



—Bob McCormick, Murray 5-14

Patched Plane Takes Off—The C-46, forced down near Cobourg Dec. 20, took off from farmer's field yesterday (top) after big crowd lined snow fence to watch warm-up. Airliner was flown to Trenton. At right Lawrence Wilson, son of former Charles Wilson, helps Bobby Weaver, 7-year-old son of aircraft's engineer, into ship for last-minute inspection.

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Giant Plane Takes Off From Cobourg Field, Lands at RCAF Trenton

By JAMES HORNICK

Cobourg, Jan. 9 (Staff).—A giant silver and blue aircraft soared east into grey afternoon skies from an improvised snow runway near here today, writing a successful finish to one of the most exciting incidents of recent Cobourg history.

Ever since Dec. 20 the plane had squatted in a field on Charles Wilson's farm, half a mile to the west. On that memorable date, the 16-ton C-46 Curtiss Commando, on a non-scheduled flight from Chicago to Cleveland, had crash-landed in the field with 47 passengers and crew aboard.

Today, as Charles Rector, 43-year-old director of operations for North Continent Airlines, Burbank, Calif., lifted the craft from the runway, there was no indication it had ever been in any trouble at all. Fitted with new propellers, a new rudder, some new spark plugs and one or two other parts, it lifted into the murky skies after a run of only 900 feet.

By the time it was over No. 2 Highway, where provincial police had stopped traffic, it was 400 feet in the air. Rector turned, passed

once over the runway in salute and headed east for Trenton. Ten minutes later he landed on the RCAF field to wait for clear weather and the next leg of his homeward trip—to Malton.

Pilot Rector, a veteran of 12,800 flying hours and Gordon McBride, his 29-year-old co-pilot, hope they can get to Malton tomorrow. There they will clear customs and return to Burbank, where the craft will get a complete overhaul.

They would have gone to Malton today had the weather permitted.

From early morning the two North Continent pilots watched anxiously for a break in the heavy skies above. With only enough gas for 400 miles aboard so as to make the takeoff easier, they could not travel far. Weather reports continued to indicate that Malton was closed in. At mid-afternoon, word came there was a 2,000-foot ceiling over Trenton.

to That Decides

That decided Rector. He and McBride climbed aboard, taxied down to the south end of the 2,500-foot runway, turned, braked hard, and revved up the engines. When the props were twirling at close to maximum speed, Rector released the brakes and the big plane shot forward. The takeoff was beautifully executed.

That it was at least partly a tribute to men of Sanderson Aircraft of Malton. They executed repairs on the craft. And they built the runway. To do this, they bulldozed the snow-covered field level, then packed it down with tractors. This morning, Rector and McBride inspected it from a jeep, described it as excellent.

Rector, who began flying in 1924, logged a good part of his impressive record during the Second World War, when he spent five years as a civilian pilot with the Royal Air Force Ferry Command. In that capacity, he took aircraft out of Dorval, near Montreal, to the United Kingdom and also from Brazil to England over the South Atlantic route.

More recently he has been with North Continent, a new firm which operates two other C-45's and one Douglas DC-3. Like the Commando which took off here today, they are flown on non-scheduled runs.

Rector's craft, flying men believe, is still in service through a minor miracle. Lost for hours with a load of 44 Christmas holidayers, it was crash-landed in Wilson's field and came through almost unscathed.

All passengers and the three crew who were aboard that day escaped unhurt. Long since they have gone to their various destinations. Rector and McBride, also an official of North Continent, came up specially to take the plane back.

In the crash landing, tips of the two propellers were bent, the underbelly slightly damaged and the rudder twisted by the wind. These defects were all remedied. Rector made sure his engines were working today. He used 40 gallons of gasoline just revving them before the takeoff.

About 300 curious Cobourg citizens gathered at the field to watch the big plane leave. With them was a group of Department of Transport men, headed by Inspector Dan Saunders. All cheered as Rector and McBride departed. It was a cheerful ending to what might easily have been a tragic occurrence.

from
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