

YUKON ARCHIVES LEGACY SOUND RECORDINGS OUTLINE

Interview with Gordon R. Cameron on His Time in Yukon Aviation

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TAPE SYNOPSES

TAPE 1

Gordon R. Cameron Interviewed May 8, 2002 at Whitehorse by Colin Beairsto
1940-1946

Side A Brief discussion of Hiller 360, Fleet Freighter, fate of Ford Tri-motor CF-AZB. Birth, arrival in Whitehorse March 1941, accommodation, board, day in the life of an apprentice aviation mechanic in 1941, met wife in Edmonton. Fall out with CPA 1944. Crash of Travel Air CF-CF-BPV 1941 and fallout. Informal apprenticeship to Harold Davenport. BYN engineers, and apprentices. Pilots Kubicek, Emery, Kitley. BYN aviation- WP aviation distinction, working relationship. WP operations and aircraft, BYN operations and management. Aircraft, Keystone Commuter, Pilgrim.

Side B Pilgrim and Million Dollar valley, Boeing 247, Barkley Grow and mail runs in CPA. BYN's competitors circa 1941, Northern Airways and aircraft. Pan Am operations. Competition for Vancouver Whitehorse mail contract. Beech 18 CF-BVC crash. Discussion of BYN a/c Fairchild 82 CF-AXA, CF-AXQ (CPA), Pilgrim, Condor and washroom. Pilots on particular aircraft, Cook, Kubicek, Hollick-Kenyon's flying, Kitley. Mechanics as co-pilots. Bookwalter's quirks, Boeing 247, Lodestar. Merritt "Pasco" Boyle. Mechanics worked on any aircraft. Mechanic's 'tickets', A and C, B licence. Reliability of radio's in aircraft, antenna, frequencies. No private or corporate aircraft in Whitehorse. Cyr's Taylorcraft in Edmonton. Remains of Clyde Wann's Ryan's. Buildings at Whitehorse Airport c 1941, east side.

TAPE 2

Continuation of Gordon R. Cameron Interview May 8, 2002
1940-1950

Side A Buildings at Whitehorse Airport c. 1941, east side. Terminal building, Steamboat hangar, stores, shop, Pan Am, YSAT, VIP house, road to town, DOT quarters, garage. Briefly, buildings on west side. Runways in 1941, 1942. BYN crashes, Condor brake problems at McQuesten, engine problems at Dawson mid winter, CF-AZB caught on hangar door, Fairchild 82 CF-AXA taxied into Boeing 247 and upshot, Kingbird CF-BVG flipped over on Mayo runway c.1942 and flown back to Whitehorse, and upshot.

Side B Aircraft incidents; P-40 between runways, RCAF DC-3, Lockheed Hudson at Whitehorse slid into Puckett's gulch, F-86, F-94, Vampire, P-51, Pan Am Lodestar carriage collapsed, Pan Am and heavy traffic. Wartime aircraft traffic. P-39 crash during victory roll. Searches for missing aircraft, C-54, DC-3's by Aishihik, Robinson and south end of Whitehorse runway. Aircraft never found. C-46's hydraulic

problems. CPA twin Beech landed with gear up c.1943. Topographic surveys in north Yukon using Hiller 360's. (Note - there is a gap in the re-cording at this point, and an attempt was made to repeat the un-recorded portion of the interview in first part of tape 4) CPA used pilots as managers. CPA wartime work – Vancouver and Edmonton daily. Mayo, Dawson, Selkirk, Carmacks in Fairchild's, Boeing. George Simmons' Northern Airways did Canol work. Simmons had trapline.

TAPE 3

Continuation of Gordon R. Cameron interview May 8, 2002
1940-1955

Side A Watched Martin Berrigan build his log skyscraper. George Simmons' mink ranch on Tagish Lake. BYN pilots, Randall, Ev Wasson, Les Cook, Woods. Ernie Kubicek was main pilot, Alec Dame, Bill Emery. Arrival of American soldiers on train. Reaction of public to the massive population increase. Civilians that came up included lots of bad eggs. Restricted liquor and high prices paid for it. Not much concern about military attack on Whitehorse. Anti-aircraft guns at airport practiced from time to time. Aircraft flying in day and night. Les Cook Norseman crash. Contact with military, not much on airfield, but socially with army. Major Jacobsen, namesake of Jake's corner. Cameron's parents arrived in Whitehorse 1943 for a year. Liquor vendor and Territorial agent, Larry Higgins. RCAF a/c in Whitehorse, Norseman, sometimes DC-3; pilots Pat Ivey and Crossley. USAF a/c in Whitehorse – Liaison Officer (Skyler?) and Sgt based in Whitehorse after war. Ride in F-89 Scorpion around Whitehorse. B-17 crash in Lake Bennett at Carcross. Next day's Norseman crash at Carcross. Departure from CPA after maintenance crews cut drastically. Barney Phillips CPA VP. Letter from Howard Sugden. Signed up with army with Lloyd Rider, went through basic and advanced training, posted to ordinance corp. 1946 given industrial leave from Army.

Side B Returned to CPA at Edmonton c. 1946 doing maintenance and then back to Whitehorse. Discharged from army, a formality. Crew chief with CPA. Rex Turpeny was the superintendent. About 6 engineers. Had Fairchild 71's, a couple of Barkley Grows, Lodestars on the mainline. Pilots Harvey Johnson, Phil Iverson, Jack Chambers, Ernie Crockoff, Bill ?, Jack Farrell, Bill Roxborough. Accompanied flights regularly. Quit CPA, and went with George Milne who was starting a flying service. Canuck and a flying school, Stinson Station wagon. Amalgamated with Yukon Flying Svce (Yukon Airways), business getting better and bought out Geo. Simmons and got his Fairchild 71, bought used Beaver, had Aeronca sedan. Added Cessna 120 for school. Fairchild 71 burnt at Quiet Lake, Stinson trying to pick up load and hit cable, and Beaver CF-FHA with same load hit the beach at Fuller Lake. Callison helped out. Yukon Airways, principles, Harbottle, Hartnell, Greenslade, Wann, Harry Gordon Cooper, who came on board with Whitehorse Flying Service. Business slower, decided to sell. Milne killed in Beaver crash. With CPA - it was doing charter work as were Simmons. Harbottle and co. Sold the SeaBee when WFS and Yukon Airways were going to amalgamate. After

WFS bought NA, Pat Callison went to Dawson and Herman Peterson went to Atlin. Topographical Surveys contract, supporting Hiller 360's, Harbottle and Cam did the contract with a Beaver, and bought Norseman as standby; north of Mayo and over to Mackenzie River and ended on Thirty mile river.

TAPE 4

Gordon R. Cameron interviewed May 10, 2002 at Whitehorse by Colin Beairsto
1941-1942

Side A Meaning of "good hands and feet". General method and Hiller 360's role in doing topographical surveys; capabilities of Hiller 360's, altitude restrictions, bringing 360's out in low weather; 360's first helicopters he saw in Yukon. Left Whitehorse for Vancouver Sept 1944. Change-over from BYN aviation to YSAT/CPA. US army took over the rlwy and a US company took over the boats. With US army the rlwy went from about 2 trains per week to about 12 a day. CPA aircraft at that time – moved in Fairchild 71's, Barkley's on Whitehorse, Dawson, Mayo runs; mainline increased from Boeing 247's to Lockheed Lodestars. He was crew chief with CPA at that point. CPA personnel in 1942, Don Dixon, Ken Maclean engineers, Tommy Achison, Harold Davenport, Lloyd Ryder; managers with BYN. Ev Wasson was head of it all, and Davenport chief engineer; CPA managers 1942-1944 included Wagner, Windrom, Wop May, Hollick-Kenyon, Ted Field, Russ Baker. Other mainline carriers in Yukon, Pan Am with Lockheed 12 and then Lodestars, then DC-3's with their Navy contract, Pollock Airlines of Fairbanks using a Bellanca then a Stinson, then a Vultee. Going out on CPA, flights very full. Flying as flight engineer to Fairbanks in DC-3's; code of the day necessary for aircraft to get information over the radio; security flying into Fairbanks, blinds down and escort aircraft; flying out of Watson with Harvey Johnson as pilot one day without code of the day. Taking photographs on airfield not restricted. Control points on Alaska Highway at McCrae and Kopper King with armed guards; would get permit to go fishing at Annie Lake. Story on CPR buying out YSAT because they were suffering ship losses and could not replace the ships so they bought out airlines. People in his shop understood CPR was behind YSAT but perhaps the person on the street did not. With shortage of pilots, flight engineers or mechanics would fly in the right hand pilot seats in the Barkley's; with Lodestars the had to have 2 qualified pilots so the mechanic would fly in a passenger seat and service the a/c when it arrived at Mayo or Dawson. He'd only a limited flying experience before he came north; only learned to fly in about 1948 on Fleet Canuck CF-DPM, when he joined George Milne. Lodestars with YSAT/CPA – had two with twin row Pratt and Whitney (engines), a/c were taken back and got 2 US Army Lodestars in camouflage with Wright Whirlwind (engines) for duration of the war. Moving the a/c (boneyard) from the west side of runway to south end of the runway, a/c moved. Location of the dump at the south end of the runway. That dump covered with fill from cutting hill to construct the larger west runway.

Side B Aircraft boneyard at south end of '1941 runway' filled in and after that derelict aircraft hauled to end of cross wind runway and used for fire practice. Location of Puckett's Gulch at south end of '1941' runway; had road at one time. Had no connection with Winter Experimental establishment. Military aircraft other than Cdn and US? Lend Lease Russian, RAF Comet. Other odd a/c, USAF Globemaster, Fairchild C-23, F-84's, F-89's, P-51's, Vampires, Cdn Lancasters, one Lincoln, civilian Lancaster maybe not. Whitehorse bug spraying done by air force with a DC-3. Early civilian aircraft, Piper Cub passing up to Alaska c.1942, Noel Wien's 80A used for oversize loads. Callison in Dawson started with Fairchild 24, then a Cessna Crane, Stinson Voyager, Anson, Beaver, Cessna 180. Northern Airways in post war, pilots included Herman Peterson, Bob Randall (?), Pat Callison; Sheldon Luck in Whitehorse, taking off in a Fairchild 71, without oil in the engine. Sheldon Luck's skills as pilot. CPA had the mail contract from Whitehorse north and would sub contract to others, such as Whitehorse Flying Services, Yukon Airways. George Milne's flying career, trained in Vancouver, Fairchild 71's in Yukon, weathered in by a Dawson cold snap, CPA mainline with Lockheed 14's, Bob Richards drove cat up the tail of a Lockheed 14, Milne took instrument training, medicalled out of flying for a while, bought the Fleet Canuck and started a flying business, convinced Cameron to join the business, (Gap in the recording at this point).

Competition – from Yukon Airways was not a big concern because YA's SeaBee aircraft not popular with customers. WFS business improving and needed more pilots and staff so amalgamated with YA. Northern Airways not major competition because they were flying larger Fairchild 71's. WFS bought out NA Fairchild 71 with a non-competition agreement. Decision to join George Milne at WFS.

TAPE 5

Continuation of Gordon R. Cameron interview May 10, 2002
1948- c.1958

Side A Little contact with RCAF establishment in Whitehorse, save for getting to know pilots Crossley and Ivey. RCAF S-51 flown by Sam McGee was in search for George Milne, fell on side at Quiet Lake. Piasecki came up to replace S-51, but a rough aircraft. Work of WFS – local charters, Livingstone Creek, Carmacks, Selkirk, anywhere, in summertime on floats. Prospectors, contracts for game department, CPA sub contract for mail from Carmacks and Selkirk. Nearly lost it over Wolverine pee on mailbag. Brought in Ron and Dawn Connelly as pilot and Flying instructor for WFS. CPA aircraft after war – Fairchild 71's and Lodestars. WFS base – first in the Steamboat Hangar, then the smaller YSAT round top hangar. WFS – YA a/c at time of amalgamation included, Aeronca Sedan, Fleet Canuck, Stinson Station Wagon, Super Cruiser. Steamboat Hangar, damaged in windstorm plus stagger wing Beechcraft CF-HSK inside it. WFS float operations from Yukon River about where YTG building is in 2002. Cameron learned to fly with George Milne just after he joined WFS. Got overhaul

licence while with WFS, got ticket for Hillers after joined Pat Callison. After WFS, went to PWA, then started Glacier Aircraft Maintenance.

TAPE 6

Gordon R. Cameron interviewed May 13, 2002 at Whitehorse by Colin Beairsto
1928-1962

Side A Reviewing historic a/c photos. Clyde Wann's attempts to start airlines, lowered price of air freight, and other businesses, started highway lodges, skills in promotion rather than management. Stearman CF-ASF crash. Bob Dellart pre-heating a/c with a blowpot. Fairchild 71 – hand swinging the propeller. Carcross photo with Anson's CF-EHV "Ansonliner" modified for carrying passengers, and CF-FGM, Fairchild 24 CF-EKK, and an Anson still with air force roundel and serial number. Original White Pass Hangar, a burnt mess to the south of the Steamboat Hangar when Cameron arrived. Loening Commuter aka "Duck" in Mayo. CF-AXJ wreckage was visible off end of Dawson runway so Kubicek insisted it be destroyed. Very large CF-BLT floats stored at WP warehouses. Travel Air CF-BPV aka the Jeep. Fleet Canuck CF-DPM. Republic SeaBee, CF-FOW. Yukon Southern Hangar with Stinson and Aeronca Sedan, Whitehorse Flying Service panel truck. Fairchild Cornell CF-FON and licence renewal, repair, and various owners, and curious demise. Piper PA 12 Super Cruiser sold by WFS to ?, wrecked at Burwash, Cameron and Patterson fixed it and sold it again. CF-BXH and two Hiller 360's. Burnt frame of CF-BXH. Norseman V, CF-OBO and Beaver CF-FHA. Second WFS Beaver CF-GCY. Beaver performance vs Norseman performance, takeoffs, noise. Sikorsky S-51 flopped sideways on South Canol road. WFS facilities on the Yukon River bank. WFS operations – no dominant contracts, one winter supplied meat regularly to Tulsequa mine.

Side B Spring business, put planes on floats on the 24th of May as a habit; flew skis off shallow part at S end of LaBerge one year; landing at Selkirk on skis with no snow. Didn't do much work on wheels, as it's riskier than skis or floats in rough terrain. WP maintained a number of airstrips between Whitehorse and Dawson. Each winter Happy Lepage took cat and caboose to roll, Upper LaBerge, Fox Lake, Braeburn, Montague, Carmacks, Yukon Crossing, Stewart, McQuesten, Wounded Moose, Dawson City strips. WFS used strips if need arose. Had one of first Cessna 180's; was a good performer; replaced engine mounts; set adrift by a vandal one night. WFS's flying school – Lloyd Romfo, and also Ron and Dawn Connelly came in to fly and run school. Romfo took over Class 4 (small end) charter business when WFS sold to PWA. Most difficult/problematic part of WFS operation – red tape from DOT, plus the unlicensed gypo operators skimming business. Most enjoyable part when business running smoothly. Overdue planes make things tense. Went from 5 to 1 plane in a week, between selling, and wrecking and overdue. Reason for WFS sale to PWA – poor corporate structure of WFS. Milne. Aircraft at time of sale included 2 Beavers, FHA, GCY, one Cessna 180. PWA had no base in Whitehorse so got operation and licences in

deal. Cam was operations mgr for PWA for a time. PWA sent up another Beaver, a Junkers, an Anson. After a year started Northern Metallic Sales' Whitehorse branch, then started Glacier Aircraft Repair and Overhaul, but not enough work. Herman Peterson's 180 out of Tulsequa, Ron Connelly's Beaver GYK that collapsed in Pelly River (July 1959 crash). Joined Pat Callison's Klondike Helicopters in Dawson, one summer in Dawson. KH had three or four Bell 47 G-2's and two Hillers. Later got 2 more. In the fall, moved the operation to Whitehorse hangar. That winter, got helicopter mechanics training in Hiller facility in Paolo Alto, California. 1962 Cameron appointed commissioner of the Yukon; occasionally KH would ask him to help flying the Cessna 180. When joined KH, worked as operations manager. Very little winter business for helicopters. Comparison – Hiller more of a workhorse, hauling bigger loads to higher altitudes, while the Bell 47 took less maintenance and was very reliable. Customers would have preferences as to which helicopter. One season went out to help as a field engineer and ended up being cook for a 21 man camp.

TAPE 7

Gordon R. Cameron in Edmonton interviewed over telephone August 14, 2002 by Colin Beirsto
1940- c.1962

Side A Aviation related businesses in Whitehorse in 1940's; Weiland, Prospector Airways – Nielsen, Austin, Stretch, Cooper. Staggerwing Beech CF-HSK story. No recollection of Wellesley Lake B-24. B-25 in McArthur range. First aircraft he worked on, in BC and Yukon. First Helicopter worked on. Working on helicopters an enjoyable challenge. Favourite engine to work on – P& W Wasp Junior, worst - Jacobs. Worst aircraft to work on, Staggerwing Beech; best – Cessna 195. Working on Wright Whirlwinds, J-69's, and big single rows. Hand turning props. Notable engineers. Notable aviation events in Yukon - military exercises, looping Norseman

Side B Notable aviation events in Yukon, ride in jet fighter, military exercise. Supports for aviation in Yukon. Changes in technology and aviation practices.