

monia is apt to set in. In any case, a badly oiled bird becomes unable to fly, and hence unable to seek its food.

Oil slicks on the water are deceptive death-traps. To birds, weary of flying, they are likely to look like patches of smooth water. Only when the luckless fowl has settled on one of them does it realize its mistake, and then it is too late. Sometimes, too, a duck will dive somewhere outside the boundary of an oil slick and come up in the midst of the oil. Then its doom is sealed in a most literal fashion.

Sea birds have only minor importance as food, but they have more than esthetic significance in other ways. Gulls and some of their relatives are natural garbage incinerators, and do much to keep down the amount of rubbish on our waterfronts. Eider ducks are prized for the light, warm down collected from their nests and used in making quilted jackets for aviators, seamen and others exposed to severe weather. Several thousands of these ducks have been oil-killed on Nova Scotia coasts alone.

Little can be done for oil-soaked birds, Mr. Peterson regretfully states. If they are really badly oiled, the most merciful thing is simply to make a quick end of their pain. Less severely oiled individual birds can be freed from the black contamination by careful treatment of their feathers with salad oil; but obviously that cannot be done for more than a few out of the many thousands of bedaubed sea-fowl. The most practical answer would seem to be to make as speedy an end as possible of the submarines, and when peace returns to obtain close observance of maritime rules against discharging oily bilge and ballast waters into the sea.

*Science News Letter, October 24, 1942*

#### ENGINEERING

### Electronic Robot Records Changes During Flight

➤ A NEW electronic instrument is helping flight test America's newest airplanes by recording temperature and pressure changes at the rate of 144 readings every three or four minutes.

Developed by the Brown Instrument Company, this flight recorder replaces three or more men who needed half a minute to write down each reading.

First used on the world's largest plane, the Douglas B19, the recorder automatically prints on paper, during the test flight, the temperatures of all 72 cylinders of the four motors, changing

temperatures of the carburetor, exhaust, and of the oil in the fuel lines, and the pressures on wing struts, bulkheads and tail surfaces.

In the case of single-seater pursuit

ships, the recorder made records that otherwise could not be obtained because test engineers in addition to the pilot could not be carried aloft.

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#### MEDICINE

## Cancer Fight Honored

➤ A MEDAL was pinned on a woman in New York City recently because of her long and valiant efforts in helping other women to escape cancer death. The woman is Dr. Elise S. L'Esperance. The medal is the Clement Cleveland Medal awarded each year by the American Society for the Control of Cancer and its New York City Cancer Committee.

Dr. L'Esperance's cancer-fighting has been carried on through cancer prevention clinics where thousands of women anxious to know if they had cancer were given thorough physical examinations in which every part of the body is searched for signs of the malignant disease.

"During the past five years," she reports, "approximately 1,500 women were examined and among these 7% were found to have cancer, most of them in the early stages. This 7% of cancer incidence represents the number of unrecognized early malignant tumors, 98% of which were curable because

recognized early and treated promptly. It also emphasizes the rather startling fact that five out every 100 of these adult women will now have an increased life expectancy of many years."

All of this work in prevention of cancer deaths was for and by women, you notice. But the masculine population, Dr. L'Esperance pointed out, is also subject to cancer. Each year 70,000 men die of cancer in the United States. As in the feminine population, many of these cancer deaths among the men could be prevented, and cancer preventive clinics need not be limited to women. With the war taxing hospital and clinic facilities and physicians' time and strength to the utmost, it may not be possible to get such clinics started immediately. The future possibilities for after the war are, however, worth keeping in mind. For the present, men should learn the minor symptoms that signal cancer in its early stages, and consult a physician promptly about them.

*Science News Letter, October 24, 1942*



**FLIGHT RECORDER**—Lieut. William C. Clay, Navy flight test officer inspects the ingenious electronic robot that obtains data in the flight testing of airplanes. The device was developed by the Brown Instrument Company.