

An advocate of flying in the subarctic when few believed it could be done, Fish is very much in his element as the C.O. of a snow-decorated base that pushes scores of planes onto the fighting fronts with great regularity.

► **GOOSE BAY, LABRADOR**—They are eager young boys who in peaceful times would be playing on college football teams and horsing around fraternity houses. They are young airmen of the war—pilots, co-pilots, navigators—the men who fly and guide the flying machines of the Army Air Force Europe-bound.

The big, barnlike briefing room is filled with them, listening with impatient attention to the Air Transport Command briefing officer, a major sitting on the corner of the desk in front—a sort of coach or professor. It is quite a game to be playing. Crossing the North Atlantic for their first time—Labrador to Iceland direct—with full responsibility for ships worth hundreds of thousands of dollars and the ten lives aboard the giant B-17s and B-24s. Greater responsibility than that, in fact, for in a few weeks they are to spearhead in the air our drives upon Germany.

Outside on the airfield their crew chiefs and other crew members are warming up the engines in the winter evening cold, checking and then checking again the hundreds of pieces of equipment that must be kept in order on a big bomber that it may fly speedily and safely. In another briefing room, the radio operators are being told the details of their jobs on the hop to begin in a few hours—how to call this station and that and how to use radio aids to aviation that now mark airways on icy oceans.

"We'll have a movie first," says the major. A screen drops down over the background of maps and charts. "Confidential" warns the opening flash.

This is old stuff to these lads, almost everything they work with is marked "confidential" or "secret." With quiet confidence the movie narrator's voice points the screen story of the trip to come—how to take off from Goose Bay, what next landmark and radio range to watch for, what to expect in Davis strait. Greenland's mountains and ice cap are shown rising out of the sea. The way up a fjord to the American Air Transport Command on Greenland's southern tip, BW1, is shown.

"We don't expect you to have to land here but here is the way to do it if you

have to," the briefing movie says.

We of the press knew it could be done, for our airplane had done it a few days earlier.

"Minimum altitude for contact flying over the ice cap is 11,000 feet," the briefing movie warns. "Out over the sea again on the way to Iceland halfway to this journey's end, check on this radio range, calls this station to let them know where you are and when you expect to arrive (E T A is the way 'estimated time of arrival' is said over the radio). Then the approaches to Meeks Field circle this way, please call in at this point. The runway is so wide and so long. Then there is a field at Reykjavik that you may have to use if you do come in this way. Your alternate (meaning the field the plane will be headed for if weather is unexpectedly bad at Meeks Field) is in the United Kingdom."

Yes, you will have enough gas to get there if you have to. And the movie shows the way, although seldom does any pilot need to head there. "Oh, yes," the briefing movie voice seems to say as a sort of after-thought, "there is an emergency field farther north on the east coast of Greenland, BE2, that we don't expect you to use, but here is the way to it."

And the pilots saw what we had seen a few days before when we had flown the same route to inspect this aviation outpost from the air. The towering mountains that surround the little landing strip at BE2 were good for a laugh from the pilots.

So ended a very effective educational movie—but unlike one in school it may have given life-or-death information.

"Now that you see all that scenery" said the major, taking over from the screen, "we are going to send you on a rhumb line route that will pass miles away from Greenland."

About radio information you receive enroute, explained the major, don't rely on it absolutely. Check it with dead reckoning. Occasionally a German submarine will try to give you false radio bearings or jam a radio range, but that does not happen often and you have plenty of ways to check on such false information.

Now the weatherman has arrived with a stack of flight plans, codes, etc., that chart in three dimensions the way that these boys will fly from America to Iceland. Tonight the most favorable altitude is so many thousands of feet. There is no cause for worry about the weather, no icing is expected; which is pleasing prognostication because ice on wings and



**START CLIMBING, SOLDIER!**—*This is the slogan at Northington General Hospital in Tuscaloosa, Ala., where the Army's reconditioning program is in full swing (See SNL, Dec. 9). A man with an injured leg is seen on the hospital's obstacle course.*

in carburetors is one of the great dangers of winter flying.

"We have been working on this forecast for the last 24 hours," the meteorologist tells the pilots and aviators. "Hundreds of weather observers in the Far North as well as in Greenland have sent in their reports. Planes have reported from the very areas you will fly. We believe that we are telling you just what kind of weather you will run into—and it's good flying weather. You'll have a good crossing."

Questions? Just a few.

"O.K.," says the briefing major, "make out your clearances, pick up your flight lunches, be sure you have all your charts and papers. Please be careful in taxiing to take-off position. Get going, gentlemen."

The night noises of Goose Bay plateau, with its scrub spruce, consist of roaring engines, screeching brakes, the sweeping up-roar of take-offs. Another air fleet is off to war.

P.S. They all got to Iceland safely, about 10 hours after take-off from Goose Bay, including that young pilot who during briefing was fondly playing with a deflated football.

*Science News Letter, December 16, 1944*

*Sugar* is a pure organic compound that is prepared in the United States in much larger quantity than any other.