



Above:  
A Sabena S-55 taking off from the temporary  
helicopter station near Waterloo Bridge in the  
heart of London.

Cover:  
The Midnight Sun, Bromma Airport, Stockholm.  
(Kodachrome by W. J. Haley)



## AIR WORLD

Edited by Leonard Bridgman

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◀ Aircraft are constantly shuttling the 35 miles between The Pas and Moose Lake, where the Lamb trading-post is located. Supplies for the stores are here seen ready to be loaded into a Cessna 170 by an Indian workman while Tom Lamb looks on.

## The Flying Lambs

AN unusual bush-flying service began in 1935 when Tom Lamb of The Pas, Manitoba, bought his first aeroplane, a Stinson. Lamb was induced to get into flying literally by accident. He had been netting fish through the ice at William Lake and sending his frozen fish by horse and truck relay to the nearest station on the Hudson Bay Railway. One after another the trucks broke down on the rough roads and when one day a bush pilot landed nearby Lamb hired him to fly the fish out. The air freight rates were only a little higher than those by truck and the speed was worth it.

The next logical step was for Lamb to acquire his own aeroplane, and having bought one he had to learn to fly it.

To-day Tom Lamb and five of his six sons pilot the five aeroplanes of Lamb Airways anywhere in the north country of Canada. Tom himself has flown mileages equal to more than 50 times around the World. To him there is no romance in flying. A plane is simply a useful tool, and he keeps his tools in prime condition. Two of the Lamb boys are particularly skilled in maintenance work. Like their father, the boys are involved in many different enterprises, such as tractor-freighting, construction, pioneering in cattle ranching, and they have grown up with the muskrat-ranching which Tom Lamb started in 1930.

The Pas in north-western Manitoba, is a frontier town with a population of some 4,000. A little mixed farming

is carried on in the neighbourhood, but The Pas is chiefly a distributing centre, a "jumping-off place" for the North. It is surrounded by vast marshes which Tom Lamb's foresight brought back into muskrat production, and which afford a livelihood to hundreds of Cree Indians. Lamb's flying base is at Grace Lake, several miles east of The Pas, where he bases his two Norsemen, two Cessna 170's and a recently-purchased Cessna 180.

Lamb's first advertisement of his air services appeared in the weekly paper at The Pas, and is a key to the country and its problem:



Three of the "Flying Lambs," from left to right, Douglas (18), ▶ Tom the father, and Jack (20). Rarely are all the five brothers at home at one and the same time.

“On practically every overland trip in the North, you will have to move your stuff over ‘the long portage’. It may be a couple of hundred yards. It may be a couple of miles. But you know it is ‘a long portage’, and it is tough. You can beat ‘the long portage’ by travelling via Lamb Airways Ltd. Fly over it. You may as well save your temper and your time.”

No advertisement could have appealed more effectively to those with experience of the North, to men who had paddled and portaged through the wild country where rivers are the only highways, and each one is strewn with rapids.

That still holds good for much of the Province of Manitoba. Some parts are accessible during the Winter by trails over which tractors haul loads of freight in a string of sleighs. Roads are still few, and the remote lakes and mines and trading-posts still depend upon the services of the bush pilot. Lamb Airways do considerable charter flying, taking prospectors in to new country, carrying trappers to remote trap-lines, and tourists to un-fished lakes. The pilot returns at a specified date, an appointment which is a sacred trust.

During the course of his experience in flying Lamb has developed several ideas of his own which have been put to use in his aeroplanes. He uses special axles so that the winter skis can be easily jacked up to prevent them freezing to the ground; a rubber bag which fits the entire cargo space of the cabin to carry fresh-killed animals or fish; heat vents in the cabin walls instead of in the floors, to prevent hot air spoiling perishable cargo; and special plywood tips to the tailplane in place of the usual fabric covering, which was always getting pinched-through.

For six months of the year, Lamb Airways operates on skis, the rest of the year on pontoons. A high upright gin-pole brought out from the bush serves to lift the plane to change the landing-gear. A mobile shed can be drawn on to the ice in Winter and is used as a nose-hangar during winter overhauls.

Lamb, the son of an ex-Guardsman, turned missionary, teacher and backwoods trader, grew up among the Cree Indians, speaks their language fluently and, above all, knows their problems intimately. His most memorable achievement, after purchasing his father's trading-post in 1927, was to re-establish the muskrat-producing marshes. He had canals dug, impounded water with dams and dykes, protected the breeding stock, and in a few years restored prosperity to the Indians.

So successful was the project on Lamb's 54,000-acre marsh leased from the Government, that the Province promptly adopted the idea, with equal success. Lamb Airways flies Indian and half-breed trappers in to both marshes for ten days or three weeks of trapping. Then the planes fetch the trappers, their families and their pelts out again. In 1947, Lamb was asked to take over management of a muskrat ranch in Saskatchewan covering 300,000 acres of marsh, which he is slowly bringing back into production.

Only rarely does Lamb leave his native region. But he has travelled from the sub-arctic to the sub-antarctic by air. In 1946 he played nursemaid to ten pairs of Manitoba beaver which were being transported to Tierra del Fuego. Lamb's Indian workmen live-trapped the beaver, and he flew them to Montreal, thence to Miami, and beyond to Buenos Aires. Here the beaver



▲ Cree Indians wait on the ice with their gear ready to embark in a Cessna 170 for the trapping grounds. The trapping season is a holiday time in spite of the work involved.



◀ Lamb Airways' base at Grace Lake, about 3½ miles east of The Pas.



◀ A trapper and his wife stand by their pile of goods at Moose Lake waiting to be flown to their muskrat trapping marsh twenty-four miles to the east.

and their guardian transferred to a Canso flying-boat, made available by the Argentine Government, and flew to Ushuaia, the World's most southerly town. The beaver were established at a marshy lake east of the Andes and are flourishing.

Many of the flights made by Lamb Airways have been in the service of the National Health and Welfare Department, and many more have been mercy flights, bringing in sick Indians or injured trappers or prospectors. Lamb has made many tours with the doctor of the Indian Services, vaccinating natives against diphtheria, and treating minor ailments. Jack Lamb, fourth son, recently answered a call to pick up a deranged patient at a remote trading-post. He and the doctor managed to give the woman a sedative, and the flight went off without difficulty.

Tom Lamb keeps in constant touch with his widespread empire by means of radiophones which connect his office at The Pas with the trading-post at Moose Lake, with various fishing headquarters, with his aircraft and with the tractor transport base at Wabowden.

Few transportation problems daunt the Lamb Airways, with its vast experience in moving supplies and equipment by tractor, truck, launch, barge or plane. In 1950, the International Nickel Company wanted mining equipment hauled out from Churchill 300 miles across the Barrens, west of Hudson Bay, in order to explore a large nickel prospect. Freight and tractors and sleighs went by rail north to Churchill then set out across the frozen Barrens.

So far from supplies and shops, endless tractor trouble

developed with consequent delays. That year Spring came early so that the tractors had to leave their freight and rattle back to the railhead before the ice broke up in the intervening rivers. Lamb promptly arranged an air-lift to complete deliveries.

Trouble followed there, too. Word came that Greg Lamb had crashed on an ice floe when his engine failed. At once his father loaded a plane at The Pas with extra gasoline, enough for the round trip. The snow was gone at The Pas so Lamb took off on pontoons, but was dismayed to find all the lakes near the crash still frozen. All but one, which was 25 miles distant. He landed there and plodded across the Barrens.

By this time the ice had tilted and dumped the aircraft into shallow water. It took ten days to get the plane ashore, since the treeless country provided no poles. Once ashore, the plane received temporary repairs so that Greg, Lamb's eldest son, could pilot it to a repair depot in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

Tom Lamb returned to his own plane only to find that the wind had battered the pontoons against the rocks, puncturing one of them. He remembered a trick the Indians used in plugging holes in their canoes. He chopped up some ends of rope, mixed them with butter and used that mixture as a patch until he could get the proper repairs done.

Undaunted by such experiences on the Barrens, in 1952 Lamb Airways was the only bush line to bid on a risky job serving a party of 17 Government geologists in the Northwest Territories. Greg Lamb took on the job of ferrying supplies and gasoline, the latter for two helicopters used by the party. That entire Summer, he served as an aerial packhorse, moving men and equipment each time the geological camp shifted to a new location. By such means, considerably more exploration can be accomplished in a single season.

An added facet to the extraordinary Lamb story is the keen interest taken in beef-cattle ranching in the region around The Pas. To-day the pilots of Lamb Airways are constantly questioning northerners on their experience with grains and grasses, building up a composite picture of agriculture in northern regions. The Lambs have pushed back the frontiers of the Canadian north by tractor, dragline and aeroplane. Now they are going to use the ploughshare as well.

The latest development ▶ in the Lamb enterprise is farming in the Delta of the Saskatchewan River, a dozen miles from the Lamb trading-post at Moose Lake. Here, Tom Lamb watches an Indian spreading fodder on the snow for fat beef cattle.

