



PIGEONS USED IN AIR RESCUES

S/Sgt. W. M. Burns of the civil air patrol is shown with one of the CAP's prize racing pigeons used to carry messages and film from CAP parties in the field to headquarters. Besides the CAP left of birds, Sgt. Burns has his own racing pigeons some of which are in training now in California for a pigeon derby to be flown there soon. With Sgt. Burns in the picture is Dorothy Jean Burns, the sergeant's daughter who is a pigeon fancier herself. She holds her favorite "Sugar" in her arms.

With a total of 17,888 miles already logged in training and missions this summer, work of conditioning racing pigeons used by the civil air patrol is continuing each week under the direction of S/Sgt. W. M. Burns, Reno, racing pigeon fancier.

For a long period, the birds were the only means of communication between field parties of the CAP and the headquarters in Reno. Now they are used to supplement the radio in the transmission of messages, and in addition, are used to transport maps and films from working parties in the field.

The birds have been released from planes, high in the air, by the mounted and ski patrols deep in the mountains, and from the motorized units and their bases established near the scene of a search for missing airplanes. When carrying messages, the pigeons have small capsules attached to a leg while films and maps are carried in special containers attached to the backs of the birds. In one instance, a bird carrying film reached Reno in such a speedy flight that there was time to which to develop the film before the plane, from which the bird was released, reached the Reno airport.

Training of racing pigeons to carry messages for the CAP starts when the birds are four weeks old and continues as long as the individual bird is used in the work. In some training missions, the birds have been released from as far east as Carlin and Montello and west from Vallejo and Sacramento.

Pigeons were used in search and rescue work by the Nevada wing, civil air patrol very effectively, particularly in the early days when no radio equipment was available. They are still used to send maps, overlays, and photographs.

CAP pilots and observers were taught to release pigeons out of the windows of the small CAP planes, the observer holding the bird high up under the wing and tossing him gently toward the wing tip. Air currents seem to carry the bird out under the wing to the tip where he fell off in the air tumble at the tip, circled a few times and took off for home none the worse for wear, often beating the plane home, particularly against head winds.

CAP observers learned to take pictures of difficult or obscure terrain, then working in a sort of black cloth stuff, would remove the film (pack) from the camera, and place the exposed film in a light-tight capsule and seal it. Then the capsule would be put on the bird and the bird released in the air. The photo would be rushed to the developer, given quick process (often at an airport) and enlarged projections of the photo studied. Often details from these photos revealed objects unseen by the air observer.

Birds are carried in planes, and also by horse and ski units of the Nevada CAP on rescue missions. They are surprisingly reliable and the added advantage of carrying

maps or photos is significant. Special baskets or containers have been made by Nevada CAP units to carry the birds on horseback or on a ski pack. All communications specialists are required to know how to handle the birds and to take care of them in the field.

Pigeons were used to send back maps of the area in which an army transport plane crashed in the Desotoya mountains in 1943 and from which CAP units removed 11 bodies after discovering the lost plane. The area was so remote that no telephone or telegraph lines were within 45 miles and the radio in use at that time could not reach home base. The pigeons got through heavy storms when much air traffic was grounded with their messages.

CAP pigeons have been used with success in many training problems by CAP and all units have been encouraged to use them whenever possible. The only limitation seems to be in obtaining pigeon fanciers as members.

The system in using the birds is exactly as in pigeon racing. The birds race for their home lofts, ringing a bell when they enter the loft. The owner or his family immediately rush out, remove the message and then dash to the communications section at the CAP headquarters.

The importance of the use of projected photographic enlargements in searching for aircraft wreckage cannot be overemphasized, especially in winter when the wreckage may be partly covered with snow, or in swampy or heavily brushy areas. The projected photo is studied under glasses and every detail scrutinized thoroughly. More than once objects unseen by observers in the air have been located later through these photographs.

RECEIVES TRAINING

CPL Russell B. Cornelius is nearing completion of training at the combat crew training school at Sioux City, Iowa. It was learned today. He is a radio operator in a heavy bomber crew, and entered service in February, 1943. Prior to that he was employed as railroad clerk by the Southern Pacific Co. His wife, Mrs. Ruth Cornelius, resides in Sparks.

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