

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Press Release

For immediate publication:

The following is a copy of the official report made by Ranger Hogan regarding his flight by plane from Labrador to Newfoundland on the 8th May 1943:

" We left Labrador at 3:15 p.m. After we were in the air awhile, the plan got levelled off and the Flight Lieutenant invited me to a game of cards. I declined and gave my place to somebody else. I then went back toward the rear of the plane and sat on a box of some object and there read a short story from a book which one of the passengers passed to me. I looked at my watch about approximately 4:40 p.m. and I figured then that we would be in Gander in about another half hour; but at the same time I heard somebody say "Pass the fire extinguisher." I stood up and I saw one of the boys trying to get the extinguisher off the wall near the door. One of the airmen helped him to get it off, and by now I had moved forward to the door. The fire extinguisher was passed to me and I passed it on to somebody else, who then passed it on to the Co-Pilot who was using another extinguisher at the time. I am not positive but I feel sure that I saw a flame but from my position, with everybody standing, it was difficult to see what was being done in the cockpit, but I did see the Co-Pilot with the fire extinguisher pointed toward the floor on his right. One of the airmen was now trying to open the door. The second airmen, whom I learned afterwards was Corporal Butt, turned and released the emergency release and the door flew out. They, almost immediately, went with it. I don't know in what order these men left.

Sometime before the door was opened I heard someone say "Pack chutes", which was done. I took this as an order to connect our chutes to the harness; we were all wearing our harnesses at the time. I was about opposite the door as the Flight Lieutenant beckoned to me to kneel down, which I did. I thought that the plane would be about to make a belly landing, but almost immediately he rose and I thought he was preparing to jump, so I being nearest the door jumped to make room for the others to follow.

At approximately 4:45 p.m. May 8th, I landed by parachute at the edge of a small lake in the vicinity of, and eastward of Western Pond, near Hawke's Bay. The jump by parachute was my first. But at Goose I had ample opportunity of listening to the stories of those who had made many parachute jumps and learned that it was possible to guide the chute by a manipulation of its ropes, or cords. It was by such manipulation of the 'chute cords that I landed at the edge of a small pond already referred to. However, in landing I slightly injured my knee. When I landed I pulled in my 'chute and decided to remain where I was for the night. I gathered a quantity of dead spruce for firewood, and large branches which I stripped for use as tent poles

for the chute. My boots and feet were wet. I had learned from experience that wet feet may sometimes prove disastrous. I therefore kept a fire going all night to keep warmth to my feet and to dry my socks and boots.

At the dawn on May 9th, the weather was clear. I climbed to the nearest hill and saw the sea and an island which I took to be Keppel Island at the mouth of Hawke's Bay. I returned to the camp site, broke camp and commenced to walk in the direction of the sea. I found my 'chute too cumbersome to carry so abandoned it. At about 9:00 a.m. I came upon fresh footprints in the soft slushy snow. I quickened my pace, and by 11:00 a.m. I came upon Corpl. Butt who was also proceeding in the direction of the Coast. Corpl. Butt and myself then went on together. At our point of meeting I felt that we were about 18 to 20 miles from the Coast as the Crow flies. But because of swollen streams necessitating wide detours we were actually much further. During the afternoon I found a dead rabbit. It was frozen in the ice under a branch. I think it had been injured by knocking itself against a tree. At 6:00 p.m. we camped for the night. I gathered some boughs, made a lean-to shelter, lit a fire and cooked the rabbit. At this point I should like to mention a point for which I can give no explanation. I suppose it is just one of those things which happen and for which we can give no adequate explanation. I rarely have carried matches, being a cigarette smoker I have mostly used a lighter. However, just before I took passage in the Ventura on May 9th, I had occasion to rush to my room for something I had forgotten. On the table I had an extra large box of matches which a friend at Goose had given me, they were of the strike anywhere type. On rushing out of the room I grabbed a handful and put them in my tunic pocket. I imagine I took twenty to twenty-five matches in that lucky handful. It was those matches which contributed so much to our remaining alive. Corpl. Butt's feet were beginning to show signs of being in bad shape and I had to slit his shoes to give him some relief.

At 5:00 a.m. May 10th we broke camp and again started to walk in the direction of the Coast. The going was slow and we had to wade swollen streams sometimes to our waists. However, we had to push steadily on as I knew that Corpl. Butt's feet would, sooner or later, give out. We had nothing to eat during the day and made a lean-to shelter of boughs for the night. I kept a fire going all night and made Corpl. Butt keep his feet as close to the heat as he could.

Early on the morning of May 11th we left our campsite and came to the river leading into Western Pond. I gathered browse and the buds of trees. These we ate, drinking plenty of water from the nearby river. I found a rabbit in a snare. At about 6:15 p.m. we camped near the river for the night. I built another lean-to shelter, started a fire and cooked half the rabbit which we ate, keeping the other half for the next day. Corpl. Butt's feet were now showing signs of becoming much worse and my own were starting to give me some cause for worry. I kept the fire on all night and again made Corpl. Butt keep his feet as close to the heat as he could bear. I hoped to get to the Coast in a day or so.

At 7:00 a.m. May 12th, we commenced to walk down the river bank in the hope of finding a suitable point from which to ford across to the other side. But on turning a point of woods we could almost see to the river's estuary into a lake. The river was too fast and swollen to permit crossing. We made an attempt to wade it but were nearly swept off our feet. We then made inland somewhat now knowing that we should have to change our course in order to travel around the shores of Western Pond and thence to the Torrent's River. At 1:00 p.m. Corpl. Butt's feet gave out and we were forced to halt. I lit a fire and cooked the half of the rabbit left from the previous day. At about 3:45 p.m. I heard a plane overhead and immediately threw green boughs on the fire in order to make a heavy smoke smudge to attract the plane's occupants' attention. We were camped in scrub bush and it is possible that because of this the smoke could not be seen from the plane.

Early morning May 13th, we broke camp and continued our route around the Western Pond. Travelling was slow as Corpl. Butt's feet were getting worse. We ate buds from birch trees and berries which I found on the marsh. These were marsh berries. We camped for the night in the usual type of lean-to shelter and again I kept a fire going all night to give heat to Corpl. Butt's feet.

We broke camp early on the morning of May 14th, and continued our journey around the shores of Western Pond. We ate young buds and leaves of trees, drinking much water from the nearby pond. My only item of equipment was a pocket knife. This knife, oddly enough, was one which one of the survivors of the U. S. "Truxon" disaster off Chamber's Point near St. Lawrence had given me as an appreciation of the services rendered by me during his trying experience. We camped early in the usual lean-to shelter, with the usual all night fire going.

At 7:30 a.m. on May 15th, we broke camp and continued around the shores of the pond. At about 8:15 we came upon an old trapper's shack at the end of the pond. Corpl. Butt's feet were now very swollen and blistered and I knew that travelling from now on would be very slow. We had been days travelling around the pond. In the trappers shack I found a small piece of salt pork. This we ate. In the shack I also found an old empty tomato can. This I took as I considered that it would be useful as a cooking utensil should Providence again gift us with a rabbit. We left the shack at 9:00 a.m. and pushed on toward the Coast. At 9:30 a.m. and pushed on toward the Coast. At 9:30 a.m. we struck the Torrent's River. We camped for the night in a lean-to shelter, and again I kept fire going all night.

Early morning May 16th, we broke camp and continued down the river. Within about an hour of starting we came upon a pond formed by a widening of the river. On the shores of this pond we found an old disused lumber camp. The camp was in ruins and unfit for habitation. However, there was one good wall standing, and against this I built a lean-to shelter and here we camped for the night. I kept in a fire all night and at some time during the night I must have fallen asleep, for some time during the night, around 3:00 a.m. I should judge, I was awakened by a

sense of terrific heat to find that our lean-to had caught fire. I kicked down the wall of the old lumber camp and extinguished the fire. We then moved to another spot and waited for dawn.

We commenced our journey coastwards early on the morning of May 17th, and at about 3:00 p.m. we came upon an old trapper's cabin. We were now in the vicinity of the head of Hawke's Bay. In the cabin I found a part of an old stale loaf of bread and a small quantity of salted fish. I got a fire going, made Corpl. Butt rest up and place his feet as near to the fire as he could bear. I then gathered green leaves and buds, and with these we ate the bread and salt fish. In examining the interior of the cabin I found rabbit snare wire. This I made into snares and that night set them in nearby rabbit runs.

On May 18th, wet heavy snow fell and I had great difficulty in obtaining wood to keep the fire going. I found a number of trapper's skinning boards and these I was forced to burn. In the cabin, I found a piece of soap, an old saucepan with the bottom partly broken and partly good. I heated water in this by tilting the saucepan so as to keep the whole good-bottom part toward the heat. I then made an antiseptic solution by boiling the soap in the water, took off some of my undergarments and proceeded to bathe Corpl. Butt's feet. Skin came off his feet in layers and the pus began to run freely. I bandaged his feet as best I could with what scant materials I had. We then talked things over and it was decided that on the next day I should proceed alone in an endeavor to reach civilization and aid. Accordingly I gathered a great quantity of wood and stored it within the cabin. I then procured a water supply and buds and leaves for Corpl. Butt's use during my absence.

Early morning on May 19th, I started off toward the Coast. I made several attempts to cross the river; but at each attempt found the water too high and too rapid to take the risk. Had I been alone I might have taken a chance but I came to the conclusion that if anything happened to me Corpl. Butt's chances would be jeopardized also. After I had been out several hours, and after several attempts to cross the river, I decided that it would be better for me to return to the cabin and take the chance of Providence sending someone to rescue us. On the way back to the cabin I visited some of the snares which I had set the night before. I found a rabbit. This I took back to the cabin, cleaning it including the entrails. I roasted all edible parts which we ate. The paws were cleaned and placed in the tomato tin which I found in the shack on the 15th, and put on to simmer to make broth. When we had eaten the roasted portions of rabbit we saved the bones and added those to the paw broth. When the broth was consumed we found that the bones had cooked so well that they were soft, these we ate also.

On May 20th, it was decided that I should make a raft in an endeavour to cross the river. I gathered some logs which I found near the bank of the river and lashed these together with strips of our greatcoats, which I had cut into suitable widths for the purpose. I completed the raft, and

launched it; but found that owing to the fact that most of the logs were waterlogged, it would not bear my weight. For the remainder of the day I confined myself to the gathering firewood. Corpl. Butt's feet were now giving him considerable pain and I found it necessary to keep as much heat to them as possible to alleviate the pain.

During May 21st and 22nd, I endeavoured to build fires around some standing timber in an attempt to burn off the trees to make a raft. But the trees were too green through spring thaw for the fires to take much, if any effect on them. The idea of making a raft was therefore abandoned.

From May 23rd, on until June 25th, life in our cabin settled down to routine. Corpl. Butt's feet were getting no better and for the most part he was forced to spend his days on the bough bed. My day usually started at 8:00 a.m., my first job each morning was to visit the snares. And from May 23rd, until June 25th, I was fortunate enough to obtain ten rabbits. These were treated in exactly the same manner as to cleaning, cooking and eating as were the previous two.

My next routine was to gather leaves and buds. And during my wanderings for food I came upon a plant leaf which, when boiled, proved to be very nourishing.

My next daily routine was to gather firewood.

My greatest disappointments were experienced when I used to visit the snares and find that a rabbit had been caught and somehow got away.

Much time was spent giving Corpl. Butt's feet attention. They had now got to the stage when the odour from them permeated the cabin with a sickening smell. I bathed them and applied some balsam from trees and made him keep them as close to the heat as he could stand. And at the time we were rescued on June 25th, they were beginning to show signs of being less angry looking.

During our stay at the cabin I heard quite a number of 'planes overhead. But I was unsuccessful in signalling to any of them. And in this connection I should like to point out the futility of having 'planes search for missing persons in this manner. If a search 'plane is flying in search at low altitude its speed is too fast to make anything on the ground distinguishable. If it is at medium or high altitude the ground is not passing so quickly but the altitude forbids the discerning of any object. I venture to suggest that when 'planes are to be engaged for searching for missing persons that sea planes be used, that landing is made at the nearest settlement to which the missing persons are presumed to have come down, that a reputable guide be taken aboard and that landings are then made on ponds and lakes in the area to be searched. Engines should be switched off and a sufficient period should be allowed to elapse in order to permit the missing persons (should they be in the vicinity) to signal from the lake or pond shore.

During the last week of our stay at the cabin I found my own strength gradually going. Most difficult time was first thing in the morning when I experienced great difficulty in getting to my feet. And during the last few days I found it difficult to control my knees. At times I used to find my sight blurring.

From May 8th, until June 25th, I kept a diary, the entries in which, for the most part, covered routine.

For some unaccountable reason I appeared to have lost a day. Corpl. Butt's birthday fell on June 25th, we 'celebrated' in the cabin on June 24th, thinking that that day was the 25th.

I should like to take this opportunity of gratefully thanking Messrs. Perry, Lawrence and Parsons for their timely rescue of both Corpl. Butt and myself. We were at dinner on June 25th, when Corpl. Butt drew my attention to what he thought was the sound of a movement of oars. I went to the side of the river, saw a boat containing three men, hailed them. It was the end of fifty arduous days of isolation.

When we arrived at Port Saunders the people gave us a most heartening welcome. I shall never forget their generous hospitality and many kindnesses. And in this connection I should like to mention the fact that when they discovered that June 25th was Corpl. Butt's birthday they showered numerous presents upon him. One old lady baked him a birthday cake.

I should also like to take this opportunity of gratefully thanking Group Captain Anderson, Officer Commanding R.A.F. (Ferry Command) Gander for his kind co-operation in flying to Port Saunders on June 25th and safely bringing back both Corpl. Butt and myself to Gander. And later through his co-operation in flying me back to St. John's on June 26th. And to Mrs. Anderson for her warm hospitality during my stay at Gander.

And to members of the Force stationed at Battle Harbour, Forteau, Flower's Cove, Port Saunders, Englee and Jackson's Arm for their efforts upon your instructions to institute search parties. And to the search parties for their many arduous days spent in fruitless search."