

Three Months At Eleven Thousand Feet Above Alaska

*A human-interest story of the second Naval Alaskan Aerial Survey Expedition,
and also about things leading up to and after the
remarkable accomplishment*

By Lieut. Comdr. A. W. Radford, U. S. N.
Officer-in-charge of the expedition

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KEYSTONE-LOENING AMPHIBIANS (WASP ENGINES) OF THE U. S. NAVY ALASKAN AERIAL SURVEY, PASSING TWIN GLACIERS, TAKU RIVER, ALASKA
(All photos by U. S. Navy)

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By LIEUT. COMDR. A. W. RADFORD, U. S. N.

Officer-in-charge of the expedition

AT nine o'clock on the morning of the 15th of May, 1929, four shiny new Loening amphibians rolled down the runway in front of the large seaplane hangar at the Naval Air Station, San Diego, California. Taxiing into an echelon they took off together from the quiet waters of San Diego Bay—bound for Alaska—the flying detachment of the United States Navy's Alaskan Aerial Survey Detachment. Every Navy pilot of the many who lined the beach as the planes took off, envied the fortunate ones who were starting the long flight North.

The four planes winging their way towards an immediate destination at Seattle were, in a sense, the rear guard of the whole expedition—all the personnel except the plane

crews having sailed from San Diego on the U. S. S. *Gannet*, aircraft tender, on May 6th bound for the United States Navy Yard at Bremerton, Washington, where they were to await the arrival of the planes before proceeding together to the first northern base, the so-called "First City" of Alaska—Ketchikan.

The departure that morning was the culmination of a month and a half of strenuous preparation. Every officer and man of the Aircraft Squadrons of the Battle Fleet and the Naval Air Station knew that the expedition was shoving off, for nearly all had assisted in getting them ready. If the truth were known—a great many were probably glad to see them underway for the personnel of the Survey

Detachment had had a bad attack of the "Gimmie's" during the fitting out period and had just about begged, borrowed or taken everything that was loose on North Island.

This, the Navy's second Alaskan Aerial Survey Expedition, had been organized at the request of numerous other government departments and bureaus to complete aerial surveys commenced several years before.

In the summer of 1926, the Navy, at the request of the Departments of Interior and Agriculture had undertaken an aerial survey of the "Tongass National Forest," an area totaling almost 26,000 square miles and comprising practically all of the southeastern or "Panhandle" district of Alaska from Skagway



OFFICERS OF THE U. S. S. GANNET AND ALASKAN AERIAL SURVEY DETACHMENT

(Left to Right)—Standing, Boatswain F. E. Doud, U. S. N.; Chief Boatswain J. D. Glick, U. S. N.; LT. (Junior Grade) L. P. Pawlikowski, U. S. N.; Lt. C. F. Greber, U. S. N.; Lt. R. F. Whitehead, U. S. N.; Lt. E. F. Burkett, U. S. N.; Machinist J. O. Hoey, U. S. N. Sitting, Lt. E. F. Carr, U. S. N.; Lt. Comdr. A. C. Smith (M. C.), Officer in Charge; Lt. Comdr. A. W. Radford, U. S. N.; Mr. R. H. Sargent, Geological Survey; Lt. Thomas Macklin, U. S. N.



PLANES OF THE ALASKAN SURVEY DETACHMENT

At the airport at Fresno, Calif.—enroute to Ketchikan, Alaska. Fresno was the first stop after leaving San Diego on the trip north.

to Ketchikan. The 1926 Expedition mapped approximately 10,000 square miles before inclement weather and rapidly shortening days forced them south about the middle of September. At that time it was planned to complete the project in the summer of 1927, but lack of funds in the other departments prevented and the Tongass Mapping Project remained on the books of the Navy Department as unfinished business until the spring of this year.

On the 6th of February, 1929, while the Fleet was in the Panama Canal Area engaged in the winter maneuvers, the Commander-in-Chief received the following

message from the Navy Department:

Department contemplates completion during coming summer of aerial survey of

southeastern Alaska first undertaken in 1926 and desires that project be carried out by detached unit of Aircraft Squadrons Battle Fleet under Commander-in-Chief Battle Fleet. Three OL-8 airplanes and necessary mapping cameras will be assigned VJ Squadron 1-B

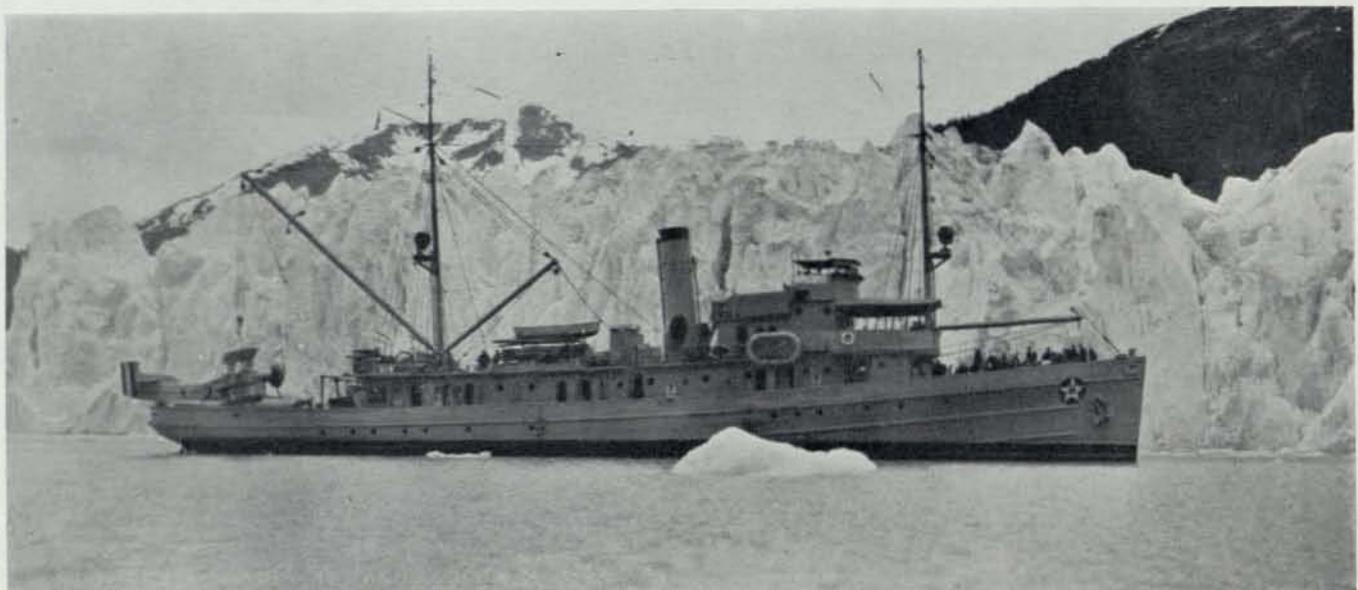
for this work. Submit recommendation for officer personnel and plans for survey, embodying use of tender detailed from Aircraft Squadrons Battle Fleet and converted barge now at Puget Sound Navy Yard which will be made available for use. Areas to be covered comprise Kuiu, Baranof and Chichagof Islands and portions of mainland bordered by Icy Straits, Lynn Canal, Stephens Passage and Frederick Sound.

Department considers expedition should be in Alaskan Waters by May 25th to insure completion of survey this season.

The word spread like wildfire on



PLANE NO. 2, LT. E. F. BURKETT, PILOT
In flight over San Joaquin Valley, Calif.—en route to Ketchikan, Alaska.



U. S. S. GANNET AT TAKU GLACIER, ALASKA, WITH ONE OF THE EXPEDITION PLANES ON THE STERN



THE ALASKAN AERIAL SURVEY PLANES PASSING MT. SHASTA

the two huge carriers, the *Saratoga* and *Lexington*, the interest among the Aviation Personnel indicating that there would be no lack of volunteers.

Actual formation of the Survey Detachment was delayed until the return of the Fleet to California waters about the 23rd of March although in the meantime detailed plans were made and selection of personnel begun. On the first of April the Officer-in-Charge and the Executive Officer, Lieutenant Eugene F. Burkett, U.S.N., reported to the Commander-in-Chief for duty and the formation of the 1929 Aerial Survey Detachment was actually underway. On April 23rd the formal commissioning took place at San Diego and just a month later, on the 24th of May, the Detachment was at Ketchikan, Alaska, ready for the summer's work—a result made possible by whole-hearted

cooperation of many widely scattered Naval, other governmental and civilian activities.

In planning for the expedition it was decided to organize it along the same lines as that of 1926, since that expedition had done such excellent work. The Detachment was to consist of the *U. S. S. Gannet*, a Navy minesweeper converted into an aircraft tender and an Aviation Detail of some forty-seven men and officers, five of the latter being Naval Aviators. Since the *Gannet* could conveniently accommodate only her own crew—a covered barge—fitted with living quarters and photographic laboratory—was to be taken for the Aviation Detail. The complement of planes, originally three, was later increased to four—all of the amphibian type. A grand total of eleven officers, one hundred men, the tender *Gannet*, the covered barge

and the four planes comprised the 1929 Detachment—quite a sizeable expedition to drop in on some of the smaller Alaskan towns.

The plan worked out in advance called for arrival in Ketchikan prior to May 25th as ordered and a shift to a more northern Alaskan base as soon as a suitable one could be located. The expedition was to be self-supporting as a unit but in order to make the *Gannet* available for rescue work in case of necessity it was advisable to select as a base—some town which could furnish a good dock with provision for supplying fresh water and power to the barge during the *Gannet's* absence.

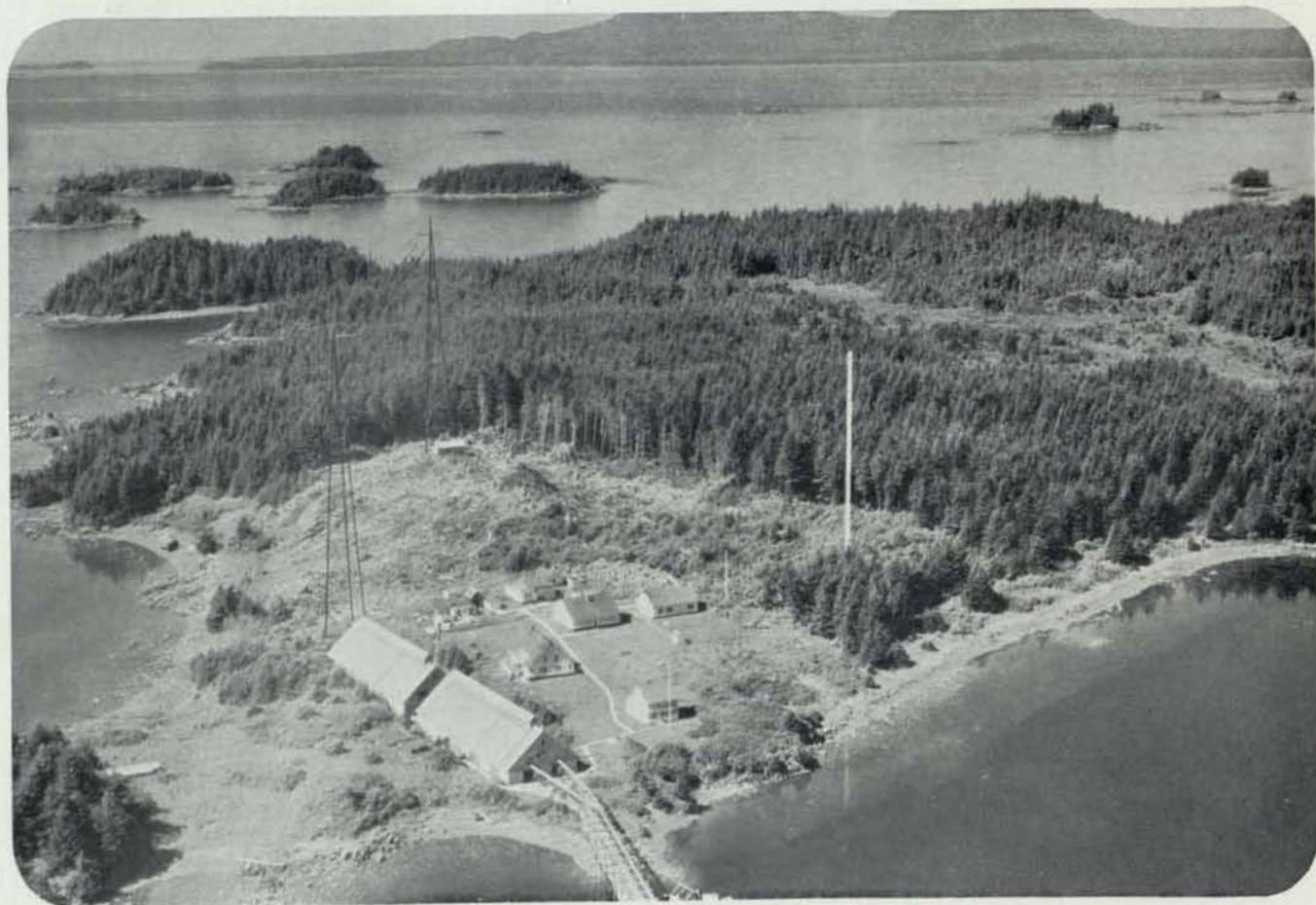
On schedule, the Detachment assembled at Seattle, with the arrival of the planes, on May 17. The *Gannet* had been at the Navy Yard since May 11 assembling and loading stores and having necessary re-



THE SURVEY PLANES ON THE BEACH AT KETCHIKAN, ALASKA



CITIZENS WHARF, PETERSBURG, ALASKA, BARGE AND GANNET MOORED TO NORTH END OF WHARF



U. S. NAVAL RADIO STATION ON JAPONSKI ISLAND, ACROSS FROM SITKA, ALASKA



EARL N. OHMER
Mayor of Petersburg, Alaska

pairs and alterations made by the Navy Yard force. The aviation details, minus the plane crews, had completed the fitting out of the barge which was fortunately already in excellent shape. The work of docking and repairing hull and upper works, repainting, refinishing living quarters and fumigating had been done prior to the Detachment's arrival—with the customary thoroughness for which the Navy Yard at Bremerton is famous. The four planes arrived at the U. S. Naval Reserve Air Station at Sand Point (on Lake Washington about six miles from the center of Seattle) at six p. m. on the 17th, having flown up as land planes from San Diego with stops enroute at Fresno and Oakland, California, and Medford, Oregon.

After a conference at the Navy Yard between the Officer-in-Charge and the Commanding Officer of the *Gannet*, Lieutenant Thomas Macklin, U. S. N., it was decided that the *Gannet* with the barge in tow would leave the Navy Yard at 8 a. m. on Monday the 20th of May—proceeding directly to Ketchikan via the inside passage. The planes were to take off from Sand Point at 9 a. m. on Tuesday the 21st, and fly to Ketchikan, stopping at Alert Bay, B. C., for fuel.

Mr. R. H. Sargent, Topographic Engineer of the Geological Survey, Alaskan Branch, Department of the Interior, joined the Detachment at Seattle. Mr. Sargent was to remain with the expedition in an advisory capacity, acting as liaison officer between the Navy Department and all other government departments interested in the work. Having done the same work in



LT. COMDR. A. W. RADFORD, U. S. N.
Officer in charge of the Detachment Survey



WARMING UP ON THE BEACH AT PETERSBURG, ALASKA



GOV. GEO. A. PARKS OF ALASKA, FISHING IN LAKE HASSELBORG, ADMIRALTY ISLAND, ALASKA

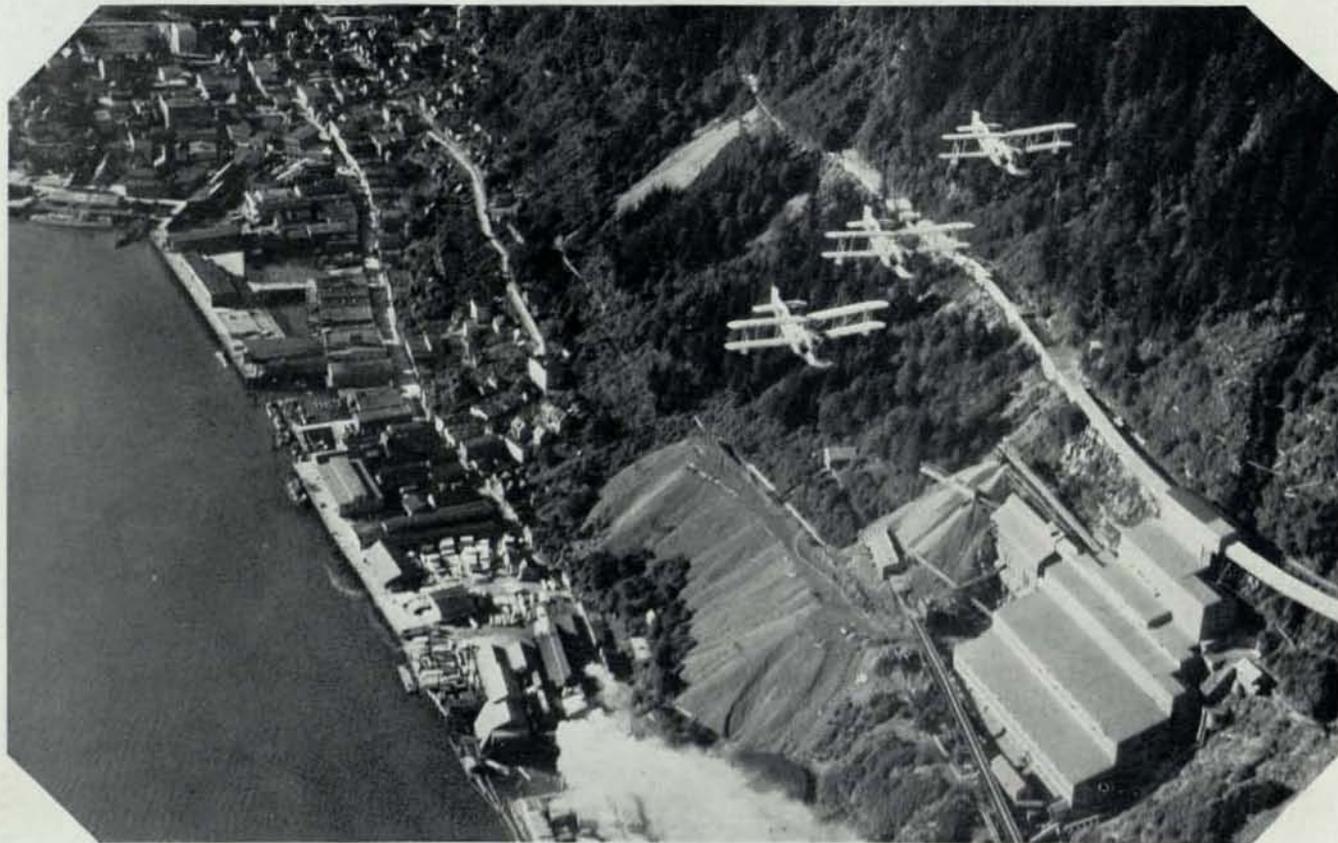
1926 and having, as a matter of fact originally conceived the idea of aerial photographic mapping in southeastern Alaska, Mr. Sargent's services were invaluable.

The *Gannet* and barge sailed from Bremerton on Monday, May 20. On Tuesday, May 21st, at nine o'clock, the planes took off from Lake Washington after receiving more or less favorable weather reports. Once over Puget Sound the

low fog proved so much worse than expected, that they returned to Sand Point. A second start was made at eleven and as by this time the fog had burned off to a large extent, the flight to Alert Bay was made without difficulty, the landing there being made shortly after three in the afternoon.

During the stay at Seattle, a powerful transmitter and receiver had been installed in plane number

one, for in making arrangements through Diplomatic Channels for the planes to fly over Canadian Territory, request had also been made to have Canadian radio stations along the flight stand by to give weather reports as necessary. On the flight from Seattle to Ketchikan, the Officer-in-Charge was in constant communication with several stations at all times, and the Canadian operators were par-



PASSING OVER THE ALASKA JUNEAU GOLD MINE, JUNEAU, ALASKA



SHELTER CONSTRUCTED TO ALLOW PLANE CREWS TO MAKE 20-HOUR MOTOR INSPECTION DESPITE INCLEMENT WEATHER

ticularly efficient and alert. Any number of times during the flight, ship traffic was held up temporarily in order to work the plane operator. The present chain of U. S. Navy, Canadian and U. S. Army radio stations from Seattle northward will ultimately be of inestimable value to air traffic on the Alaskan Airway. For this run, the present general weather forecasts are not sufficient as weather conditions very often change so rapidly that radio advice during progress of a flight is almost imperative.

The planes passed the *Gannet* on the flight to Alert Bay. She was anchored with the barge just below

the famous Seymour Narrows in British Columbia, awaiting a favorable tide to pass through. Having been in radio communication with plane number one, the passage of the planes was expected. All hands on the ship and barge were on deck as the flight passed over.

The populace of Alert Bay was out in full strength to welcome the planes—which were taxied up on the beach in front of the Indian Mission School. As a matter of fact the crowd of a hundred or so small Indian children were so active that the plane crews in their efforts to chase them out of danger were soon convinced that the popu-

lation of Alert Bay was considerably underestimated. It took very little imagination to count at least four or five thousand extremely active small boys and girls. All were determined to stand directly in the way no matter what was going on.

Order was finally restored and two of the planes taxied across the small harbor to the Union Oil Dock to refuel. One was successfully gassed and got away but a sudden squall came up and plane number two was nearly wrecked. Heroic efforts on the part of Lieutenant Burkett, his plane crew and the crew of a private launch finally saved her. In the excitement, how-



PILOTS AND NAVIGATORS CLOTHED AND MASKED FOR MAPPING FLIGHTS AT 11,000 FEET

ever—the pilot of plane number four, Lieutenant Pawlikowski, fell overboard. "Polly" reported the temperature of the water as some fifty degrees below zero, a statement which nobody disputed!

Weather reports from Prince Rupert and Ketchikan were so unfavorable and gassing the planes took so long that arrangements were made for an overnight stop at Alert Bay. The proximity of the planes to the Indian School with its hordes of lively little redskins—made it advisable to establish an all night watch on the beach. After a conference with the local constable, an ex-British Army Sergeant was hired for the night. He went on duty at six o'clock and after securing the planes and giving the sergeant voluminous instructions, all hands



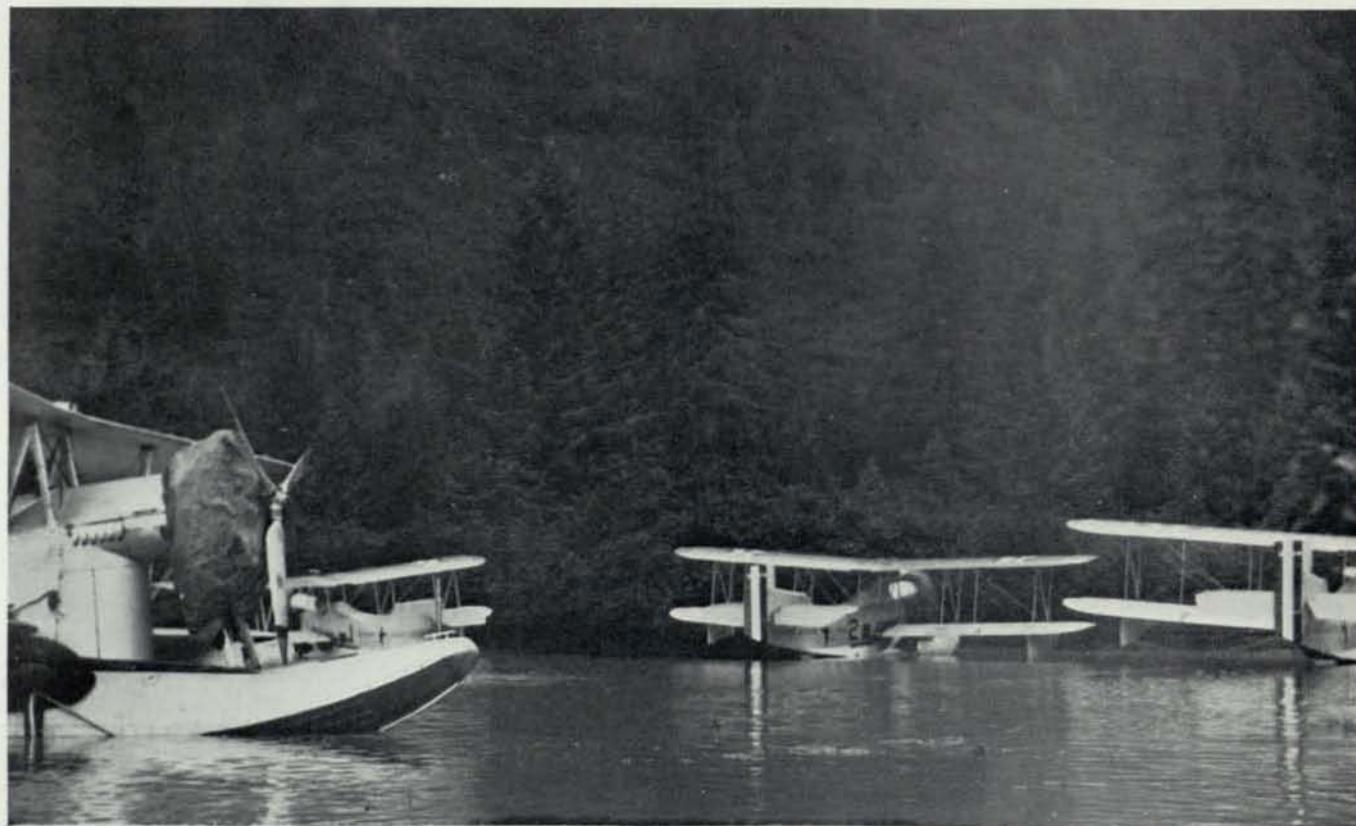
HENRY O'MALLEY, U. S. FISH COMMISSIONER

Indulging in the sport at Lake Hasselborg, Admiralty Island, Alaska. Lieutenant Burkett, Executive Officer of the Detachment in the background.

trudged around the bay about two miles to the "Hotels." After a sketchy dinner everyone turned in hoping for an early start in the morning.

The weather the next morning was awful—rain and low clouds—with nothing better reported to the northward. All hands assembled on the beach and tried to keep dry—passing the time away swapping the terrible stories which only aviators can swap when they have nothing better to do. About seven-thirty the *Gannet* and barge steamed by giving in passing a blast of greeting—or derision—it could be interpreted either way.

The morning passed without incident, all the children being in school. Gassing the planes was completed on the beach, the Union Oil man bringing the drums to the planes in the Indian School truck (the



ANCHORED IN LAKE HASSELBORG

This beautiful lake is practically inaccessible except by plane.

only automobile on the Island) loaned for the occasion by the Principal, Mr. Earl Anfield. The weather began to look more favorable—the *Gannet* reporting it clearing in her vicinity.

Mr. Anfield invited all hands to luncheon at noon, thereby saving a six-mile round trip to the hotel. At two o'clock, the weather reports were favorable enough for a start. At two-thirty the take off for Ketchikan was made. Course was laid northward across Queen Charlotte Sound to the mainland, following in general the steamer route but cutting corners where possible.

Crossing the sound, the *Gannet* could be seen in the dim distance making pretty heavy weather with her tow. The Sound is really open ocean and can get pretty nasty at times. However, Captain Macklin reported by radio that everything was lovely and that he would be out of the Sound and in protected waters about eight p. m. that evening.

The planes landed at Ketchikan at about eight o'clock in the evening of the 22nd of May, after the most interesting flight of the trip so far. Coming up along the coast of British Columbia—flying most of the time at an altitude of three thousand feet—the scenery beggared description. One would have to make the same flight at the same time of year to appreciate the beauty and magnitude of the panorama that unrolls before the pilot of a plane headed north. More and more snow on the mountains, beautiful timber covered islands and fjords that certainly must dwarf any in the world. At the altitude flown, the planes were on the level of many small lakes which were practically all frozen over although it did not seem uncomfortably cold. At lower altitudes, the lower and usually larger lakes could be seen tucked away in the islands with beautiful streams and falls where they drained to sea level.

Practically none of these many lakes were indicated on the charts used, many of them being probably entirely unknown. As a matter of fact, it was plain to the pilots that in many cases the shore line was not shown correctly and the relative location of islands was in some cases so far wrong as to cause a little difficulty in navigating. However, Captain Cook, Vancouver, and other early explorers, whose work is still the basis for a good many of these charts, had done a mar-

velous piece of work when the handicaps under which they surveyed that country are considered.

Probably the most stupendous sight encountered on the flight north was the Grenville Channel. A narrow gorge, a huge ditch—almost straight for about forty-five miles, with walls on either side over three thousand feet—it was a sight never to be forgotten. The channel was passed through about seven o'clock, the sun was getting low and clouds were beginning to close in. The planes flew through just about even with the tops of the side walls, the noise of their motors probably causing quite a disturbance in the canyon-like channel.

Soon after coming out of Grenville, Prince Rupert was passed to port and Ketchikan was near. The course carried the planes towards Duke Island, on the Alaska side of the boundary. All pilots noticed an apparent error in their plotted compass course—variable it seemed—but sometimes as high as twenty degrees as the island was approached. This locality is one of many in Alaskan waters where magnetic attraction of mineralized areas throws the ordinary compass so far out as to make it extremely unreliable. For flyers, such localities are particularly dangerous in foggy weather.

Ketchikan—a beautiful city located on Revillagigedo (call it Revilla for short) Island, in Tongass Narrows—hove in sight at seven forty-five and the landing was made about eight.

Again the use of the plane radio had insured a warm welcome. The docks were lined with people as the planes flew past the city, turned back, landed in the narrows about three miles below it and taxied up on the best beach available, one used by the previous expedition, the "back yard" of Ketchikan's "Model Dairy." The Mayor and many other prominent citizens were waiting there to welcome the crews.

The Model Dairy cows evinced little or no interest in the proceedings. These cows had either kept their "air mindedness" for three years, or were different from ordinary, curious, cows. Not once while the planes remained on that beach did a single bovine so much as nip a wing or flipper—they were quite evidently well fed and contented.

The weather, until after the ar-

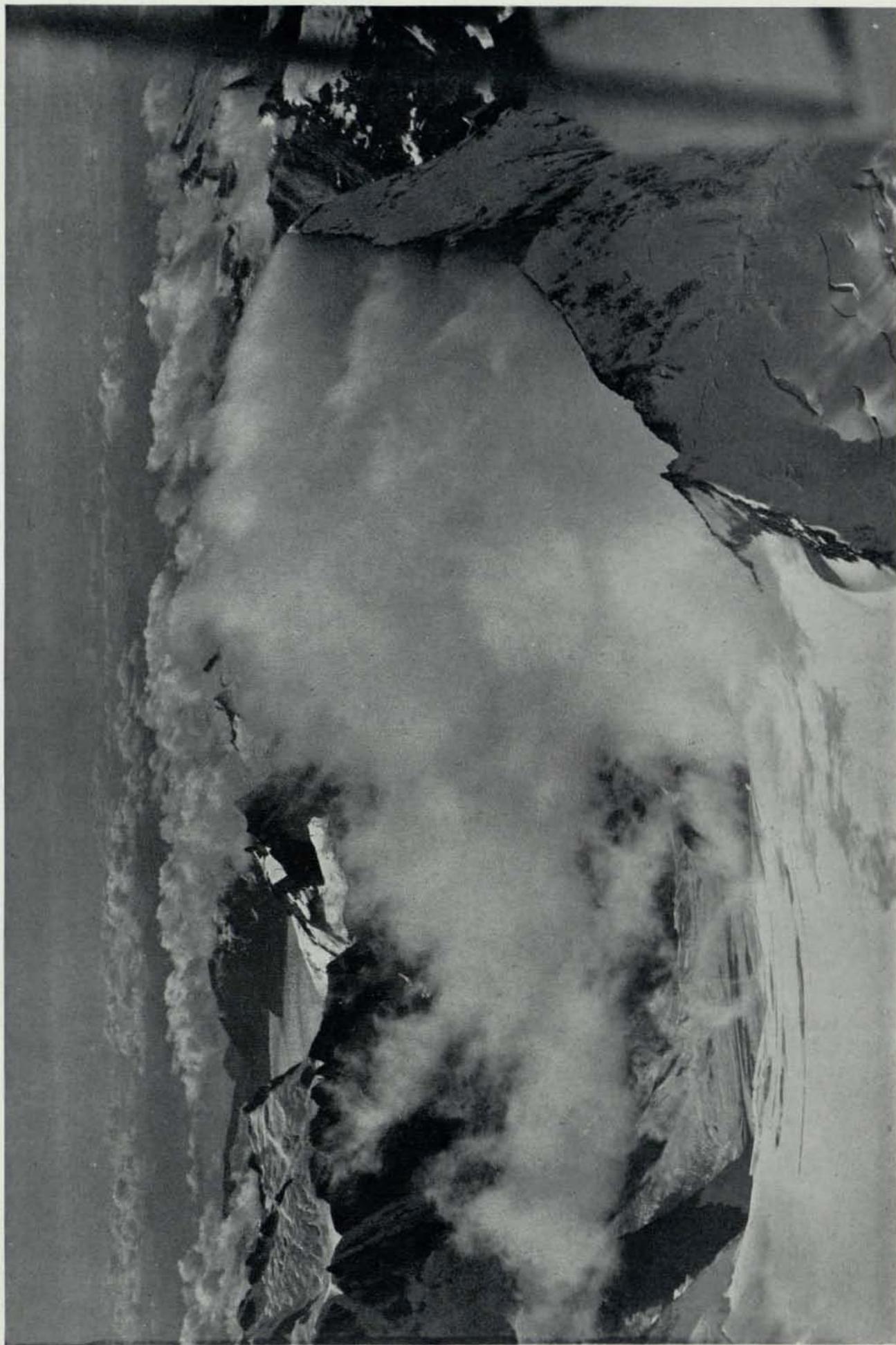
rival of the *Gannet* on Friday the 24th, was too rainy for exploratory flights to the northward so all hands and the planes enjoyed a much needed two-day rest.

The *Gannet* and barge tied up to the Lighthouse Dock in Ketchikan at noon on the 24th of May and the Detachment was ready for work a day ahead of schedule.

Saturday the 25th of May, the Officer-in-Charge and Lieutenant Burkett flew to Petersburg, about one hundred miles to the north to see if the next base of operations could be there. Satisfactory arrangements were made and the move from Ketchikan ordered for Monday the 27th. Good weather arrived on Sunday the 26th, however, and the first actual mapping flights were made on that date although they were not successful. Film broke in one camera—probably due to the intense cold at the mapping altitude of 11,000 feet and the other plane found the assigned area spotted with just enough low clouds to prevent good work. Both mapping crews returned after about four hours in the air, thoroughly frozen and completely disgusted.

On Monday the 27th of May the Detachment left Ketchikan for Petersburg, with a stop in Wrangell scheduled for that night. The *Gannet* and barge left at eight a. m. At 10 a. m. planes one and two took off for Sitka to look it over with a view to operating from there later. Low fog forced these two planes to return to Wrangell about noon, however, where they were joined in the afternoon by the other two planes which flew up directly from Ketchikan, most of the way in a driving rain. Wrangell has a nice beach for amphibians right alongside the Indian cemetery. Otherwise nearly perfect, it is rather gruesome to find that a really comfortable seat is the exposed end of a coffin laid bare by the action of the tide. The *Gannet* loomed up through the mist at six, a welcome sight to the very damp plane crews out on the cemetery beach.

Early the next morning the Detachment was again underway. The *Gannet*, her tow and two of the planes going directly to Petersburg while planes one and two once more headed for Sitka where they arrived after a miserable flight through rain and sleet. Weather reports from the U. S. Naval Radio Station, Sitka, were received with disconcerting frequency during the flight over. The radio per-



DEVILS THUMB, SHOWING PECULIAR CLOUD FORMATION, CAUSED BY A STRONG NORTH WIND

The Devils Thumb is one of the boundary peaks between Alaska and British Columbia. This is the first close-up photograph ever made of this peak—the top of which is over 9,000 feet above sea level.

sonnel there were apparently determined to keep the weather information up to the minute, having been told that aviators want accurate data of this kind. They could have done no more surely, but it was difficult to figure out at first just what was going on.

First reports indicated fairly good weather, then came "heavy rain—calm,"—"thick fog—calm," "clear—good visibility wind from southeast about fifteen miles," etc. etc., in rapid succession. The planes kept on going, arrived in such a pouring rain that they almost overran the town and found that the rapidly changing weather reports actually described the state of the weather at Sitka.

The *Gannet* and the other two planes arrived in Petersburg late that afternoon and were given the keys of the city by Mayor Ohmer. The dock of the Alaska Glacier Sea Food Company, Mr. Ohmer's "shrimp factory," had been cleared for them. The planes taxied up on a sandy beach across Wrangell Narrows. At Petersburg the Narrows are about a quarter of a mile wide so that the run to the operating beach was easily made in the *Gannet's* motor launch in five minutes.

The detachment at Sitka had a rather hectic time. It had been planned to have them return to Petersburg the same day but bad weather and an unfortunate incident kept them overnight. The incident concerned a locally owned Chevrolet sedan whose owner was anxious to have the expedition base at Sitka. He volunteered to show a good hard sand beach about three miles from town, one that would be, so he said, ideal for amphibian planes. The drive to this beautiful beach was made in a pouring rain. Upon arrival, someone ventured an opinion that it "didn't look so hard" whereupon the "Sitka Booster" promptly drove into the water to demonstrate. The car came to a sickening stop and all efforts to pull it out proved in vain. With her owner sure that the incoming tide "wouldn't hurt her a bit" she was left to submerge and all hands trudged into town, soaking wet. The incident had no direct bearing on the decision *not* to base at Sitka, but the memories of a miserable night, no dry clothes and a long wait for clearer weather the next day undoubtedly made Petersburg and the comfortable quarters of the *Gannet* look awfully good the next afternoon. Any-

way, Petersburg proved an excellent base and not one man of the Detachment will ever forget it. Mayor Ohmer made us feel "at home" from the start.

Mapping operations progressed famously with the coming of good weather the first week in June. All of Kuiu and half of Baranof Islands were completed by the 15th. That much done, it was more convenient to operate out of Juneau so the Detachment shifted base to the Capital City on the 17th after just three weeks in Petersburg. The four planes arrived in Juneau an hour and a half after leaving Petersburg, the *Gannet* and barge arriving in the evening shortly after six.

Juneau, the Capital of the Territory, is a thriving city located at the foot of sheer mountains on the shore of Gastineau Channel. For sheer beauty of location it excels anything in Alaska except perhaps Sitka. Since it was centrally located as far as the territory to be mapped was concerned, the Detachment prepared to "flemish down" for a long stay. Mapping weather was slow in coming but fishing was excellent, the good people of the city were most hospitable and the time passed quickly.

By the end of the first week in August, nearly all the original allotment of mapping film had been expended. The larger islands had been covered and all of the mainland from Cape Fairweather to some distance south of Juneau. The planes had flown hundreds of miles over some of the most beautiful and at the same time most forbidding country on the continent.

It was apparent that with a little luck additional mapping film could be expended, provided it could be obtained in time. A dispatch to the Eastman Kodak Company (the only manufacturers of the special film required) elicited a response to the effect that film could be shipped ten days after receipt of order. Including ten days for shipment, the film could reach the Detachment in Alaska about the 25th of August. After a conference between Mr. Sargent and local representatives of the United States Forest Service, thirteen additional rolls were ordered.

The territory to be covered with this additional film was principally the mainland in the so-called Hyder region. Ketchikan was the logical base from which to operate while mapping this part of the

country as it lay in the southeastern extremity of the Tongass National Forest. Accordingly the Detachment left Juneau for Ketchikan on Saturday the 17th of August—after a stay of two months to the day. The trip was broken with a stay over Sunday in Petersburg, with the prospect of more fresh shrimp and crab!

The Governor of Alaska, the Honorable George A. Parks, had been very much interested in the work of the Detachment while at Juneau. The Governor is an aviation enthusiast as well as an expert fly caster and had often expressed a desire to determine for himself whether or not the inaccessible lakes in southeastern Alaska were inhabited by large or small trout. Certain members of the Detachment shared the Governor's curiosity in this regard and many plans had been made to settle the question by flying in to some one of the larger lakes near Juneau. The weatherman had prevented such an excursion time and again. Good weather called for much work and bad weather made the desirable lakes even more inaccessible on account of clouds which invariably hang low over the islands.

The shift of base from Juneau to Petersburg, however, provided a golden opportunity for the anglers. The weather was just good enough, so Hasselborg Lake, some five miles long and located on Admiralty Island almost in a direct line between Juneau and Petersburg, was selected as the objective. Governor Parks, Mr. Henry O'Malley, Chief of the Bureau of Fisheries, and Mr. Harry Watson, the governor's secretary, were guests of the Detachment on the flight. Leaving Juneau just before seven—all four planes landed in the lake at eleven-thirty and remained until five-thirty in the afternoon. During most of this time it rained hard but the fishing was so good that nobody cared. Fifty-six huge cut-throat trout were taken—everyone except Mr. O'Malley dragging them in until they were tired. Mr. O'Malley could think of no good reasons for his failure but asked as a personal favor that the matter be kept under cover. The fish in Hasselborg Lake just weren't trained enough to know their master's voice.

The Detachment arrived in Ketchikan on Monday the 19th of August, basing at the Lighthouse Service Dock. The new film arrived about a week later and "standby for mapping" was again

the order of the day. For practically ten days it rained continuously. Even the hardened natives began to remark about the "unusual weather." The days were noticeably shorter and all hands felt the urge to start south. Plans were made to depart for San Diego on Saturday, September 14th, subject to weather, of course, as all Alaska plans are.

On the 27th of August the weather cleared sufficiently for mapping and for the next week the two mapping planes were flying up and down the mainland looking for clear areas. Half of the new film was expended but on account of the short days even exposures made at noon were rather dim. The weatherman predicted a rapid break and as a break of bad weather in September means something decidedly unpleasant in Alaska, the time of departure was advanced one week.

At ten o'clock on Saturday, September 7th, the weatherman advised getting out while the "getting was good." One-thirty p. m. found the planes in the air circling over Ketchikan in a final salute to Alaska and bound for Alert Bay.

The return to Seattle was without incident so far as the planes were concerned. Barring low fog at Alert Bay on Sunday morning

which prevented early departure—the schedule was maintained. The *Gannet* and her tow were not so fortunate. Leaving Ketchikan soon after the planes had departed on Saturday she did not arrive in Seattle until the next Thursday evening, having encountered heavy fog almost continuously for three days.

At Seattle the expedition began to disband. Mr. Sargent departed for Washington carrying with him the best wishes of all hands. "Foxy Grandpa" or just plain "Foxy" for short, he had proved himself a wonderful shipmate and airmate even if he did have to carry a bundle of heavy paper bags for use when the going got rough! The good old barge was turned in at the Navy Yard in Bremerton to wait until another expedition needed her.

The *Gannet* sailed for San Diego on September 17th leaving the four planes "smoke bound" at the Naval Air Station at Sand Point. The worst forest fires in years covered the whole northwest with a pall of smoke which kept every plane in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho on the ground for several days. For a day or so it looked as though the *Gannet* would lead the way into San Diego, much to the disgust of the plane crews. The weatherman in Seattle promised no relief until general heavy rains occurred and followed this pessimistic report

with the news that there was no rain in sight.

He slipped a cog somewhere for on Friday the 20th, although only a trace of rain had fallen, it was clear enough for a start. To be sure it wasn't pleasant flying but it was safe enough. A day spent in dodging the larger fires found the planes at Corning, California for the night. A five hundred mile flight to Long Beach with a good tail wind most of the way made Saturday night at home almost positive and after a stay of only thirty minutes at the Naval Reserve Aviation Base at Long Beach, the remaining ninety miles to San Diego was made in record time, forty-five minutes. The four amphibians rolled up the same runway that they left over four months before—just as shiny as when they left and almost as new.

The *Gannet* arrived Sunday morning and the Navy's 1929 Alaskan Aerial Survey was over. Approximately 13,000 square miles of territory had been mapped from the air and many new lakes discovered. The four planes had flown a total of over 54,000 miles without an accident of any kind—a fine tribute to the modern American aircraft engine, the sturdiness of the American planes and the personnel of the Detachment.



THE NAVY ALASKAN AERIAL SURVEY PLANES PASSING OVER PORTLAND, OREGON, EN ROUTE TO SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, ON THE COMPLETION OF THE WORK IN ALASKA



THE 1930 MODEL KEYSTONE-LOENING AMPHIBIAN AIR YACHT
Commercial Development of the Navy Loening Amphibians Used in the Alaskan Survey

This interesting story by Lieutenant Commander A. W. Radford, originally appeared in *The Aeronautic Review* of December 1929, and has been reprinted through courtesy of the National Aeronautic Association.