

Jack McCready was a very enthused student. He was there every Sunday, McCracken revealed. Taxiing the Tiger Moths from the barn, fueling them up and getting them ready to fly. This he did, in exchange for his flying lessons. He became the 2nd NFC student to fly.

One weekend Harry gave 100 scenic flights in about a twelve to fourteen hour period. He did not reveal how long the flights were, but the most he ever made in those days was \$100.00. Harry's log reveals that Stanley Baker won one of these scenic flights and went for his ride on April 14, 1947. The logbook also revealed that as of June 30, 1947 the club had 42 members.

There were not really airshows in those first years, Harry said, but often Ron Cook who owned another Tiger Moth tie-down at the airport, and the Club's two Tiger Moths would go up and show off some of their flying skills to the crowd that had accumulated below. Sometimes Whitham's "Green Hornet" would be there from Vancouver. These events helped a great deal financially. At one of these events the congestion after the show had police in a dilemma. Finally part of the fence was pulled down so traffic could disperse.

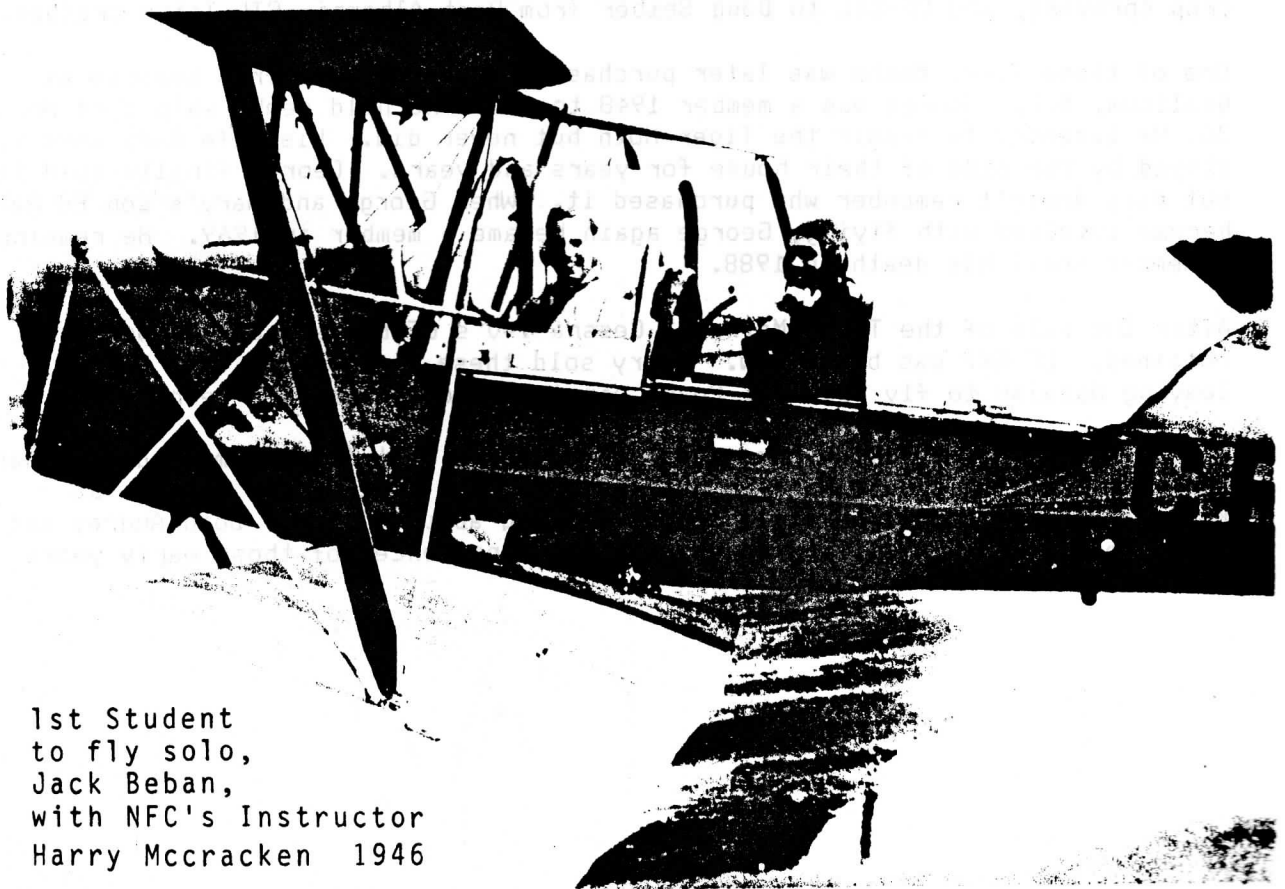
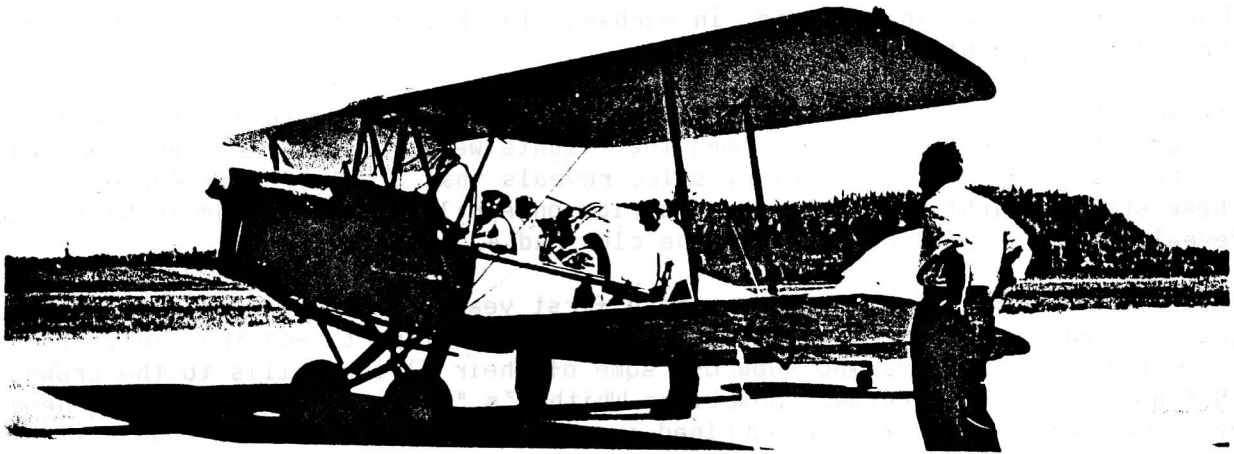
The last signature in Harry's log for flying a Tiger Moth was in 1947. Both aircraft were sold as servicable aircraft, CF-CHZ to Art Zellers who used it for crop spraying, and CF-CIL to Doug Seiber from Port Alberni. CIL later crashed.

One of these Tiger Moths was later purchased by George Race from someone at Qualicum, B.C. George was a member 1948 to 1952 and held membership card No. 30. He intended to repair the Tiger Moth but never did. His wife Mary says it stayed by the side of their house for years and years. George finally sold it but Mary doesn't remember who purchased it. When George and Mary's son Ed Race became involved with flying, George again became a member in 1969. He remained a member until his death in 1988.

After the sale of the Tiger Moths, 2 Cessna 140's CF-EKO and CF-EKP were obtained. CF-EKP was brand new. Harry sold these aircraft in 1953 before leaving Nanaimo to fly for West Coast Air in Vancouver for fourteen years.

After many years of flying Harry and Audrey moved back to Nanaimo and live here today in 1996. Although Harry's health is not the best and he resides at Kiwanis Village Lodge, he still enjoys talking about flying. Both Audrey and Harry were more then willing to share their experiences of those early years with the club.

Cassidy Airport May, 1946 Aircraft: Tiger Moth CF-CHZ
Pilot, Bruce Tait, passenger Mrs. E. Tait (mother) of Nanaimo.
CFI Harry McCracken looks on. (This aircraft originally from
Prince Albert, Sask.)



1st Student
to fly solo,
Jack Beban,
with NFC's Instructor
Harry Mccracken 1946

Harry McCracken's tribute a long time in the making

by GEORGE STEVENS

It was a surprise tribute and reunion for a former Flying Training Instructor, Harry McCracken of Nanaimo, when former students and present-day flyers and wives gathered at the Big '7' banquet room on Nicol Street.

McCracken, 66, first arrived in Nanaimo in 1945 and was retained by the newly formed Nanaimo Flying Club as flight instructor.

In due course McCracken was to take over the assets of the flying club, which consisted of two De Havilland Tiger Moth biplanes which had been used as primary trainers by the RAF and RCAF during the war.

Designed for limited aerobatics, they were a popular aircraft with all who flew them and were a common sight around Nanaimo skies until replaced by newer post-war aircraft.

McCracken moved to Vancouver in 1953 where he continued as a flying instructor for West Coast Air and has accumulated 8,000 hours in flying time. He has been back in Nanaimo now for a few years, and while he suffers with impaired health he retains his zeal for flying and attends all the air shows.

McCracken was lured to the surprise gathering under the pretext that the function was to be a Nanaimo Hospital Christmas party, his wife being a hospital employee.

On entering the dimly lit banquet room, where the old friends were already assembled but unrecognizable in the subdued lighting, McCracken and his wife Audrey were seated at a strategic table where they would be hearing a seemingly 'live' broadcast from radio station CHUB, with Lyall Leltham interviewing Nanaimo Airport manager, Denis Geddes on the 'History of Cassidy Airport'.

With Denis Geddes dispensing much erroneous information about the flying that took place in the early days of the airport, especially about who the first flying instructor was, Harry McCracken began to take notice, and was subsequently made aware that the broadcast was 'trumped up', and this was all for him!

Numerous people spoke of their respect for Harry as an instructor and his stress on safe flying practices. Everyone remembered his casual attitude when students produced scary flying maneuvers which would have unnerved most people. He took it all in stride, said one former student.

The late Jack Beban was remembered as McCracken's first student, and was the first person to solo and obtain his private pilot's licence at Cassidy Airport.

The second student to acquire his licence was Nanaimo-born Jack McCready Jr., about 20 years old at the time, now living in Ottawa. He was not able to be present in person, but sent a tape recording of his memories of his flying training days with Harry McCracken.

He also paid high tribute to McCracken, and made special reference to the time that McCracken grounded him for 'buzzing' his parents' home and flying under the power lines that crossed the Nanaimo River, just after going 'solo'.

Along with the complimentary memories of the quiet manner in which Harry handled his students came a few 'confessions' of 'breaching the regs' when out of Harry's sight.

Notables among the gathering were Mr. & Mrs. Bob Stacey Sr., who was the first secretary of the Nanaimo Flying Club. Perky Stacey made a presentation to McCracken of an enlarged photo-

HARRY & AUDREY MCCRACKEN Feb, 1996



HARRY McCRACKEN: a walking history book

graph taken with Jack Beban in a Tiger Moth at the commencement of flying training at the airport.

Ken Wright, well-known local bush pilot, returned to Harry a manual borrowed some 20 years ago.

Other notables attending included Stan Budd, executive pilot for Modills, and former owner of Nanaimo Airlines; Denis Geddes, airport manager who showed a video tape of the first Boeing 757 landing at Cassidy in August for the B.C. Summer Games; former alderman Dick Winkleman, and airport committee member who presented McCracken with a spitfire lapel pin, an insignia adopted for Nanaimo Airport officials.

An NFC Member in the cockpit of the Club's aircraft. He was a friend of Art Vanderlip.



CASSIDY AIRPORT



FLYING CLUB HAS HAD VERY ACTIVE INITIAL MONTH ^{MAA} 16/46

President Frank Honey of Nanaimo Flying Club has prepared an interesting report on the intensified activity of the new body during the few weeks it has been in active operation. For the past three Sundays the sight of the Flying Club's plane over the city in short trip flights has become almost commonplace.

With an executive of seven men and a membership presently numbering only 25, much has been accomplished within the past four weeks, according to the report. The club's first airplane, a Tiger Moth, has been bought and paid for. At Cassidy Airport an old barn has been remodelled and is in use now as a hangar; the club has become active member of the Royal Flying Club; a charter has been secured and paid for including the costs of registry and seal; a second airplane has been ordered; a qualified engineer and instruction pilot is permanently employed; a contract has been let for a "cross" runway to provide for wind variation take-offs and landings, and negotiations are under way for installation of standard airport gassing equipment.

In the four weeks the Flying Club has incurred and has fully paid bills totalling \$2,300.

Y. MAY 13, 1946

JACK BEBAN FIRST STUDENT TO FLY SOLO

First of the Nanaimo-trained aviators to fly solo, Jack Beban of this city, one of the original Nanaimo Flying Club members, took off from Cassidy Airport at six o'clock Sunday evening and had for himself a pleasant hour's trip through the blue. He made perfect take-off, completed five chartered "air tours" around the city, and completed his solo with a perfect three-point landing. He is being complimented today by friends and fellow-students of the Flying Club.

Five historians are now listed among instructor McCracken's students.

A second Tiger Moth plane is now at the Flying Club's premises, having been recently purchased for instructional purposes.

MAY 11, 1946

LEARN TO FLY

WITH NANAIMO FLYING CLUB

Operating from Cassidy Airport.

Qualified Instructor for Dual and Solo Flying.

A second plane has been purchased which will allow one plane for students to solo in and one for scenic flights.

Application for Membership can be made to Gus Matthews at Pay and Pack, also to our instructor, Harry McCracken at Cassidy Airport. Club House facilities now available at the Airport.

LEARN TO FLY

—with—

NANAIMO FLYING CLUB

Operating from Cassidy
Airport.

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Dual and Solo Flying.

A second plane has been purchased which will allow one plane for students to solo in and one for scenic flights.

MAY 13 & MAY 28, 1946.

JUNE 10 & JUNE 18, 1946.

JUNE 10, 1946
NANAIMO

Flying Club

Applications for membership now being received. "Bus" Matthews, secretary (Pay & Pack Store).

Membership Fee \$25.00
Dues (Annual) \$10.00

All membership fees already paid are credited to 1946 membership, effective June 1st.

Applications for life membership also received.

July 8, 1946

NANAIMO-OWNED PLANE FLIES ACROSS ROCKIES

First Nanaimo-to-Calgary airplane flight by a Nanaimo privately owned airplane was completed Sunday morning. In the machine were "Bus" Matthews, pilot, Jack Beban, and Hal Laird. They left Nanaimo at an early hour Sunday morning and early in the afternoon Frank Beban received a telephone call announcing their safe arrival in Calgary where it is presumed they will enjoy the Stampede now on in the foothills city.

The plane, a former trainer model, used to instruct pilots is a Sisman Crane equipped with the latest flying instruments. It was acquired on Friday last by Jack Beban and Mr. Laird in Vancouver and flown to Nanaimo airport Saturday afternoon. It made several flights about the city Saturday evening. The machine has a cruising speed of 150 miles and carries enough gasoline to fly under normal conditions from Nanaimo to Regina. All the party are members of the Nanaimo Flying Club.

While weather conditions were none too good at the takeoff Sunday the fliers, no doubt, found good weather going across the Rockies.

July 17, 1946

BEBAN GROUP FLYERS FOUGHT BAD WEATHER

"We had a pleasant trip, but it was uncomfortable at times crossing the Rockies on our way home," said Jack Beban who, with "Bus" Matthews and Art Laird, returned to Nanaimo by airplane from Calgary yesterday. The trio, in their recently purchased plane, flew to Calgary 10 days ago. They made a stop at Penticton. On their return trip they travelled via Lew. All the Grows Nest over Nelson and to Penticton. The weather was not good for the return and they had to fly at a low altitude over some of the most dangerous parts of the route especially around Kootenay lake and Nelson. At Penticton they installed a radio to aid their navigation so bad were the clouds.

They made a side trip from Calgary to Edmonton. The plane behaved well for the whole trip, said Jack.



Aircraft- a Steerman;
Nanaimo Airport 1946

Cessna Crane owned by Jack Beban

FLYING CLUB TO DROP PAMPHLETS

In the recent war the allies and the enemy used airplanes for the dropping of pamphlets for propaganda purposes. Nanaimo citizens will shortly get a small scale idea of how this procedure works when Nanaimo Flying club will drop from 800 to 1,000 pamphlets over the residential sections of the city.

City Council last night granted the club the necessary permission to go ahead with their scheme. Some 35 of the pamphlets will bear signatures entitling the finder to a free ride in a club plane. Pamphlets will give a brief history of the local club. Council requested however, that they be granted the right to scrutinize the pamphlets before they are liberated to the breezes. Flight will be made late in July between the hours of 5 and 6 p.m. F. Honey made application on behalf of the club.

SEVEN LUCKY LEAFLETS FROM AIR FOUND

Nanaimo had an opportunity between 5 and 5:30 o'clock Friday night to see just how a "leaflet raid" from the air works when three Nanaimo Flying Club planes circled the city and dropped 3,000 handbills which came fluttering down to streets and rooftops. The "raid" was to make the public more air-minded and to draw attention to the activities of the Flying Club, operating at Cassidy Airport. In the early evening sunlight the yellow planes presented a pretty picture as they zoomed and circled around and around the mapped circle set for the stunt.

Of the 3,000 printed leaflets dropped there were fifty selected ones which bore the signature of a Flying Club official. These will be redeemed for free sightseeing trips, and naturally crowds of schoolboys were scrambling around to pick up all leaflets available. To noon today seven calls had been received indicating that this number of lucky leaflets had been recovered. Wind drifts, so important in leaflet raids, were determined by the local fliers in a preliminary run in which a bunch of dummy leaflets were released into the air.

FLYING CLUB WILL SHOWER CITY FRIDAY

Weather permitting on Friday, Nanaimo will receive a shower of pamphlets from the skies. Nanaimo Flying Club, having received the necessary permission from Dominion and civic officials, will loose some 3000 leaflets between 5 and 5:30 p.m. If there is a bright sun the shower will be well worth seeing. To those who have been overseas it will recall shower of German propoganda dropped over the Canadian lines in both Italy and Northwest-Europe.

A number of pamphlets will bear the signature of the secretary of the Nanaimo Flying Club, "Buster" Matthews. These are the lucky pamphlets and may be redeemed at the Flying Club and a free ride obtained in the club's Tiger Moth plane. The whole stunt depends, however, upon weather conditions.

26, 1946. - OCT. 26th

FLYING CLUB'S ELECTION MEET DEFERRED MONTH

A year ago when Nanaimo secured Cassidy Airport from the Royal Canadian Air Force at \$1 per year, and later when Nanaimo Flying Club was made operative, City Council, service clubs, Board of Trade and other community bodies took keen and active interest. Last night the Nanaimo Flying Club was all set to hold its annual meeting in City Council Chambers. Twelve persons, all Flying Club personnel and including their directorate were in attendance but there were no representatives of any of the local bodies. Three separate advertisements of the meeting had been run, but the attendance was so un-representative that President Frank Honey and the directors decided to postpone the election of officers for a further meeting, now set for Nov. 25.

Such business as was transacted showed that the Flying Club, during the year, had been host to 41 visiting aircraft, one of which brought Governor General Alexander who came incognito and looked over Comox Logging Co. operations back of Ladysmith, as guest of Manager Jimmy Sheasgreen and remained a few hours. It was also shown that the Nanaimo Flying Club is one of the few clubs of its kind to have operated through its initial year at a financial profit.

Efforts are being made to secure a more general and representative attendance at the meeting set for next month when club officers are to be elected.

25

THE NANAIMO DAILY FRI

Leaflets Will Come Fluttering Down Today

From the skies over Nanaimo somewhere between 5 and 5:30 o'clock this afternoon 3,000 yellow Flying Club leaflets are due to come fluttering down in a "Leaflet Raid."

"You Too Can Learn To Fly" is the main message of the pamphlets which will be scattered from the cockpit of the Flying Club Tiger Moth plane which will circle the city.

Main purpose is to get Nanaimo folk more "air minded" toward Flying Club activities at the Cassidy Airport where Harry McCracken, ex-R.C.A.F. pilot, gives instruction in dual and solo flights. The pamphlets give information as to hours, membership and scenic flights.

CITY AND FLYING CLUB PREPARING AN AGREEMENT

In view of the growing importance of Cassidy Airport operation with advent of the C.P. Airlines twice-daily schedule starting shortly, a joint meeting of the City Council's airport committee and Nanaimo Flying Club executives was held Wednesday night at council chambers. It was agreed that a committee of six, three aldermen and three Flying Club members, will devise and draw up some form of operating agreement whereby mutual interests will be safeguarded, and proper supervisions exercised at all times by both interested parties in the airport operation. The city now has full rights over the airport as holders of a \$1 per year, five year rental agreement with the federal government.

The Nanaimo Flying Club is operating under the charter of the Royal Canadian Flying Club, a non-profit organization. Naturally the initial activities of the club have incurred costs which preclude profits for some time at least, but under the charter, when the "red ink" mark is reached and surpluses are realized, these would be turned over to the city.

The joint committee will meet again in the near future to effect a juncture of ideas and decisions which will be embodied in an agreement under which both parties will operate.

CITY COUNCIL ROUTINE NOTES

There was an underlying, subtle note of sarcasm in a letter read before City Council Monday night. It was from Hon. E. C. Carson, Minister of Provincial Works, and was in reply to a City Council letter indicating that the Nanaimo Council was not inclined to share in cost of repairing Departure Bay sea wall, as it lay well outside city limits.

"I am aware that this lies outside your city limits but felt it had particular interest to the city, and, as such, might warrant some attention on your part. I note that you do not feel that this is possible, and it will be necessary for us to make our future arrangements accordingly," said Mr. Carson's letter which was received and filed.

Capt. L. Titcombe had a letter asking the privilege for 'The Salvation Army Christmas Cheer' kettles to make their appearance again for street collection. Permission was granted.

The Canadian Federation of the Blind's letter thanked Nanaimo Council for a \$25 donation.

Nanaimo Foundry was given permission for a hanging sign, subject to the usual safeguards.

A Board of Trade letter thanked the city for inclusion of Trade Board representatives at the luncheon given officers of H. M. C.S. Uganda during the warship's local visit.

Nanaimo Flying Club notified the council that Dr. Giovanni Bus Matthews and Frank Honey would represent the club to act on a committee of aldermen which will in future administer affairs at the Cassidy Airport.

Arthur Leighton, for himself and Palace Hotel owners offered to pay for a lane connection between the new Leighton Building on Skinner street, and the hotel. His application was referred to the streets committee.

Permission application from 68 Kennedy street asked for oil tank installation at that address, and will take the usual course.

Nanaimo Sawmills Ltd., asked for a 4-inch fire hydrant water protection installation, which was referred to the waterworks committee for action.

John Sandland, secretary-treasurer of Southend Sports Club forwarded a cheque for \$81.50, being the city's ten per cent due for intermediate and Pacific Coast League games played at the Central Sports Grounds during the season.

Alderman Wilson reported occupation in three of the city-secured Camp Nanaimo huts, with a fourth soon to move in.

Council lighting committee will prepare an annual Christmas street lighting.

Council will arrange for its annual public meeting prior to election, the meeting date set at Tuesday, Dec. 10.

Next meeting of the council is Monday, Dec. 9th, which is also

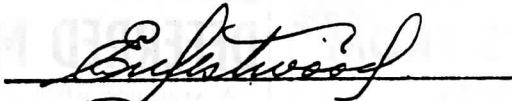
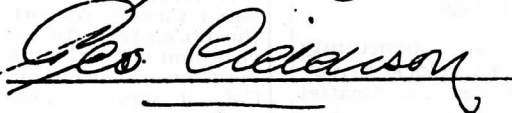
NANAIMO, B. C., June 21st 1946.

TO THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL,
THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF NANAIMO.

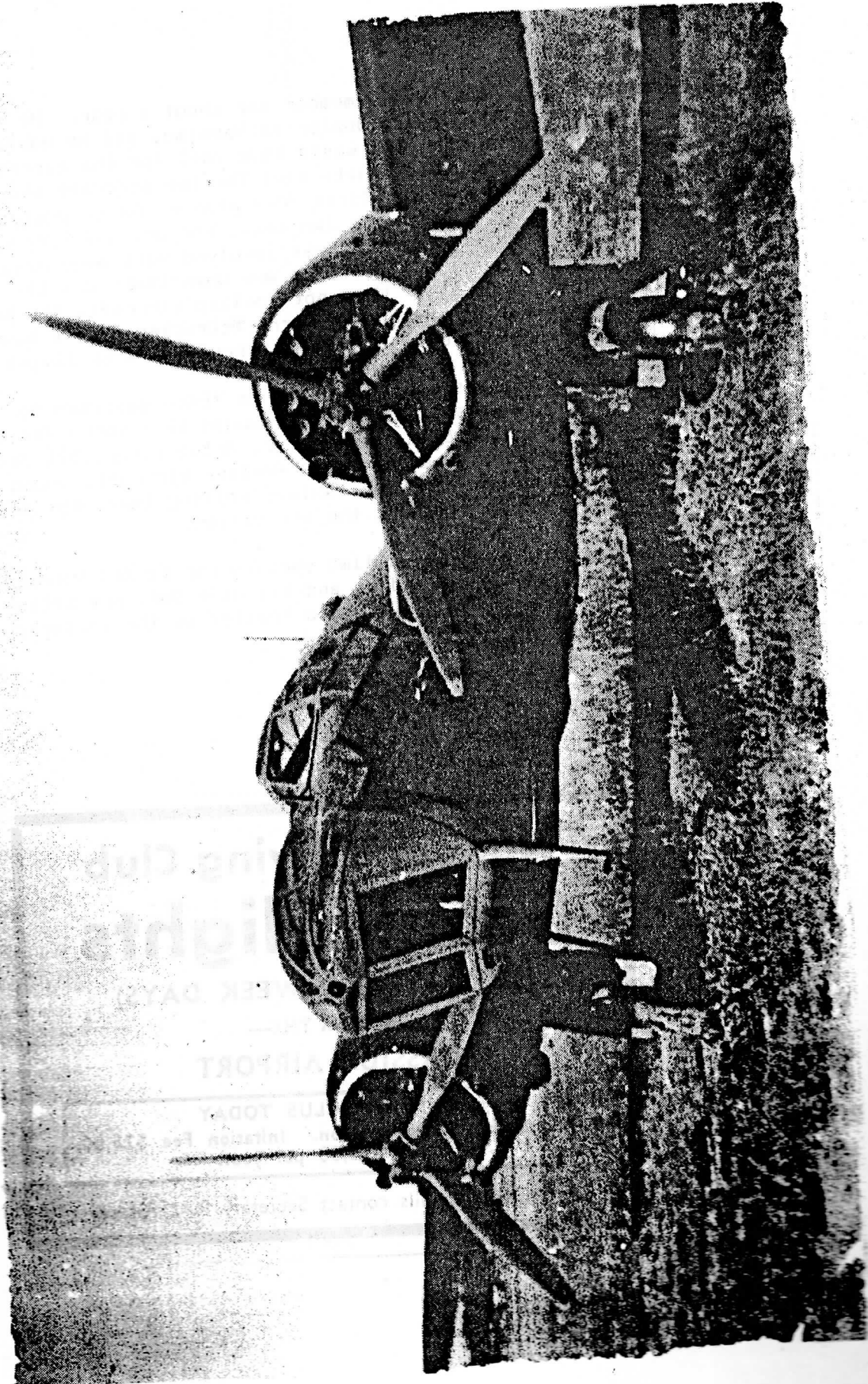
Gentlemen:-

Your Committee has considered the application of the Nanaimo Flying Club to lease the Cassidy Airport, and recommend that the Airport be leased to the Club, subject to the approval of the Department of Transport, and subject to the same terms and conditions as the Airport has been leased to the City.

Respectfully submitted,

AIRPORT COMMITTEE.



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ntain Ex

ROBERT LAWRENCE STACEY, "Bob" was a member for about a year. He was the first secretary. He also was the Texaco dealer in Nanaimo, and he would haul fuel out in drums to the airport so the club would have fuel for the aircraft. There was no fuel on the field. He would donate fuel for the aircraft when there was special flights. Later he had the first fuel pumper and he would bring it out for the weekend and leave it with his two sons, Bob Jr. and Percy "Perk", so they could fuel the aircraft. Bob, Sr. was involved with many organization and hadn't time to be there himself. Weekends was when there was the most activity. The boys enjoyed those weekends. When not fueling aircraft, the boys would strap people in the plane so instructor Harry McCracken didn't have to get out. Bob Stacey Sr. is the only one of the first executive to be living in 1996.

Some of the wivies of members would come out on these weekends too, and they prepared hotdogs, etc. and sell them. This would be revenue for the club. Among these were Audrey McCracken, her sister, Artie Logan, Dot Stacey and probably Mary Matthews too. When not busy fueling aircraft, young Bob Stacey Jr. and Perk would go up and down the taxiway selling these hot dogs to the carloads that were lined up watching the activities.

Another source of income was from a limo service ran by Art Vanderlip (now deceased). He came from Duncan and he and his wife Dot, who became the first woman pilot of the club to fly, lived in a trailer on the airport.

Nanaimo Flying Club Scenic Flights

(SUNDAY AND WEEK DAYS)

—FROM THE—

CASSIDY AIRPORT

JOIN THE CLUB TODAY

Membership Drive now on. Initiation Fee \$25.00.
Dues \$10.00 per year.

For further details contact Secretary R. L. Stacey.