

From the cabin of the Lockheed Vega owned by the Detroit News, Photographer William Kuenzel's camera records the quiet majesty of Nature and the clamor of human events

ADAPTING the AIRPLANE TO THE NEWSPAPER

*A Report Covering An Experiment
Conducted by the Detroit News*

WITH the utility of the airplane established, there comes the widening of its usefulness, its application to everyday affairs. In addition to its transporting passengers, mail and merchandise over the beaten path of the established airways, the airplane has been partially tried in numerous remote places in occupations ranging from fishing to farming. In its major field, where it is rapidly taking the status of a common carrier, much valuable information has been compiled and broadcast. But its application to the individual business has been comparatively neglected, and it is to add something useful to the record of experience in this field that this report is published. For the most part the report covers the operations of only one airplane and one business, but it is based on precise records and indicates what may be expected of aircraft in any business. Further, considering that this experience comes of an airplane's coördination with a metropolitan newspaper whose requirements for quick action and accuracy are most exacting, the results attained are indeed encouraging.

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THE Detroit *News* recently completed a year's test of airplane operations which reveals many interesting facts concerning the adaptation of air transport to the publication of a newspaper. During the period of the test, 45,961 miles were flown on 141 assignments which included news stories, aerial photography and the distribution of papers. The assignments involved 388 flights which took the plane into twenty-nine states and two Canadian provinces. All but three assignments were accomplished without a moment's delay, and there was only one assignment that could not be undertaken.

This test period was preceded by other experimental flights which began in 1912 when William E. Scripps, president of the Evening News Association, publisher of the *News*, purchased and piloted the first privately owned "flying machine" in Detroit. His pioneering was later followed by numerous experiments in which air service and airline operators were hired by the *News* for various tasks. The early flying done by Mr. Scripps demonstrated possibilities for the paper. The later experiments, leading up to August, 1929, were useful, and indicated that an air transport division of the paper similar to its automotive division might ultimately be desirable. With this in view, the degree of dependability, the cost of operating aircraft and the specific requirements of the paper were to be further defined.

Already there was an occasional demand for the speedy distribution of papers at distant points and immediate aerial service was rarely obtainable. The aeronautics editor was flying from 10,000 to 20,000 miles a year to report aviation events, and his traveling accommodations were rarely oper-

By
James V. Piersol

*Aeronautics Editor
The Detroit News*



ated on schedules that could be timed to the paper's press schedules. Detroit was experiencing a rapid expansion. Numerous highway and building projects were to be shown and aerial photography offered a new and better medium. Occasionally a big news event required fast transportation of reporters and photographers to a distant point.

This was the situation when the decision to purchase a plane was reached. To arrive at the selection of a plane numerous factors were considered. The amount of papers to be carried was arbitrarily settled at 500 pounds. A closed cabin was necessary from the standpoint of comfort and photography. Also a cantilever monoplane was necessary so there would be no lower wing or wing struts to restrict the range of the camera. Added to these and other general requirements was speed—the major requirement.

On a basis of these essentials, a Lockheed Vega powered with a Pratt & Whitney engine of 450 horsepower was selected.

Then came the matter of equipment. Because news has no regard for time or place, landing lights and other night-flying equipment were added. Special aerial cameras and accessories were made a part of the airplane equipment. Blankets, emergency rations, parachutes and other provisions were added for safety and comfort. Pontoons were added for landing on water and skis for landing on deep snow.

Finally, with a total initial investment of \$27,709.50, the plane became a ship-of-all-work, equipped to fly to the Arctic or the tropics on short notice. Frank Byerley, an Army Reserve officer with both military and commercial training, was chosen to pilot the plane. Operating plans and policies were placed under the direction of W. S. Gilmore, managing editor, and the plane was put into service on a fire department operating basis—ready for action at any time of day or night.

One of the airplane's first assignments took it to Cleveland for the National Air Races. There, photographs of the field, the crowd and the participants in some of the early events were taken and rushed back to Detroit for publication the same day. Then the plane proceeded to Pontiac airport to photograph Capt. Frank Hawks taking off for Cleveland on his first cross-country flight in a glider.

The next day the plane was put on pontoons for the International Boat Races on the Detroit River. Aerial photographs were made of the race and, as reproduced in the paper, gave spectators an unusually comprehensive picture of the course and the events.

Next came reports of a forest fire in northern Michigan. From several sections of the state, cities were reported in imminent danger of destruction. Reports from other sections were less alarming. There were conflicting reports and uncertainty as to the exact extent of the fire. Many of the fires were reported in remote places where there was valuable timber and no communication. The only way to find out the extent of the fires was to see them. They were scattered over more than 1,000 square miles. Consequently, a reporter and photographer were sent out in the *News* plane. Within one hour they were over the fire area, inspecting it first hand. Twice the plane landed for the reporter to telephone his story to the paper. Within four and one-half hours the plane had flown 768 miles and returned to Detroit with photographs and a first-hand report.

An old settlers' picnic in a distant farming community was next to call the plane. A reporter and photographer were landed near the picnic and while they gathered news of the proceedings the plane hovered overhead to photograph a parade and a placid scene recalling the ox-cart days of Michigan.

Next there came a flood. A Nor'easter whipped the Great Lakes to fury. Hundreds of homes and thousands of acres of land were flooded overnight. Quickly the plane was in the air and aerial photographs were in the paper, chronicling the plight of the stricken districts in a way that could not otherwise be equalled.

One night there was a shooting. When the smoke cleared away the wife of a prominent contractor was accused of murder. She accused her husband. He accused her. Gradually there was unfolded a story of intrigue, infidelity and mystery. The story gained nation-wide circulation. The trial came. There was a witness, a woman, missing. She could not be found, but in the course of the trial her hiding place, 300 miles away, leaked out. Almost the moment it was known, the *News* plane was in the air with a reporter and photographer. And her story was in the paper soon after.



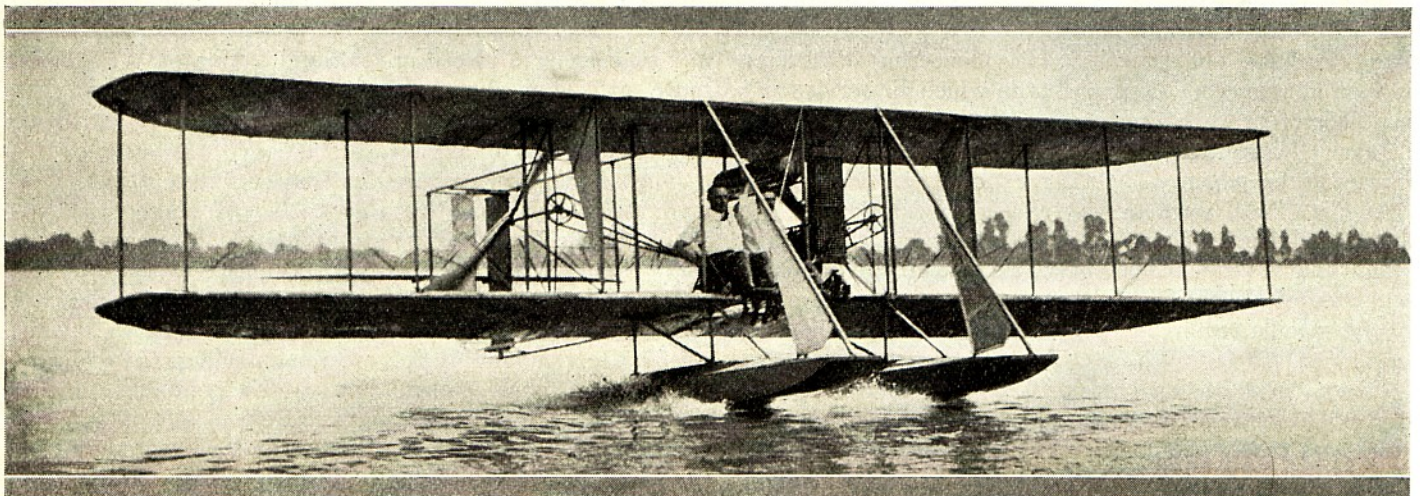
In 1912 William Kuenzel made the first aerial photograph of Detroit. Walter Brookins (left) was his pilot

Four hundred members of the Detroit Board of Commerce sailed one evening in June for their annual cruise on the Great Lakes. Next afternoon, about the time they began to wonder how the market was going and what was happening at home, the *News* plane overtook them on Lake Huron, 290 miles from Detroit. It alighted alongside and unloaded 400 papers with the closing market quotations and all the news of the hour. The papers were received with gratitude, but that was the least of the plane's utility on this occasion.

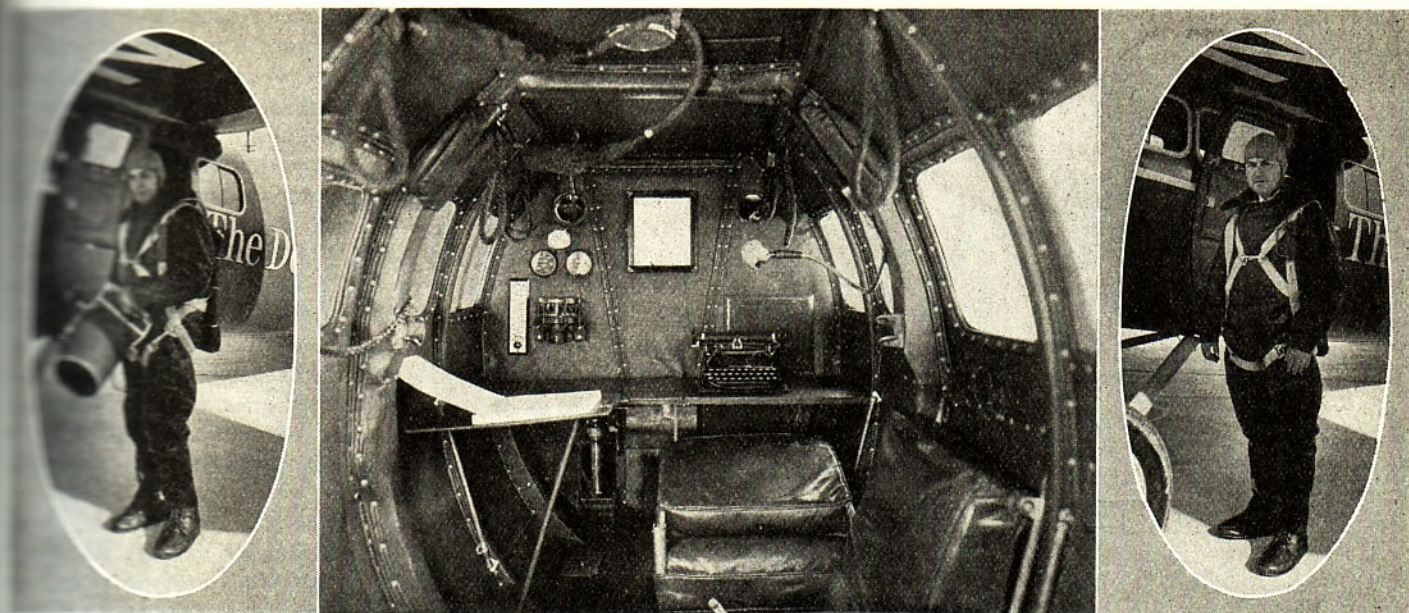
At the moment the plane landed. A. Blair Moody, Jr., a Detroit *News* reporter who had embarked with the cruisers to write the story of their trip, lay in his bunk below decks stricken with acute appendicitis. Not expecting the plane, the captain had radioed for an ambulance to meet the ship at the Straits of Mackinac. That was hours away for the ship but only a few minutes for the plane, and an operation was urgent. Mr. Moody was transferred from the ship to the plane and flown ashore where the operation was performed at a time when delay might have been fatal. The airplane returned to Detroit and continued the distribution of papers for the duration of the cruise.

At every turn in the early stages of the test the airplane was on trial. For some time after the success of its initial flights, there was still an occasional note of doubt as to whether the plane would stand the pace of the paper. On one occasion it was sent to Indianapolis for photos of an automobile race. The race was the annual 500-mile speed classic, and Detroit had never seen photographs of the event in the paper on the day of the race. Orders were issued to run an extra.

Everything was set to get the paper on the streets at a predetermined time, but nothing was said about it until the plane had landed. The plane was the only cog in the wheel the reliability of which was questioned. The paper had been running extras for fifty-seven years; everything else was certain to work. So, as soon as the plane brought



William E. Scripps, publisher of the Detroit News, in 1912 purchased a Burgess "hydroplane," the first privately owned plane in Detroit



Only experienced personnel, working with the most complete equipment, can qualify in the aerial service of a modern newspaper. The Detroit News chose William Kuenzel (left) as photographer, Frank Byerley (right) as pilot, and a Lockheed Vega plane

in the pictures, the forthcoming extra was announced over WWJ, the News radio station. But it was fully two hours before the extra was off the presses when it should have been off in a few minutes. When an investigation was made to locate the trouble, it was found that the plane was fifteen minutes ahead of schedule, but another department with nearly half a century of experience had slipped. After that there was not so much concern about the plane, and its operation finally became a part of the paper's everyday affairs.

At the conclusion of the test period the airplane's 141 assignments were divided into four categories for analysis. Sixty-one were placed in the category of routine affairs. Three assignments included flights to contact airports, aircraft factories and other news sources. In this work the plane was periodically piloted by the aeronautics editor to test the condition of the plane and to contact news sources.

Thirteen of the assignments came under the category of calendar events. These called for aerial photographs to be made and filed for publication coincident with an event to transpire later. This included photographs of new buildings to be opened on a certain date, the dedication of an international bridge and the opening of a new highway. On one of these assignments, a photograph was made from 18,000 feet, showing 400 square miles including Detroit and the vicinity.

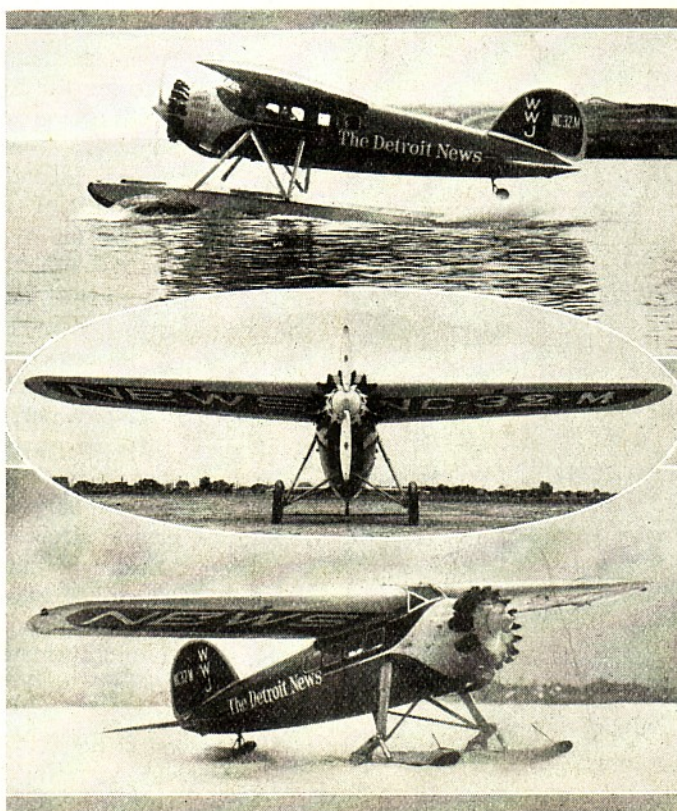
Fifty-seven times the plane was used on "spot news" assignments. These included the Columbus, Ohio, prison riot in which 320 prisoners were shot or burned to death,

the Indianapolis race, rum running activities, several big fires, the National Air Tour and the National Air Races.

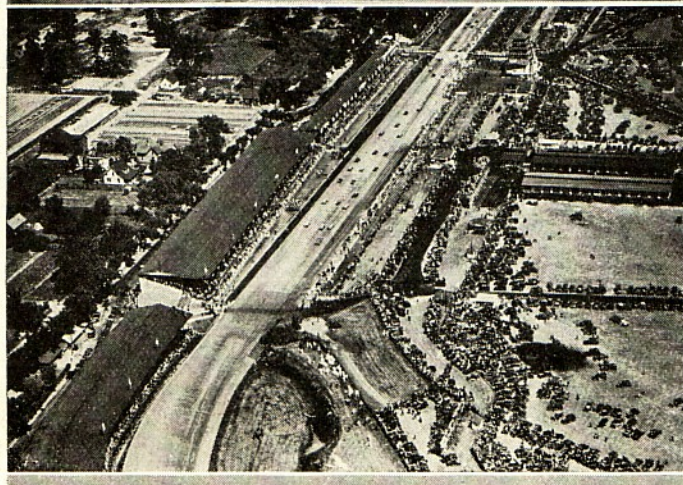
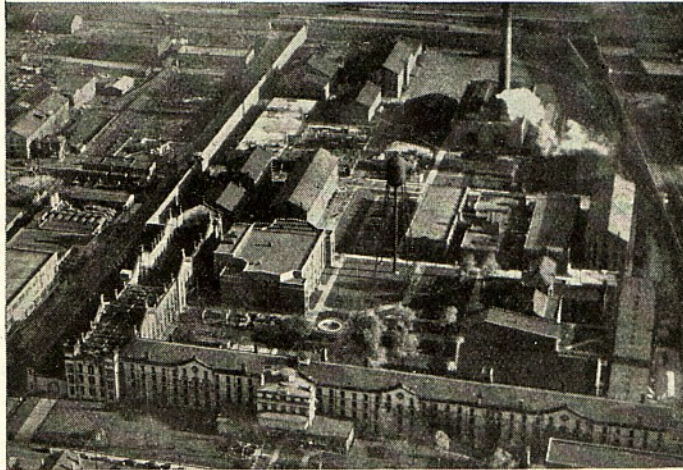
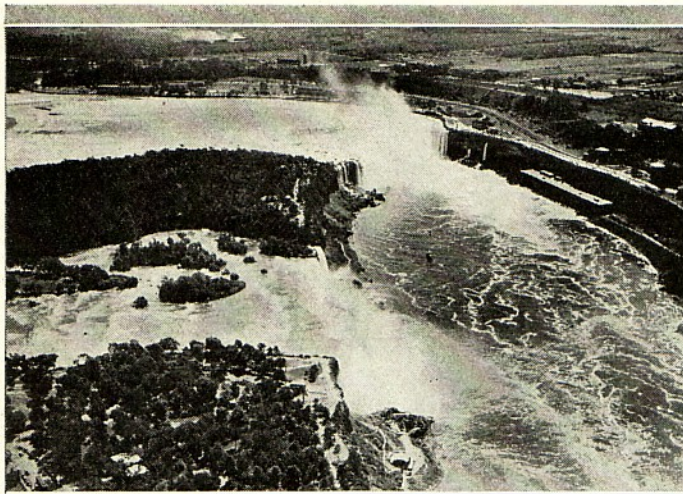
The fourth category includes ten special assignments. Among these was a search for a missing ship on the Great Lakes and the delivery of pine tree seedlings in connection with a reforestation program sponsored by the paper. In the delivery of the trees, 30,000 seedlings were transported from the state nurseries at Lansing to the planting grounds in the northern part of the state. At the same time aerial photographs of the planting were made for publication, and the plane thus served two purposes in one assignment.

Other combination assignments in the "special" category included sending the plane to Florida for pictures of the opening of the Detroit baseball team's spring practice. For the trip, the course was laid out in a round-about way to get photographs of numerous cities, Government works and monuments of national importance. In one day the plane covered 1,000 miles and was in the air seven hours and thirteen minutes. During that time it was the means of making eleven striking aerial photographs which included the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln at Hodgenville, Kentucky, the power development at Muscle Shoals, Alabama, and Lookout Mountain at Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The following day brought photographs of prominent winter resorts where there were numerous Detroiters. The route was laid out and timed for the arrival of the plane at Tampa coincident with the opening of baseball practice. As soon as the Tigers were in their uniforms the plane was on the way back to Detroit. The pictures



News has no regard for time and place, and the airplane in quest of it must be able to operate from land, water or snow



The News fliers find many interesting events and scenes to photograph from the air: Top to bottom, Niagara Falls, the Columbus, Ohio, prison after the fire and outbreak, a Michigan flood and the annual automobile race at Indianapolis

of the ball players and the scene of practice were in the paper the next day, thirty hours ahead of any other Detroit paper. This was followed by additional photographs of the players and Southern scenes published in the roto-gravure section the following Sunday.

The aerial photography was done by William A. Kuenzel, manager of the photographic department of the Detroit *News*. During the year's test, 173 aerial photos were published in the various sections of the paper. In addition, 113 were used in the paper's institutional advertising. At the conclusion of the test period more than 500 additional pictures were on file for use in the future.

Among the numerous inquiries regarding our experience there have been four dominating questions, including the dependability, service, cost and advertising value of operating the airplane. The substance of each question and the answer is as follows:

(1) *Is the airplane dependable?*

Only three times was there any delay in carrying out the 141 assignments. Weather conditions delayed two. On one occasion the pilot was occupied elsewhere, causing a delay of one hour in locating him. The one assignment which could not be undertaken called for the plane to take off on bare ground and to land where there was several feet of snow. The skis could not be used to take off on bare ground and the snow was too deep to permit the plane to land safely on wheels. Tests of a combination of ski and wheel which is designed to eliminate this difficulty are now scheduled.

(2) *Do the aircraft companies provide prompt replacement and repair service?*

During the test period there were seventeen days in which the airplane was tied up for replacements and repairs. Seven days were occupied by work on the engine and ten days by work on the plane. Other factors made maintenance complicated, and our experience in general showed there is little provision for repair and replacement service for the owner of the individual plane. When it came time for an engine overhaul, we had our choice of flying the plane 165 miles to the nearest authorized repair station of the engine manufacturer or imposing on an airline operator to get the work done. When it came to the replacement of airplane parts and accessories, they had to be shipped anywhere from 100 to 2,000 miles, or be made by hand at considerable expense.

However, the lack of prompt service is not to be taken as a reflection on the makers of our particular plane or engine, or on the other fifty-nine manufacturers whose products are a part of our flying equipment. We believe this condition is general in the aircraft industry. We acknowledge it in answering numerous inquiries on this point, as a matter of fairness to the aircraft makers, owners and potential owners who want to know the shortcomings of airplane ownership so that they can be overcome. Further, lack of prompt service is emphasized because we believe it is the greatest single hindrance to the adaptation of the airplane to individual use. Service has improved considerably in recent months, but we believe the lack of it still is the cause of ninety per cent of the dissatisfaction among individual owners. There must be much greater improvement before planes will be numerous in everyday affairs and before the aircraft industry will fully develop.

(3) *What is the cost of operating a plane?*

The cost of operating the *News'* plane during the test period was sixty-two cents a mile. This figure includes the pilot's salary, the salary paid a mechanic's apprentice, complete insurance coverage, depreciation, hangar rent and all

other items involved in maintaining and operating the plane. This figure is considered high in some quarters and low in others, and it is not to be taken as a standard of measurement. Costs vary according to the size, horsepower and performance of the type. Some planes can be operated for considerably less than this. Others cost three times as much. There is a variation in every case. In this case the cost of operation probably is a little more than the average of the same type because of its exacting work and the maintenance of special equipment required to keep the plane ready for safe and speedy action under all conditions.

(4) *Aside from the service rendered by the plane, do you consider it good advertising or of any other value?*

In a merchandising sense it is not advertising. However, the use of a plane has features that may be interpreted as advertising. Some of them are good advertising and some of them bad. All of them are involved in its appearance and use. This airplane was painted according to a carefully drawn color scheme dominated by a peculiar shade of red. A similar color was in use on the paper's automobiles and other vehicles for many years. But it was simply red. Within the last six months, however, one of the country's largest paint manufacturers has put a special aircraft lacquer on the market and labeled it the Detroit News Red.

The plane was named after the paper, and its name was painted on the fuselage. The wing bore the word NEWS. Thus it was easily identified, and it is estimated that more than 3,000,000 persons saw it close enough to read its name. When it was seen loading or unloading reporters and photographers to cover an important news event, when it was seen loading or unloading papers, whenever it manifested a usefulness of any kind, the publishers and editors received considerable favorable comment. On other occasions the public's reaction was not favorable.

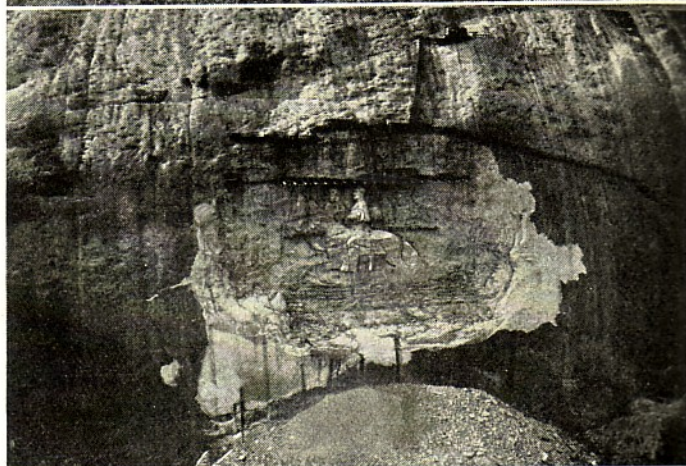
The plane was often over airport crowds and other gatherings which figured in the news of the day. The pictures made from it often brought favorable comment from the paper's readers, but not always. On one occasion the plane was flown around a stadium containing 90,000 persons attending a football game, and the pilot flew a little lower than usual to satisfy the photographer. He was above the minimum altitude prescribed by the air traffic rules and outside the rim of the bowl, but the audience sensed the fact that he was closer than necessary and the paper received numerous protests. At other times, when the plane appeared to be idle there were whispers of waste—an expensive luxury.

These experiences bring us to the conclusion that the advertising value of the airplane in any business is proportionate to its utility and not in proportion to its novelty.

Above anything that may be considered, aside from the service rendered by the *News'* plane, we value the experience it has given us. It has further defined the requirements of the air transport division of the paper and has brought us in closer contact with the aircraft industry. From this we have learned more of the industry's problems and possibilities, and have found its future more promising than ever.

In addition, it has been useful in another way. It has added a note in maintaining the morale of the paper's 1,600 employees. The plane became one of those little symbols of progress all men like to see in the organization to which they devote their labors. This was illustrated when a reporter from another newspaper complained to one of our staff photographers that he was not able ade-

(Continued on page 122)



Aerial photos often tell a story words alone cannot convey: Top to bottom, the Goodyear-Zeppelin shed at Akron, a forest fire in Michigan, Lee Memorial on Stone Mountain in Georgia, the city of Detroit from an altitude of 18,000 feet

YOUR CREDENTIALS

to the aviation
industry...

A BOEING DIPLOMA!

Until you have proved yourself, you will be judged
merely by the kind of training your school offers.

Boeing training commands the respect of employers.
They know the record of the Boeing System in flying
1,000,000 miles over the San Francisco-Chicago and
Seattle-Los Angeles mail, express and passenger routes.
They know the international reputation of the Boeing
Aircraft Company, which has been building commer-
cial, Army and Navy planes for sixteen years. This
school has the same high standards.

That's why a Boeing diploma is the best indorsement
you can have when you knock at the industry's door.

Learn to fly this winter. Hours in the air are what count
in flying instruction. Oakland's mild winter climate makes
it as easy to fly in January as in June. Average winter
temperature is 50° F. There is no snow.

The following courses begin January 5 and April 5,
1931: Master Pilot, Master Mechanic, Transport Pilot,
Limited Commercial Pilot and Private Pilot.

The coupon below will bring you full details. Mail it
today!

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Room 1-A, Airport, Oakland, California

Gentlemen: I am interested in

- ☐ Private Pilot ☐ Boeing Master Pilot
☐ Limited Commercial Pilot ☐ Boeing Master Mechanic
☐ Transport Pilot

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

ADAPTING THE AIRPLANE

(Continued from page 39)

quately to cover a big aircraft event because there was no
plane to carry him. The photographer replied: "If you
worked for a regular sheet, you'd have transportation like
we've got."

Another illustration of the staff's attitude toward the
airplane is illustrated by a brief report made to the manag-
ing editor by John M. Carlisle, a reporter who was flown
425 miles on an assignment.

Excerpts from the report are as follows:

"On the St. Louis graft story, we made St. Louis from
Detroit in three hours and fifteen minutes in the *News'*
plane on usual cruising speed. It was a beautiful trip. I
read 100 pages of a novel en route. I came back by train
because of circumstances. It took me more than thirteen
hours because the train killed two motorists in Illinois.
The normal train time is twelve hours."

USING THE AIRPLANE FOR BUSINESS

(Continued from page 51)

airplanes for business purposes has more than proved the
value of this means of transportation. In addition to the
three planes used in Richfield Oil Company's department of
aviation for purely business purposes, we also have a large
trimotored Fokker which has covered many thousands of
miles. It is used exclusively for our executive personnel
on business trips throughout the United States. This plane
has flown a total of 1,000 hours, covering 120,000 miles
without a single accident or injury.

Below is a transcript of my log for sixty days, show-
ing the various points which I have covered in an airplane,
the time it took to fly these distances, and the same time
it would take to cover them in an automobile and a train.
We do not feel that it is necessary to compare the costs be-
cause the time saved will more than offset the slightly in-
creased cost which an airplane at present has over transpor-
tation by automobile or train. The automobile time has
been computed figuring a naverage speed of thirty-five miles
per hour; the flying time has been figured at an average
speed of 100 miles per hour; and the railroad time is taken
from the various routes.

	Distance Miles	Flying Automobile Railroad Time Time Time		
		Hrs. Min.	Hrs. Min.	Hrs. Min.
July				
24 Los Angeles to Stockton, Calif.....	353	3:45	10:00	11:53
25 Stockton to Montague, Calif.....	323	2:35	9:08	14:04
26 Montague to Portland, Oregon.....	362	2:40	10:12	13:56
29 Portland to Yakima, Washington...	210	1:25	6:00	25:23
30 Yakima to Spokane, Washington...	254	2:05	7:09	6:45
31 Spokane to Clarkston, Idaho.....	133	2:10	3:28	5:40
Aug.				
1 Clarkston to Baker, Oregon.....	250	1:45	6:40	15:27
2 Baker to Portland, Oregon.....	335	2:55	9:20	11:20
3 Portland to Salem, Oregon.....	204	1:15	5:29	15:50
4 Salem to Medford, Oregon.....	253	2:05	7:08	9:25
5 Medford to Corvallis, Oregon.....	318	2:10	8:38	12:25
6 Corvallis to Tacoma, Washington....	247	2:10	7:02	7:28
7 Tacoma to Seattle, Washington.....	98	1:20	2:28	3:43
8 Seattle to Portland, Oregon.....	354	2:55	10:04	18:20
9 Portland to San Francisco, Calif....	704	5:30	20:04	25:00
10 Oakland to Los Angeles, Calif.....	409	3:50	11:15	10:51
16 Los Angeles to Albuquerque, N. M..	916	6:20	26:00	23:04
17 Albuquerque to Pueblo, Colorado...	604	4:55	17:10	18:05
18 Pueblo to Wichita, Kansas.....	738	5:45	21:03	23:15
19 Wichita to Kansas City, Missouri...	242	1:50	6:32	5:45
21 Kansas City to St. Louis, Missouri...	256	2:25	7:11	7:40
22 St. Louis to Chicago, Ill.....	309	3:20	8:29	7:00
Sept.				
2 Chicago to Dayton, Ohio.....	283	3:05	7:38	8:15
4 Dayton to Columbus, Ohio.....	70	0:45	2:00	2:16
5 Columbus to Washington, D. C.....	395	3:00	11:10	14:25
12 Washington to New York, N. Y.....	248	2:15	7:03	5:54
15 New York to Bristol, Pa., to New York, N. Y.....	147	1:55	3:42	4:28
18 New York to Buffalo, N. Y.....	425	4:30	12:05	10:20
19 Buffalo to Detroit, Michigan.....	236	2:50	6:26	5:25
20 Detroit to Chicago, Ill.....	300	2:40	8:20	6:00
21 Chicago to Wichita, Kansas.....	807	6:35	23:02	19:15
22 Wichita to Albuquerque, N. M.....	764	7:15	21:29	22:55
23 Albuquerque to Los Angeles, Calif..	916	7:50	26:06	23:04
GRAND TOTAL.....	12,463	107:50	349:31	414:36