries, servicing of new routes for passenger and cargo flights, tourism and recreation employment spread to the far north. New tourist camps in the north brought visitors from southern Saskatchewan, across Canada and the United States for hunting and fishing, and provided some employment for people in remote areas. Settlements grew and developed in response to increased activity and expenditures. Several SGA scheduled flights operated out of La Ronge and, with the smokejumpers, the DNR, the Prospectors' School, fishermen using the filleting plant and thriving tourism, La Ronge flourished. By 1956, SGA had 94 employees and 22 planes. Even with Saskatchewan Government Airways operating in the north, there was still "plenty of room"¹⁷ for smaller private businesses to compete: Floyd Glass and Athabaska Airways, Waite's Northern Airlines Limited, M and C Aviation, La Ronge Aviation, Balych Brothers Flying Service of Meadow Lake, Carrot River Airways and others. (Saskatchewan Government Airways 1957; Saskatchewan Education 1992:92-94)

Northerners also felt the effects of increased air transportation on their leisure activities. Well, you see, at that time the village [of La Ronge] was very, very much smaller, and if the weather was bad for several days and aircraft didn't get out, you'd have caught up on your work. There was time for leisure in the evening and to sit around and discuss with people, ... If the weather was bad you were not only grounded, in many cases there was shortage on aircraft and you had to wait your turn until the aircraft got back. And if the aircraft in some way got called on a fire, you could cancel that day out and say, "Well, we'll go tomorrow." And, of course, that evening you had some time to sit around and talk to people. (Wood 1976)

¹⁷Premier T. C. Douglas's "plenty of room" policy was based on his idea that there was room for government, private and co-operative enterprise in the north. (Saskatchewan Education 1992:95)

Until 1952, there was no liquor store or beer store in La Ronge and there were enough problems of the use of liquor as it was with people bringing it in from wherever they came from. The people who lived there were very concerned to keep it out. And they felt one way that you could at least reduce the amount of liquor was by not having a store in the area. So that a person could bring it in but once they ran out, they were [dry]. ... it really was a catering to American tourists who were the most demanding of getting liquor into the place and ... did add to the problems that had already existed. (Clarke 1977)

Fishing was also affected, mainly because of the Fish Marketing Service, which regulated fish amounts, species and price. The appearance of Field Officers in remote areas was keenly felt by families who had been accustomed to catching what they needed when they needed it, and to having no one looking over their shoulders while they were doing it. (Quandt 1976b)

With the CCF scrutiny of the north came an increased emphasis on education. With a new requirement for children to be sent to school, mothers had to live in town over the winter. This meant that families were split up, as the fathers would go out on the trap lines. Children were no longer taught how to hunt, trap and fish. It has been observed that, when the beaver were once again plentiful enough to trap, there were few who knew how to do it properly.

And they [the CCF] had in education, a fellow by the name of Chet Piercy was commissioned to do a study of northern Saskatchewan and he came up with the Piercy Report and this is supposed to be the key to changing things. Education, we have to educate people. They didn't realize what this was going to do, the cultural shock that was going to take place. And if you look at it now, in retrospect, you would see that what this has done has been a terrible thing. Education hasn't accomplished [very many positive things]. Just the opposite. Because they [the CCF] just didn't understand. They wanted to do something, so Joe Phelps was the Minister of Natural Resources at that time and he wanted to get people in to the programs that they sort of envisaged by having people of Indian ancestry involved directly. (Quandt 1976b)

Bibliography

Beck, Gwendoline B.

1976 Interview, La Ronge, 20 July 1976. Murray Dobbin, interviewer. Saskatchewan Archives Board, Tape No. IH- 421. Regina.

Berrill, Richard

1930 "Putting the Northland on the Map." The Country Guide 15 April, pp. 3, 21. Winnipeg.

Brockelbank, John H.

1976 Interview, Regina, 19 August 1976. Murray Dobbin, interviewer. Saskatchewan Archives Board, Tape no. IH- 351. Regina.

Campbell, Donald N.

1993 Wings of Mercy. A Story of the Saskatchewan Air Ambulance. Turner-Warwick Printers Inc., North Battleford.

Canada. Department of International Affairs and Foreign Trade..

1954 "Distant Early Warning System, Mid-Canada Line and Continental Air Defence." Extracts from Minutes of Meeting of Cabinet Defence Committee. Top Secret. June 25th, 1954, Ottawa. Accessed on the internet 6 December 2003 at http://www.pinetreeline.org/reports/CER/CERv20_466.html

Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame

n.d. "Basil Deacon Hobbs." Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame website, accessed 2 Dec 2003 at http://www.cahf.ca/members/H_members.htm

Canadian Aviation Historical Society- Regina Chapter

n.d. "Saskatchewan Aviation Chronology: 1930-39." cahsregina website, accessed 11 December 2003 at <http://groups.msn.com/cahsregina/193039.msnw>

Carrière, James E.

1976 Interview, Cumberland House, 18 August 1976. Murray Dobbin, interviewer. Saskatchewan Archives Board, Tape no. IH- 354. Regina.

Clancy, R. S.

1998? True lies of a northern bush pilot : stories of George (Dad or Pop) Greening. Simply Creative, Carrot River.

Clarke, Phyllis

1977 Interview, Toronto, 14 June 1977. Murray Dobbin, interviewer. Saskatchewan

Archives Board, Tape no. IH- 359. Regina.

Henry, Walter and the Canadian Bush Pilot Book Project, eds.

1983 Uncharted Skies : Canadian Bush Pilot Stories. Reidmore Books, Edmonton.

Jensen, Ron

n.d. "Commercial and Sport Fishing on Dore and Smoothstone Lakes."

Dore/Smoothstone Lakes Wilderness Protection Association website, accessed 8 December 2003 at http://www.sfn.saskatoon.sk.ca/science/dore/2_4.html

JKCC Consulting

1998b "Fish and Fur." A History of Buffalo Narrows, Saskatchewan website, accessed 1 December 2003 at <http://www.jkcc.com/evje/fishfur.html>

1998c "Fishing on Deep River." Memories Of Deep River: Hunting, Trapping, Fishing and Fur Farming in Northern Saskatchewan, Canada website, accessed during November and December 2003 at <http://www.jkcc.com/evje/fishing.html>

Kupsch, W. O. And S. D. Hanson, eds.

1986 Gold and other stories as told to Berry Richards: Prospecting and mining in northern Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan Mining Association, Regina.

Lang, A. H.

1966 Prospecting in Canada. Geological Survey of Canada, Economic Geology Series No. 7, 3rd edition (1956). Department of Mines and Technical Surveys Canada, Ottawa.

Larmour, Jean B. D.

1985 "Jack Douglas and Saskatchewan's Highways." Saskatchewan History 38(3):97-107. Saskatoon.

1988 "Nursing in Northern Outposts." Western people 17 March (Issue 433), pp. 3-4. Saskatoon.

Leader-Post, The

1947 "Smoke Jumpers on Guard in North to Pounce Quickly onto Forest Fires." 9 August 1947, Regina.

MacKenzie, Janet

2002a "Saskatchewan Cares for its Own and Defines Being Canadian for Canadians." ms. Western Development Museum, Saskatoon.

2002b "Saskatchewan's Air Ambulance Service." ms. Western Development Museum, Saskatoon.

2003 "What a Rush! Staking Mineral Claims in Saskatchewan's North." ms. Western Development Museum, Saskatoon.

Michel, M., ed.

1967 Timber Trails: History of Big River and District. Compiled by Big River History Book Committee, Big River, Saskatchewan.

Northern Canada Evangelical Mission

2003 "NCEM's Beginnings." NCEM website, accessed 2 December 2003 at <http://ncem.gospelcom.net/beginnings.htm>

Phelps, Joseph

1976 Interview, Saskatoon, 26 June 1976. Murray Dobbin, interviewer. Saskatchewan Archives Board, Tape no. IH- 403. Regina.

Quandt, Allan

1976a Interview, La Ronge, 21 July 1976. Murray Dobbin, interviewer. Saskatchewan Archives Board, Tape no. IH- 404A. Regina.

1976b Interview, La Ronge, 21 August 1976. Murray Dobbin, interviewer. Saskatchewan Archives Board, Tape no. IH- 404. Regina.

Reguly, Bob

1997 "Smokejumpers: The Saskatchewan Story." The StarPhoenix 9 August 1997.

Saskatchewan. Department of Highways and Transportation

1958 Official Highway Map Saskatchewan Canada. Department of Highways and Transportation, Regina. (WDM-73-S-16888)

1960 Official Highway Map. Department of Highways and Transportation, Regina.

1964 Official Highway Map. Department of Highways and Transportation, Regina.

Saskatchewan Education

1992 Wings Beyond Road's End: Airplanes over Saskatchewan's North. Saskatchewan Education, Northern Division, Pakkisimon Nuye?áh Library System, La Ronge.

Saskatchewan Government Airways

1957 Annual Report for 1955-56. Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources, Regina.

University of Saskatchewan

2003 "Saskatchewan Interactive- Tourism- Sask Stories- The Fishing." Saskatchewan Interactive website, accessed 8 December 2003 at http://interactive.usask.ca/ski/tourism/sask_stories/fishing.html

Wood, Tony

1976 Interview, La Ronge, 28 July 1976. Murray Dobbin, interviewer. Saskatchewan Archives Board, Tape no. IH- 417. Regina.