



WIDE-BLADED PROPELLER—Engineers check the latest Hamilton Standard propeller on its final test run. Designed for the U. S. Navy, it has the widest blades of any propeller ever built.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Parrot Smuggling Danger

► POLLY THE Parrot and her brightly feathered relatives have been giving Uncle Sam's customs officers a hard time. They even gave one of the officers an attack of the life-threatening disease, parrot fever, or psittacosis.

Because of this disease, the U. S. Public Health Service has a quarantine regulation forbidding entry to this country of any bird of the parrot, or psittacine, family. This includes parakeets and love birds. Only exceptions are birds being imported by zoological parks, by institutions for medical research and, very occasionally, by a family that has been living abroad and had the bird for several years.

The quarantine regulation is enforced by Treasury Department customs officers. During the past year, reports Commissioner of Customs Frank Dow, large numbers of these birds were brought into Mexico from Belgium and Holland, intended for the lucrative United States market. The potentials of this illicit business have been estimated at as high as a quarter of a million dollars a year.

Runners, Mr. Dow explains, attempt to deliver the birds to confederates on the U. S. side of border at isolated points, or use trick cages concealed in automobiles moving through regular ports of entry.

Custom officers have seized thousands of birds and made scores of arrests to stop this smuggling. Birds valued at \$30,000 were

taken as a result of a single investigation in the San Diego, Calif., area. Texas border points also have been "hot spots" in the racket.

The outbreak of parrot fever starting in Florida about a year ago is believed to have come from smuggled birds.

Parrot fever is caused by a virus. It attacks the lungs and is marked by high fever. Birds other than the parrot family get the disease and pass it along to humans. There were 90 cases among workers in a poultry processing plant in Texas. In Pennsylvania there has been some indication that human cases came from canaries. Pigeons have also been found guilty of spreading this disease. It got its name from parrots, however, because it was to these birds that doctors first traced the human sickness.

Science News Letter, February 28, 1953

INVENTION

Patent Toy Gun To Blow Smoke Rings

► A TOY gun invented by Thomas M. Shelton, Glendale, Calif., blows smoke rings. Smoke is produced with a star-shaped cartridge, the points of which are coated with a smoke-producing material. The smoke goes into a smoke chamber and is emitted from the barrel in the form of rings. Patent number is 2,628,450.

Science News Letter, February 28, 1953

AERONAUTICS

Wide-Bladed Prop Slated To Power Navy Transport

► A NEW square-tipped, hollow, steel propeller having the widest blades ever built soon will be added to a U. S. Navy plane to step up take-off thrust of the engines and to raise flying performance of the plane.

Now in limited production at Windsor Locks, Conn., the propeller combines with a 5,500 horsepower Pratt & Whitney Aircraft T-34 turboprop engine to give more propulsive thrust for take-off than any other propeller-engine combination, reports Erle Martin, general manager of United Aircraft's Hamilton Standard division.

The Navy picked the propeller to power its R7V-2 turboprop version of Lockheed's Super-Constellation transport. Although the Navy says it does not have even a "guesstimate" of when the R7V-2 will take to the air, Mr. Martin said it should fly this year.

The propeller's hollow blades are supported internally by a steel core. A vulcanized synthetic sponge is packed into the air spaces to support the outer shell of the blades. The prop can be adapted to work on planes flying faster than 500 miles an hour driven by engines of more than 9,000 horsepower.

Science News Letter, February 28, 1953

MEDICINE

Drug Tells Early of Impending Toxemia

► TOXEMIA OF pregnancy, which takes an annual toll of 1,500 mothers' and 30,000 infants' lives, can be detected as early as the fifth month of pregnancy by a test announced by Dr. Nicholas S. Assali, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine.

The test is based on the finding that pregnant women need much less spinal anesthetic than non-pregnant persons, and that they are susceptible to fainting. The reason is that in normal pregnant women, particularly after the sixth month, the sympathetic nervous system becomes very active and takes over almost entirely control of blood pressure.

The new test consists in injecting a synthetic drug, tetraethylammonium chloride, or TEAC for short. This blocks the sympathetic nervous system, giving an effect similar to that of spinal anesthesia.

If there is a significant fall in blood pressure following this injection, toxemia is not likely to develop. If the blood pressure does not fall, it is possible the patient is heading for toxemia. This advance warning could enable obstetricians to take preventive measures, Dr. Assali said in reporting the test to the Obstetrical and Gynecological Assembly of Southern California meeting in Los Angeles.

The test has been used about 1,000 times, he said, and proved helpful in detecting toxemia in about 85% of the cases.

Science News Letter, February 28, 1953