

# **CANADA'S FIRST MOUNTAIN HELICOPTER RESCUE**

## **SEPTEMBER 23, 1950**

**Publishers Note: September 23, 2020 - The 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the rescue!**

The Forest History Association of BC is pleased to publish this story about an interesting event in a fire lookout man's life, a rescue by helicopter as remembered by his son, a teen at that time.

The accompanying photos and material about life at a Wells Gray Park forestry lookout in 1950, the related helicopters and people involved will make it an interesting read for many of BC's forest history buffs.

The story is about the rescue of Albert David Flowers, a BC Forestry lookout man who was injured at the Azure Mountain Lookout in 1950. The story is told by Albert's son Gerald Flowers, who was with him as a teenager, took the photographs, had his own adventures before and after the rescue, and later wrote a biography of his father. In memory of Gerald, his son Ken (Albert's grandson) did additional research over the past year, and assembled the extract of his father's writing along with other interesting related material for the article below. Ken was assisted by his uncle David Flowers and many others mentioned on page 26.

We chose to publish the 26 page piece on our website [fhabc.org](http://fhabc.org) and introduce it through our Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/fhabc> on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event, Sept 23.

In a 2021 issue of the FHABC Newsletter, we will do a one page abstract of the piece with a link to the website so our members who are not on Facebook can access it.

*Dave Florence*

Dave Florence,  
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September 23, 2020



**CANADA'S FIRST MOUNTAIN HELICOPTER RESCUE  
SEPTEMBER 23, 1950**



THE VANCOUVER SUN: Mon., Sept. 25, 1950 \*\*\*33

## Injured Man Rescued by Helicopter

A Forestry Service lookout man, alone and injured on top of a 6500-foot mountain peak in the B.C. interior, was rescued Saturday by helicopter.

The dramatic rescue took place in the Clearwater-Azure Lakes district, 110 miles north of Kamloops, despite clouds and wind.

A. D. Flower, lookout man in that area, suffered a crushed right leg last week when a rock tumbled on him as he was clearing a trail. He was in touch with Kamloops by radio but did not ask for help immediately, feeling that hospitalization was unnecessary.

When the leg failed to heal, he radioed for help.

An Okanagan Air Service Ltd. helicopter, doing a flying job at Hope, was detoured to Kamloops then took off for the lookout station.

Pilot D. K. "Deke" Orr made the ticklish flight and put the big "windmill" down virtually on top of the mountain, in a small alpine meadow.

Flower's injury is not serious.

*The Vancouver Sun*



*Nanaimo Daily News (Sept. 25)*

## **Recently Uncovered Mountain Rescue**

*This recently uncovered event was possibly the first mountain rescue by helicopter in Canada. News of the rescue was broadcast over the radio and made newspapers across Canada. At the time, television broadcasting was only just beginning and very few people had TVs, but most everyone had radios. According to the Canada Aviation and Space Museum in Ottawa Ontario, "It seems that you have uncovered Canada's first mountain helicopter rescue. We could not find other similar events that dated further back".*

*Albert David Flowers was working as a Forestry Lookout-man on a remote mountain in Wells Gray Park (along with his son Gerald). It was a two-day trek to get there and that's already from a remote homestead. Albert was tasked with getting out daily weather and fire reports. While there, he suffered an injury to his right leg that got progressively worse so they radioed for a medical evacuation. Pilot D. K. "Deke" Orr of Okanagan Air Services was called away while flying for a mining company operating high in the mountains south of Hope BC. He arrived in a Bell 47B-3 helicopter, (CF-FZX) to fly Albert to the Kamloops hospital for treatment. It was actually lucky that his son Gerald was with him to clear an area for the helicopter to land. With his bad leg, Albert could not have done it. Gerald had just turned 15 and took several pictures of the rescue.*

*There are two areas of interest to search for the site. Location #1 shows a triangle that is used as a ground to air signal meaning "Probably safe to land here". There is also a rectangular feature that might still be evidence of a structural foundation. In location #2, a BC Forest Service Lookout map indicates that is where a lookout was built in 1950 (the same year as this story), but nothing is seen on the ground. The two locations are 9.5 km apart over very rough terrain.*

## **The Need for Fire Lookouts**

*There had been several severe fires with some turning tragic. In the summer of 1950, a huge wildfire was raging across northern BC and Alberta. It burned for several months with September being the worst for smoke that eventually made it to Europe. It was later called the Chinchaga Fire. It burned between 3.5 and 4.2 million acres and even today is considered the largest single fire in North America. At the same time, smaller fires were being dealt with across southern BC in more populated areas that stretched existing resources to their limit. It was also barely a year (August 1949) since the tragedy of the Mann Gulch fire near Helena Montana, where 13 firefighters had died. The most efficient way to watch for fires was to build manned lookouts across the province.*

## **Early Mountain Helicopter Rescues**

*One early rescue by helicopter was on January 26, 1945, in the Naga Hills in Burma. The evacuation of a wounded enlisted man at a weather station at 4,700 ft, was not the first rescue by helicopter, but it was the highest up to then. Another rescue was in the Swiss Alps in November 1946, where a passenger plane crashed and survivors were stranded at 11,000 ft. They tried to use a helicopter at first but it malfunctioned and could not be used. They then used a fixed-wing plane called a Fieseler Fi-156 'Stork' on skis, a "short take-off and landing" (STOL) aircraft.*

*Then in August 1947, a Bell 47B was used in an attempt to recover the body of a mountain climber at 4,000 ft on the Tiedemann Glacier in the Coastal Mountains of BC. Mountain flying techniques had not been developed and the terrain prevented the helicopter from being used.*

*The first helicopter rescue behind enemy lines was during the Korean War on Sept 4, 1950, five miles north of Pohang and under enemy fire. The concept of rescue by helicopter in a war zone had never been tried. Helicopters up to that time had only been used for support and never entered the combat area or front line, as they had no armor to protect themselves and were unarmed so could not fight back. A Sikorsky H-5 was used, they were small and slow, with a maximum speed of 60 knots and a range of 150 miles. The highest altitude that it could achieve was only 4,000 feet. For a medical evacuation at its maximum range, it could only have a pilot and one paramedic, and with a full load of fuel, it could only evacuate one wounded soldier at a time. It worked, but not ideal during combat.*

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*The Story...*

Forestry Lookout man: Alberta David Flowers (bio page 12)  
Story & Photographs: Gerald Flowers (bio page 13)

(Excerpt from) **"THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A MAN CALLED FLOWERS"**

I stayed at East Greenfield (*Montreal*) until the late winter of 1948 when I rejoined dad at Clearwater Station BC (*who had arrived in August 1948*). At Clearwater, I mostly enjoyed horseback riding, swimming in Dutch Lake, and hiking. One time when I was swimming with two friends to the island in Dutch Lake, a cow moose swam across just thirty feet in front of us.

At Easter time I went to Les Klopfer's home at upper Clearwater. I think it's about eighteen miles. We walked up there and then walked back after a week. During my visit, we went down into and along Clearwater River Canyon, climbed White horse Bluff, Battle Mountain, and many other places. On the way up, and on the way down to Clearwater, we visited Moul Falls on Grouse creek and Bear Creek Falls (*now called Spahats Creek and Spahats Falls*).



*Clearwater School (looking Northwest) where Gerald attended grades 7 and 8 and Albert may have taught before working for the Forestry Service. This building looks to have been where the Raft River Elementary School is now (along Candle Creek road). This photo was taken from the old highway (looking northwest), whereas the new #5 highway bypassed Clearwater in 1972. This part of the old highway is now called the Clearwater Village Rd. (Photo by Gerald Flowers)*



*Northside of Clearwater School, removing heavy snow. Unknown who is in the picture.  
(winter of 1948/49 or 1949/50) (Photo by Albert or Gerald Flowers)*

Towards the end of the school term, dad got a job as a lookout man in Wells Gray Park on Azure Mountain. He was offered a 6.5x54mm MS. I was offered the loan of a .30/30 Ranger carbine. This was one of the Model 94 Winchester carbines used by the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers which was a military outfit put together to protect the coast of B.C.

They were made up mostly of men who were either too old for the regular forces or were not able to go due to health or some other reason. They were hunters, trappers, fishermen, or others who knew the bush. Most of them had many skills having to do with the woods, boats, etc. They also used the Model 1917 Lee Enfield rifles chambered for the 30/06 Springfield. Other arms were used also.

However, when I mentioned it to dad, he said no. I guess he didn't think it was a good idea for a fourteen-year-old boy to borrow a rifle.

We left for the lookout and had to travel to Upper Clearwater where the guide, Ted Helset lived. We spent the night there and the next morning we left his ranch, near the entrance to Wells Gray Park, and traveled up a long hill to where a road camp was situated above the Murtle River. From there we went down a hill to the river level and crossed a bridge below Dawson Falls. I have a picture (*not found*) that Dad took of the pack train crossing on that bridge.

We traveled as far as the Ray Farm, about halfway, where we had lunch. John Ray had passed away a year or two before and his rifle and all of his belongings were still there, undisturbed. Dad and I were walking and Ted was riding his horse. Johnnie Wiener also had a horse. He was the Assistant Ranger. Maybe dad had to pay for horses for us and so figured to walk. We also

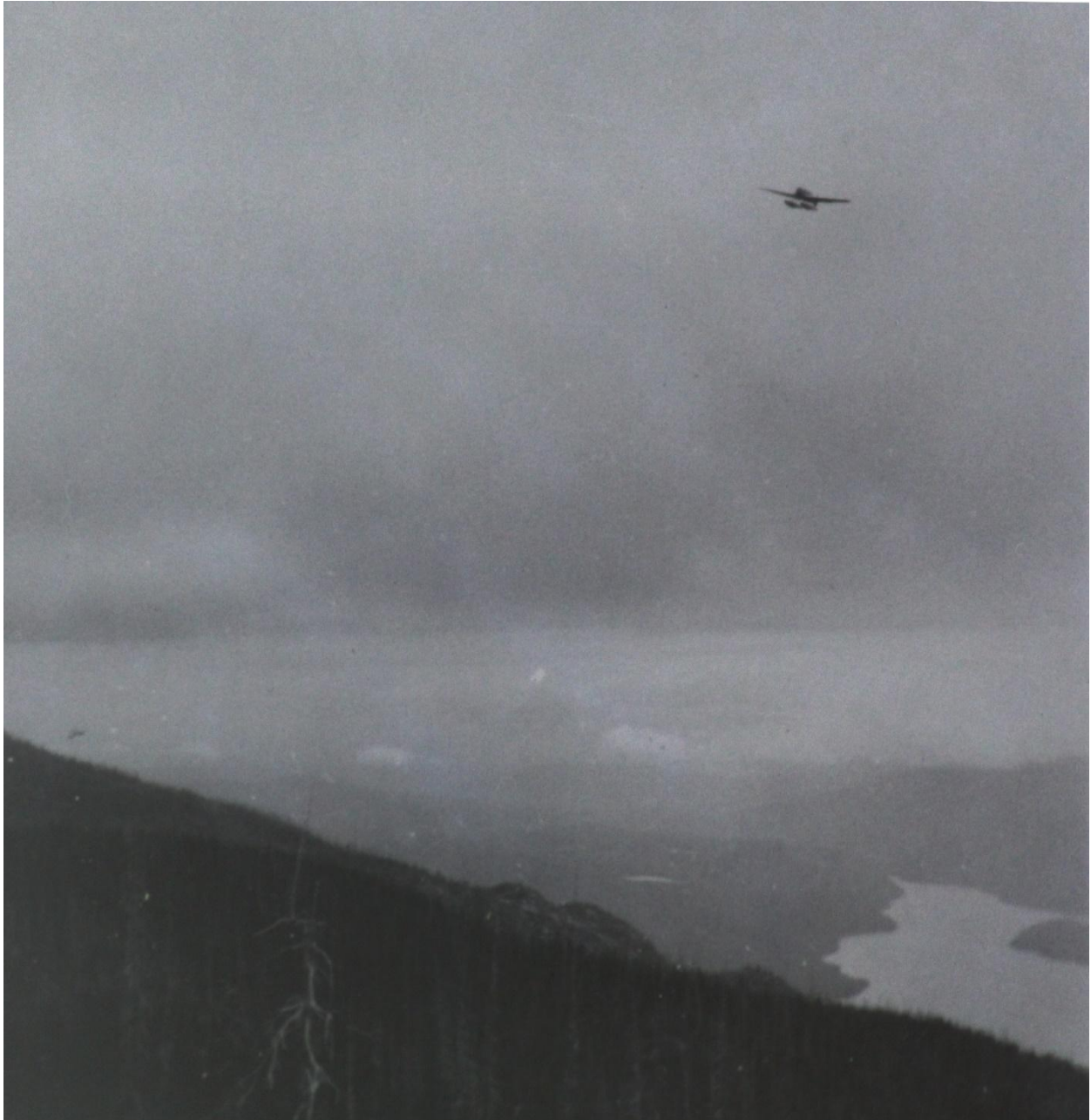
had two or three packhorses.

We finally arrived at the lake where we spent the night at the cabin of Jack Norman, the Clearwater Lake Patrolman. His cabin is about three or four hundred yards above the falls at the foot of Clearwater Lake. Many people have gone over the falls as that is where the best fishing is and when they get close to the falls they don't realize how swift the water is. I went for a walk and explored the lava fields. We spent the night at the cabin and the next day we were taken to the foot of Azure Mtn by boat which was run by Jack.

The foot of the trail is about seventeen miles from the patrolman's cabin and the level of the lake is about twenty-two hundred feet. We had to climb to the sixty-five hundred foot level carrying all our immediate supplies. The rest would be dropped by parachute from a Beaver airplane FHN, or from a Junkers W34, CF-AQW. The Beaver was quite new out, but the Junkers were an old workhorse bush plane.



*Junkers W-34, CF-AQW arriving to drop supplies. (Enlargement)*



*CF-AQW above Clearwater Lake, looking south.  
(Photo by Gerald Flowers)*

It seemed to be a long climb carrying equipment and it was hot. I left two items, intending to go back down the next day to get them, but I guess that wasn't a good idea because I went back down when it had cooled off a bit. I never put things off after that.

I enjoyed the summer on Azure Mountain and saw a lot of game. When we were out hunting one day we saw a black bear that dad thought would taste good, however, the first cartridge was a dud and the bear got away. It was moving very quickly through an old burn which was partly grown-up, breaking branches and anything else that got in its way. That whole box of ammunition were duds. Luckily dad had ordered a box of new ammo.

Another time when picking huckleberries down over the hill we spooked a bear and it took off in the opposite direction. I shot a grouse one time but I held too low and all we could find was a scattering of feathers. I was slowly learning. We walked up to a small glacier and startled some Rock Ptarmigans, they exploded from almost beneath our feet. Dad had carved several figures over the summer up there.



*Albert carved several figures (Photo by Gerald Flowers)*

We went over to a rock cairn and realized that the edge dropped off in a vertical cliff about thirty feet behind the cairn. We could see Azure Lake five or six thousand feet below. Then it was time to head for our camp. We also saw a large bull caribou which trotted across in front of us. I found out later that it was the first one back after the Archer burn, thirty years before.





*(Photo by Gerald Flowers)*

We started to build a log cabin by the creek in the draw where our tent was pitched and used logs that had fallen due to the forest fire. They were perfectly sound, but heavy. They were all of an even size which made it easier to build. We had gotten all the walls up and the door and window openings when dad had an accident.

While we were climbing up the hill behind the campsite, a large stone rolled down and caught dad on the calf, bruising it badly. We continued to do our work and got out the weather and fire reports (of which there were few) until dad's leg started to worry him. His lower leg was black and he told me to call the Kamloops Ranger Station. He had called a few days earlier but was unable to get his message through. The weather was better when I tried and I got through.

They asked if a basket stretcher would work OK, but I didn't think it would as they would take too long, and dad's leg looked bad. Besides, I thought it would be very painful. Anyway, I told them a helicopter would be the best if it didn't have too much of a load. It was a slight downhill takeoff which would make it easier.

They must have really hustled because the next morning (*Saturday the 23rd*) they called and said that a helicopter was on the way and asked me what the weather was like. Anyway, along comes the helicopter, makes a circle and he told me to cut down a few more trees which I did. Then he landed with a bit of forward motion, facing down the draw to the south. The registration was CF-FZX and it was a Bell. The cockpit plexiglass was open to the side and to the top. The tail boom was covered and said Okanagan Air Services.

The pilot introduced himself and then went to get dad aboard. I didn't remember his name at the time, but dad said it was Carl Agar (*one newspaper reports the pilot name as 'Deke' Orr, who was trained and flew for Carl*). The helicopter lifted slightly and then began to go forward and down the hill. It was the first helicopter that I'd ever seen. It was September 1950.



*A.D. Flowers in the left seat, 'Deke' Orr in the right. Restarting helicopter during medical evacuation.  
(Photo by Gerald Flowers)*

After dad took off in the helicopter, I started to pack things as I was told to by him. I thought I could stay there until the end of the season as it was just about over, but I guess rules are rules. I packed things up and called Jack Norman, the Clearwater Lake Patrolman to come and get me. I met him the next day at the foot of the tail and got a ride with him in the boat to his cabin at the foot of the lake where I stayed overnight.



*Deke Orr and A. D. Flowers, leaving for the Royal Inland Hospital in Kamloops BC. (Photo by Gerald Flowers)*

I only had the rifle and three cartridges and a small pack when I headed out the next morning for Dawson Falls. On the way, I stopped at the Ray farm where I had lunch. I saw a black bear at the farm and some geese in the lick in the middle of the pasture. A little way past the farm there was a log cabin that a wolverine had done its job on. It could be smelled for two hundred yards.

Further down the trail, I could hear the sounds of equipment working. It was the road crew at work. When I got to the road camp, I went to an area where I could shoot off the remaining three rounds of ammunition. I needn't have bothered as they were all duds. What luck I'd had that they weren't needed.

I visited with the cook and then Les Cook, the Ranger, arrived to take me to spend the night at his house. After a great meal and a visit with his son, whose name I think was Robert (*turns out, was David*), I went to bed to sleep. The next day the Ranger, Les Cook, and his son drove me to catch the train at Blue River from where I went to Kamloops. I went up to the hospital to see dad. He told me of his trip down from Azure Mountain Lookout and that they had to stop several times for fuel. The last place was from a tractor on a harvesting crew.

He had found a place for me to stay with a nice older couple by the name of Webber, who had lost their son due to being struck by a train. They were nice to me and found a friend for me to go hiking with. When dad was ready to go, they gave their son's heavy shirt to keep me warm. We took off to Campbell River where dad was to teach the higher grades. I started grade nine sometime in October.

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***END of the excerpt***

## ***A Little about Albert and Gerald, and the people involved***

*The above story is 2 pages out of 13 written by Gerald, about himself growing up in the 1940s and 50s. This article simply puts together the pictures they took with some information and pictures found on the internet, as well as information shared by individuals and archives. The words are 100% his.*

*At the time, Albert Flowers' wife Jennie, and their other two children Joyce (17) and David (11), were living in East Greenfield (now called Greenfield Park) near Montreal QC. They did not know about what had happened until they heard about it over the radio. Several radio archives were searched, but the broadcast has not been found.*



**Albert David Flowers**

*March 1899 Port Daniels QC – Nov 1980 Victoria BC*



1940

*Canadian Army Training Centre, Petawawa*



1943

*Albert served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the First World War. He enlisted January 1916 at age 16, with the 132nd 'North Shore' Battalion in Campbellton NB. His older brother Clement also enlisted in 1916. They both trained at the Valcartier camp, then shipped out to England in November 1916, where they were transferred to the 104th Battalion for further training at the Whitley camp. In March of 1918, the two brothers went to different units after arriving in France at the start of the German Spring Offensive. Albert was transferred to the 26th 'New Brunswick' Battalion, also known as "The Fighting 26th", while Clement volunteered for the Canadian Machine Gun Regiment, where he was wounded. Albert never spoke of the war to anyone except his brother.*

*Albert was with the 26th at the Battle of Amiens at the start of the 100 Day Offensive and served as a Stretcher Bearer. In mid-August 1918 he was transferred to the 78th 'Winnipeg Grenadiers' Battalion in Arras. He later moved to a frontline soldier sometime during the Battles of the; Scarpe, Drocourt-Queant Line, Canal du Nord, Hindenburg Line, Cambrai, Selle, Sambre, and finally Valenciennes when the war ended. Albert did not know his brother was wounded until seeing him in a newsreel that was taken in a hospital during the war.*

*During the First World War active soldiers were paid \$20 per month. Albert managed to save most of what he made and after the war, he went back to school and got a teaching degree (he excelled at mathematics).*

*At the start of World War 2, he re-enlisted, joining the Canadian Artillery Training Centre In Petawawa at the rank of Lieutenant. Although he remained in Canada, he trained artillery crews who then went overseas.*

*Albert, a veteran of two wars, was also a High School Teacher, Principal, Meteorologist, Assistant Surveyor, Genealogist, Author ('Loyalists of Bay Chaleur'), and Poet ('Sir Winston Churchill' published March 1965). In his later years, he worked/volunteered at the Canadian Legion in the War Services department in Victoria BC.*



**Gerald Flowers** (Author of the above story) Sept. 1935 Montreal QC – July 2018 Duncan BC

*The first time Gerald arrived in British Columbia with his father, was in September 1947 when they both went to Cortez Island aboard the Union Steamship SS Chelosin, arriving on his 12th birthday. They built a cabin near Manson Landing on some acreage. Gerald went to school there, and Albert worked as a Surveyor on a new road to Whaletown. Gerald wrote several stories relating to his time there, such as a trip on the Mission Boat Society's 'Rendezvous' with Reverend Rollo Boas, among others. He must have had quite the stories to tell his brother and sister when the two of them returned to Montreal in August 1948 for a short stay before going back to BC.*

*That same August is when Albert left for Clearwater BC and Gerald joined him later that winter. This is where the story of their adventure in Clearwater and Wells Gray Park takes place. They rented a room about 2km east of the Clearwater school. Gerald attended school there and Albert may have worked as a teacher there as well.*

*After being left behind and packing their belongings and with no working ammunition for his rifle in an area of grizzlies, black bears, badgers, wolverines and wolves, Gerald walked from the lookout on Azure mountain down to Clearwater lake, where the Lake Patrolman took him to the patrolman's cabin to stay over night. The next day after a long walk (40 ~ 45kms), he reached safety. Being new to the area and being so young would have made his hike out that much more difficult, as there were so many things could go wrong. Perhaps the trail was in good condition.*

*It has been pointed out that Les Cook most likely took Gerald to catch the train at Clearwater Station, rather than Blue River. Because the road from Clearwater to Blue River was appallingly bad in those days, it would have taken a full day to get there and pointless, as he would then have to take the train south again to Kamloops. Most everyone took the train in those days, as even the road from Clearwater to Kamloops was still pretty sketchy. The present #5 highway was not built yet and some bridges were one-way. One reason he may have done this is for another day of adventure, and a little more time with his friend. The fare for the train would not have been that much more.*

*After their time on the mountain and when Albert was released from the hospital in October 1950, they returned once again to Montreal, but this time the whole family moved to BC (Campbell River), then after several other moves they settled in Duncan. Gerald got a job with the C.N. Railway to rebuild bridges on their Vancouver Island lines. The Kinsol trestle near Shawnigan Lake was one of those bridges when it was still in operation, today its a walking trail.*

*In 1958 he was hit by a tree while working in a logging camp near Marguerite BC. He was not expected to survive and suffered effects from the injuries for the rest of his life (yet another story he wrote about). Gerald loved boating, collecting old guns and spent time in the outdoors hiking, 4x4ing, camping, hunting and was also a volunteer fireman in Duncan. He loved flying and later he was able to get his private pilot's license.*



Deke Orr,

Picture Courtesy of Okanagan Heritage Museum

### **Pilot - D. K. "Deke" Orr**

*D. K. Orr, also known as 'Deke', is Darwin Kitchener Orr. He was born in Toronto, Ontario in July 1914 and was 90 when he passed away in October 2004, in Hancock, Mississippi. In 1945 he flew a tiger moth to tow a glider to set a record for the longest tow of a glider at that time. He was a veteran bush pilot, as well as a commercial pilot and lived in Vancouver BC. Deke was married several times but its unknown if he had any children. His first marriage in 1942 was to famous female aviation pilot Marion Alice Powell. Little is known about Deke Orr.*

*As per one newspaper article we now know he was the one who performed Canada's first mountain helicopter rescue. Deke was trained by Carl Agar and received his helicopter license on May 31 1950 and so, had less than 4 months experience at the time of the rescue. His first job was flying material for a mining company that was setting up a mineral claim high in the Cheam Range south of Hope BC. The helicopter would have had its crop dusting equipment removed beforehand to lighten it as much as possible.*

*Deke was flying an early (1947) Bell 47B-3 (page 20). With an open cockpit, underpowered, had a covered tail boom and rolled on caster wheels, it would have been difficult to control, land and takeoff on such a high ridge. Flying in an open cockpit directly under the main rotor blades would have been a very unpleasant experience, but had to done and in all kinds of weather. Doing this for months on end could easily have led to an accident. A landing pad may have been built later once CF-FZX was converted to a Model 47D-1 with skids.*

*Deke gained a lot of experience in a short amount of time doing this job, and so doing a rescue at 6,200 ft on a flat area would have been easy for him in comparison.*

### **Rico Copper Mines**

*Minerals were first discovered in the Cheam Range in 1915. Drilling was done and an adit (entrance) was built by 1919. It was left abandoned until 1948 when Rico Copper Mines Limited took over the claim. Today it sits abandoned and is known as the Lucky Four Mine.*

*The mine is on the eastern flank of Foley Peak below a long ridge to Conway Peak. The ridge varies between 6,100 ft and 6,210 ft (1860m and 1893m) and has an area flat enough to land a helicopter. The exact landing spot is not known, but there are some remnants of mining equipment in the area.*



*The ridge between Foley and Conway Peaks with mine area looking west. (Google Earth)*

## **Ted Helset - Guide and Outfitter/Packer**



*Ted Helset at the hitching rail. (Photo Courtesy of the Helset Family)*

*Ted Helset moved to the Upper Clearwater area in 1938 near Moul Falls. In 1946, along with Charlie Shook, bought an existing trap-line and built a homestead near Hemp Creek where the road now passes.*

*He started a business as a Guide and Outfitter in summer and trapped in winter. With his many horses, he would bring hunters and park rangers into remote areas, on trips that would last a week or some could be up to a month. Life here was tough, but it was also a close-knit community at a time when people would help each other out, far from the rat race. Ted's daughter Clara who turned 16 at the time, remembers people talking about the rescue.*

*In more recent times, when a highway crew was building a new bridge into the Park, a cabin of Ted's was in the way and was going to be torn down. Some locals saved it by moving it carefully several km, and it now stands as a chapel. Locals suggest that Ted's homestead should be preserved while it is still in good condition. It represents the early settlers in the area.*

*Ted Helset was also the subject of a five-page Reader's Digest story in the April 1953 issue, called "An Unforgettable Character" written by Bruce Hutchison.*

### **Jack Norman - Lake Patrolman**

*The Clearwater Lake Patrolman's cabin was exactly where The Osprey Café is now located. Jack Norman had a homestead on Grouse Creek road 42 km (26 miles) south. He and his family moved there From Princeton BC in 1934. The Norman family's tiny log cabin where Jack was raised is inside the Princeton Museum. He would have manned the Patrolman's cabin during the summer and had to drive over a very rough road that is said to have taken several hours. There is an airport just west of Dutch lake in Clearwater, but the Patrolman's cabin would have been the last stop the helicopter pilot could have made for fuel, before going up the mountain.*

### **Les Cook – Park Ranger**

*Les Cook and Ted Helset were neighbours and lived across Hemp Creek from each other. Les Cook and his wife Roberta owned the property to the east of the Helset homestead at Hemp Creek, close to the bottom of the Hemp Creek hill. Les supervised the building of the jeep-trail into the park. In Gerald's story, he was uncertain what Les' son's name was... it was David. Les helped with the restoration of the town of Barkerville and also in turning it into a park.*

## **John Ray - Trapper & Farmer**

*John Ray was the first homesteader in the area. He moved into the area in 1911, long before it was established as a park, which was in November 1939 just before the start of World War Two. He set up trap lines and built a small cabin. Ray helped save members of the Canim Lake Indian Band during a measles epidemic, and in gratitude, the chief awarded him a tract of land of about 800 acres around Alice Lake and in 1929 he built a 4-room cabin for 5, near a mineral spring there and raised a family.*

*A journey to the town of Clearwater was about 2-3 days over pack trails before the first road was built. He and his family moved away in 1947, but that fall he returned and sadly passed away there. In April of 1996 the Ray Farm was listed as a Canadian Historical Site, not to be preserved but instead left alone, where as the Helset ranch could still be preserved.*

## **Wells Gray Park**

*Wells Gray Provincial Park covers an area of 5,250 square kilometres, with many lakes, mountains, and caves. It also has many waterfalls, dormant volcanoes, glaciers, and hot springs, and is known as Canada's Valley of Fire and Ice. It has different types of terrain and soils and a great amount of diversity in plant and animal life, with dense forests and large open alpine meadows. It's boundaries have changed over the years, getting ever larger.*

*In July 1926 a large area along the Clearwater Valley was destroyed by fire. The Great Fire of 1926, along with the Archer Burn, destroyed over 125,000 acres. Many of the settlers lost practically everything they owned. They had to rebuild their lives, but at least there were no fatalities. Five fires burned large areas between 1926 and 1950, so BC Forest Service established the lookout on Azure mtn in 1950, but it was only used for 3 or 4 years and then abandoned in favour of a permanent lookout on Battle mountain in 1955.*

## **Upper Clearwater Road Construction 1950**

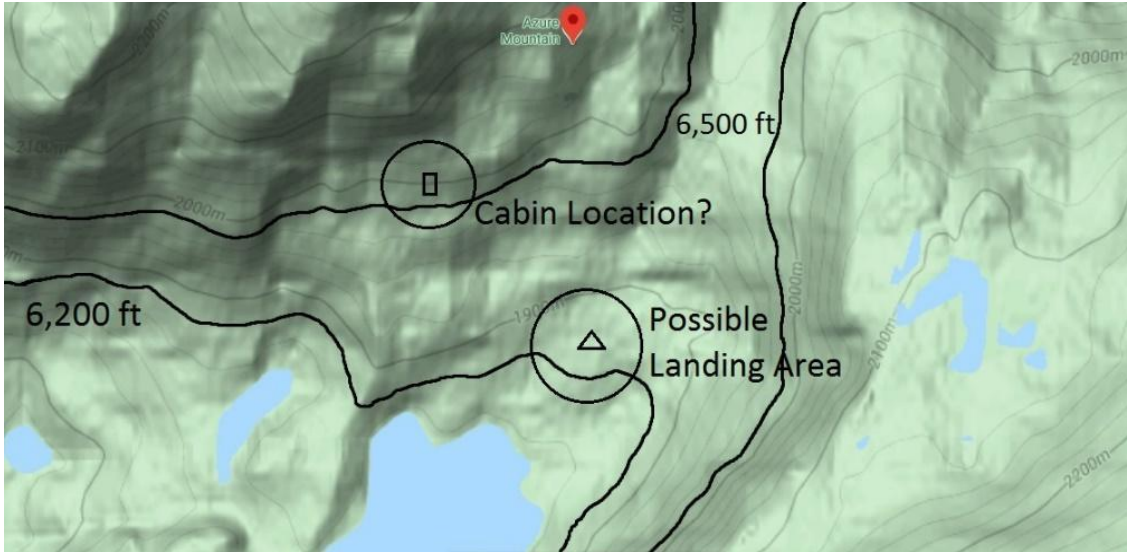
*In 1925 the Clearwater Valley Road was a narrow gravel road that had only been pushed to 12 miles north of the town of Clearwater. Park planners explored and coordinated the requirements of both forest protection and recreational use in an integrated system of jeep-trails and horse-trails. The building of a bridge over the Murtle River in 1949 made it possible to bring road-building equipment across in 1950 and start work on a jeep-trail to Clearwater Lake. A Ranger Station and residence were also built at the entrance to the park. Under the supervision of the Park Ranger Les Cook and advised by the Resident Engineer, the approach to the Murtle River Bridge and the first 5 miles (of 15 miles) of the Clearwater Lake jeep-trail were constructed during that same year, but it did not reach the lake until the early-mid 1950s. By 1995 the road had been paved up to Helmcken Falls.*



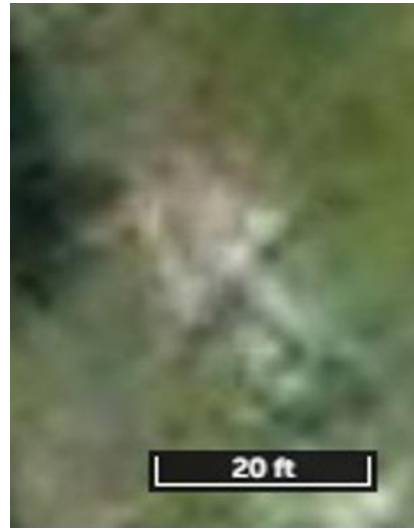
*One-way wooden bridge built in 1953, was an improvement over what was originally there (no picture). This is at the 2nd Canyon on the way into the Upper Clearwater area and had an approach of very sharp turns.*



**Searching for the Landing Site and Cabin**  
**(Location 1)**



Area of interest. (Google, Terrain)



Triangle; ground to air signal indicates 'Probably Safe to Land Here'  
Arrow; ground to air signal indicates 'Proceeding in this Direction' (ZoomEarth)



Possible outline of cabin. The Triangle/Arrow points to this feature 1,050ft away. (ZoomEarth, winter)

<b>Location 1</b>		<b>Objects found on ground</b>			<i>(Unknown when built)</i>		
<u>Cabin</u>	<u>Latitude</u>	<u>Longitude</u>	<u>Elevation</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Built</u>	<u>Notes</u>	
AZURE (Summit)	52d 17m 53s N	120d 04m 19s W	6430 ft	?	?	<b>Rectangle</b> (structure foundation?) (Shows in ZoomEarth, September view)	
	52.298	-120.072	1960 m				
AZURE (near lake)	52d 17m 47s N	120d 04m 06s W	6150 ft	?	?	<b>Triangle</b>	
	52.2964	120.0682	1875 m				

<b>Location 2</b>		<b>Forest History Association of B.C</b>			<i>(Official)</i>		
<u>Lookout</u>	<u>Latitude</u>	<u>Longitude</u>	<u>Elevation</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Built</u>	<u>Notes</u>	
AZURE (West Ridge)	52d 19m 59s N	120d 12' 0" W	6000 ft	P	1950	BC Parks lookout (map indicates 5548ft)	
	52.333	-120.2	1829 m				

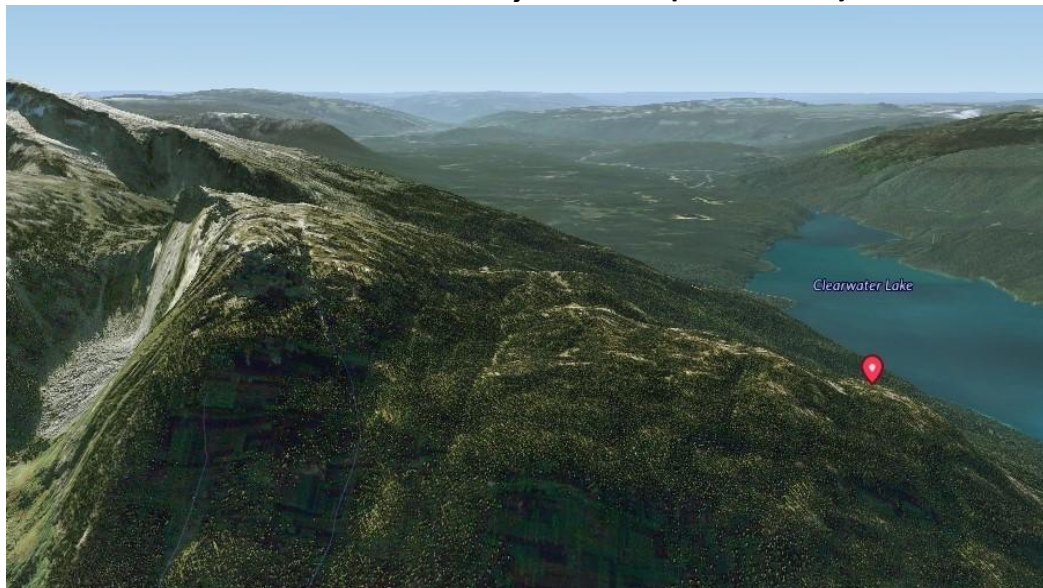


Locations 1 and 2 are 9.5 kilometers apart. (Gaia GPS)

Location 1; Objects found on the ground using various online maps.

Location 2; Official location (and where the photo of CF-AQW was taken from).

### **Forestry Records (Location 2)**



The icon indicates the BC Forestry location of the lookout.

Location 2; looking south. (FatMap)

## Junkers W33 & W34



*Junkers W34 CF-AQW (Built 1931 – Written-Off 1959)*



*Example of a Junkers W34 (CF-ATF) and is still on display at the Canada Aviation and Space Museum in Ottawa (Picture credit: Canada Aviation and Space Museum, Archives)*

*The Junkers W33 first flew in July 1926 and were considered advanced for their time. During the era of biplanes, they were an all-metal cantilever monoplane with corrugated dural skin, powered by a 350hp L5 inline-6 engine. A few W33s later had their engine swapped for a radial engine and were then designated a W34. In April 1928 a Junkers W33 (#D-1167 "Bremen") made the first successful transatlantic flight over the Atlantic from east to west. This aircraft is restored and currently on display at the Bremen Airport Museum in Germany.*

The Junkers W34s were a 6-passenger version that was equipped with a radial engine. Nine were brought to Canada, and most of them used by Canadian Airways. The Junkers were popular in the early days of bush flying for their ruggedness and ease of flying. The last flight of a Junkers W34 was by CF-ATF on September 17, 1962, when it was flown from Kamloops BC to what is now the Canada Aviation and Space Museum in Ottawa.

### **CF-AQW**

CF-AQW rolled off the assembly line as a model W33 on June 5, 1931 (manufacturer's serial number 2587). In January 1939 at the Winnipeg's Stevenson Aerodrome, an 'Oil Dilution System' was installed to test a new method of cold-starting aircraft engines in arctic winters. On October 20, 1947, it was sold to Central B.C. Airlines, and then in May of 1950 it had its 350hp L5 6-cylinder inline engine, swapped out for a War surplus Pratt & Whitney R-1340-AN1 600hp radial engine, adding 250hp, thereby increasing its payload. It was then re-designated as a model W34. Its not known where the swap was done but may have been in Victoria or Vancouver. It later went through yet another engine swap in 1955 while in Yellowknife NWT.

On August 10, 1959 while taking-off from Kootenay Lake near Nelson BC, it stalled while trying to avoid powerlines. It crashed and sank, but the pilot escaped with minor injuries. It was written-off and scrapped for parts.

The Kamloops airport borders Kamloops Lake and has a floatplane dock where they would be loaded and unloaded. Central BC Airways had a base of operation there in 1950 and had a variety of aircraft types. It is possible that the pilot at the time of the drop was Edward Walter 'Ted' Stull. Other pilots were suggested but they were hired later.

### **BELL Helicopter; Model 47B-3**

Bell received certification for the world's first commercially available helicopter on May 8, 1946, and started manufacturing the Model 47 in Niagara Falls, New York in early 1947. The Bell 47 B-3, was originally manufactured with an open cockpit, enclosed tail boom, and a wheeled undercarriage. It was designed for Agricultural work and was used primarily for spraying fields, orchards, and forests.

Of the 34 model B-3s built, 2 remain original and preserved. Bell 47B-3 LV-AEF, MSN 67, and built on June 5 1947 is at the Niagara Aerospace Museum in Niagara Falls, New York. It was used in Argentina and is basically what CF-FZX looked like in 1950. The other is at the Anchorage Alaska International Airport, Bell 47B-3 N105EH, with an unknown MSN and build date, was owned by Economy Helicopters. Very little information is available about this one.

<b>Specification:</b>	Occupants	2 people (Pilot and 1 Passenger)
	Engine (gas)	Franklin 6V4, 6-cylinder; 178 HP (sea level) (-18% = <b><u>146 HP</u></b> at 6,200 ft)

<b>Performance:</b>	Cruise Speed	137 kph	(85 mph)
	Range	341 kms	(212 miles)
	Maximum climb rate	274 m/min	(900 ft/min)
	Service Ceiling	3,353 m	(11,400 ft)

**Hovering ceiling in ground effect:      5,400 ft                      (Rescue and Mine activity was at 6,200 ft)**

Performance and flight characteristics deteriorate with altitude. For a gas-powered naturally aspirated engine it would lose power with an increase in altitude. Flight controls would also be adversely affected in the thin air at higher elevations. Another danger was having a fabric-covered tail boom that would act like a sail in a strong wind pushing the craft around. Having wheels instead of skids allowed maneuvering like a plane on the ground, but was removed in later models, being of little use and changed to skids.

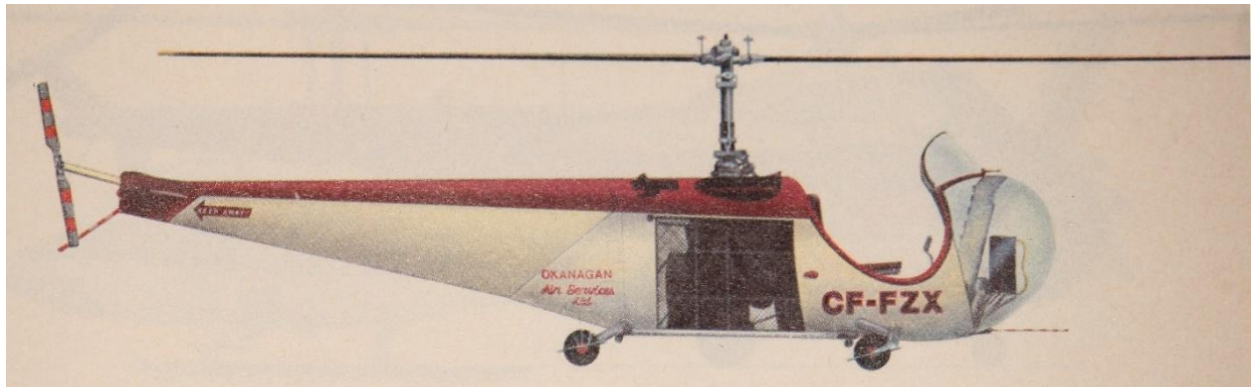
## **Okanagan Air Services and CF-FZX**

Bell helicopter model 47B-3, serial number #71, first rolled off the assembly line on June 12, 1947, and was first registered as N26H before being sold to Central Aircraft in Yakima Washington and registered as N1657.

In April 1947 two former Canadian military pilots Carl Agar and Arnold Bent, along with an RCAF engineer Alfred Stringer, founded South Okanagan Flying Club in Penticton BC. After a troubling first year, they moved to Kelowna and changed the name to Okanagan Air Services to include other options for flying. They heard about a new flying machine that was being used for spraying fields with good results. They went to Yakima Washington and after seeing a demonstration they got the money together and purchased N1657 from them.

On August 9 1947, N1657 was flown to Penticton, Canada, and registered as CF-FZX, and became the first commercially licensed helicopter in British Columbia and was among the first five commercial helicopters registered in Canada. In 1968 it was sold back to an American company is still flying today as a model 47G-2, in Washinton state.

<u>Canada</u>	<u>U.S.A.</u>	<u>Serial Number</u>	<u>Model</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Company</u>
CF-FQR	NC125B	S/N 45	Bell 47B-3	Winnipeg MB	Skyways Services
CF-FQS	NX131B	S/N 51	Bell 47B-3	Winnipeg MB	Skyways Services
CF-FJA	NC132B	S/N 52	Bell 47B-3	Toronto ON	Photographic Survey
CF-FZN	NC143B	S/N 63	Bell 47B-3	Winnipeg MB	Skyways Services
<b>CF-FZX</b>	<b>N1657</b>	<b>S/N 71</b>	<b>Bell 47B-3</b>	<b>Penticton BC</b>	<b>Okanagan Air Services</b>



CF-FZX in 1949, Illustration by Clive Brooks (Courtesy of CANAV Books)



CF-FZX after refueling during a crop spraying demonstration 1947 in Kelowna. (Courtesy of Helicopter Heritage Canada)



*Pilot Bill McLeod, about 1950. (Photo by Gordon Peters; Courtesy of Helicopter Heritage Canada)*



*Bell 47B-3 (LV-AEF) equipped for agricultural spraying (Courtesy of Niagara Aerospace Museum)*

## CF-FZX / N1657

Originally manufactured as a Model 47B-3

Date	Model	Reg.	Country/Location		Owner	Comments
1947-06-12	47B-3	<b>N26H</b>	US	NY Wheatfield	Bell Factory	<b>Manufacture Date: Bell serial number #71</b>
1947-07-21	47B-3	N1657	US	WA Yakima	Central Helicopters	Delivered to "Central Helicopters" (Central Aircraft)
1947-08-07	47B-3	N1657	US	WA Yakima	Central Helicopters	Okanagan Air Services Buys N1657 (CF-FZX in Canada)
1947-08-09	47B-3	CF-FZX	Canada	BC Penticton	Okanagan Air Services	Flown to BC by Pilots Carl Agar (Alf Stringer passenger)
1947-09-??	47B-3	CF-FZX	Canada	BC Windemere Valley	Okanagan Air Services	contracted by BC Fire Services to spray for bugs
1947-09-12	47B-3	CF-FZX	Canada	BC Windemere Valley	Okanagan Air Services	Damaged: Hit Electrical Wires and crashed
1947-09-??	47B-3	CF-FZX	Canada	BC Windemere Valley	Okanagan Air Services	First crash investigation of a helicopter in Canada
1948-??-??	47B-3	CF-FZX	Canada	BC Kelowna	Okanagan Air Services	Repaired: Back in service
1948-06-??	47B-3	CF-FZX	Canada	BC Chilliwack	Okanagan Air Services	Used to spray for Mosquitoes after Fraser River flood
1948-08-??	47B-3	CF-FZX	Canada	AB Banff Nat. Park	Okanagan Air Services	Used to spray lodgepole pine beetle
<b>1950-09-23</b>	<b>47B-3</b>	<b>CF-FZX</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>BC Wells Gray Park</b>	<b>Okanagan Air Services</b>	<b>Azure Mountain BC Rescue at 6,200 ft</b>
1951/1955	<b>47D-1</b>	<b>CF-FZX</b>	Canada	BC Kelowna	Okanagan Air Services	<b>Converted to 47D-1</b>
1968-02-29	47D-1	N1657	US	WA Manson	Cascade Helicopters	Sold to Cascade Helicopters & moved back to US
1968-02-29	47D-1	N1657	US	WA Manson	Cascade Helicopters	US Certificate of airworthiness (A/W) issued
1970-08-06	47D-1	N1657	US	WA Manson	Cascade Helicopters	Sold to unknown buyer
1970-08-06	47D-1	N1657	US	WA Manson	Cascade Helicopters	Damaged: Collided with trees, uncontrolled descent
1971-06-24	47D-1	N1657	US	WA Moses Lake	Cascade Helicopters	Damaged (Written Off): Low level Loss of Control
1971	47D-1	N1657	US	WA Manson	Cascade Helicopters	Repaired: Rebuilt by Cascade
1972-06-04	47D-1	N1657	US	WA Warden Airport	Unknown	Sold to unknown buyer
1972-06-04	47D-1	N1657	US	WA Warden Airport	Unknown	Damaged: Crop dusting, collided with wires
?	47D-1	N1657	US	WA	Cascade	Bought by Cascade
1976	47D-1	N1657	US	WA	Cascade	Repaired: Rebuilt by Cascade
1976	47D-1	N1657	US	OR Milton-Freewater	Unknown	Sold to Lawyer & Farmer Partner
?	<b>47G-2</b>	N1657	US	WA Waitsburg	Unknown	<b>Converted to 47G-2</b>
1977	47G-2	N1657	US	WA Waitsburg	Waitsburg Helicopter	Bought by Waitsburg Helicopter Service (Partnership)
1978-01-25	47G-2	N1657	US	WA Waitsburg	Waitsburg Helicopter	Certificate Issue Date
2006-06-02	47G-2	N1657	US	WA Waitsburg	Waitsburg Helicopter	Registration History (Flight Aware website)
2009-01-20	47G-2	N1657	US	WA Waitsburg	Waitsburg Helicopter	Last Action Date
2011	47G-2	N1657	US	WA Waitsburg	Waitsburg Helicopter	Last Flown
2020	47G-2	N1657	US	WA Waitsburg	Waitsburg Helicopter	Currently Stored Indoors

History of CF-FZX (N1657)

## Early Helicopter History; Search/Rescue/Firsts

Date YY/MM/DD	Location	Elevation		Comments	Event	Success? or Failure	Helicopter	
		Above Sea Level					Make	Model
1944-04-??	US, New York	Sea Level		First Rescue of a Civilian. Stranded teen on a sand bar	Rescue	Successful	Sikorsky	R-4
1944-04-25	Burmese Jungle	Unknown		First Combat Rescue, behind enemy lines of 4 men from an L-1 Vigilant crash. 600 miles and over 5,000-foot mountains.	Rescue	Successful	Sikorsky	YR-4B
1945-01-05	US, NY, Lockport	Unknown		Rescue of a Bell P-59 Airacomet (prototype) test pilot	Rescue	Successful	Bell	30 ship1
1945-01-26	Burma, Naga Hills	4,700'		<b>Not the first, but the highest up to this date</b>	Rescue	Successful	Sikorsky	YR-4B
1945-03-14	Lake Erie	Sea Level		Ship-2, Rescue of 2 fishermen on ice flow	Rescue	Successful	Bell	30 ship2
1945-04-19	Canada, NL, (& QC)	<500'		First Helicopter Rescue in Canada.	Rescue	Successful	Sikorsky	HNS-1
to 1945-05-03	238km SW Goose Bay Lac De Morbihan, QC			US based helicopter transported survivors of crashed PBV -5A/Canso, to a base camp near the crash site.				
1945-05-11	Burma, (WW2)	Unknown		Rescue of a downed Corsair pilot	Rescue	Successful	Sikorsky	R-4
1945-06-01	Philippines			Rescue of 34 critically wounded soldiers	Rescue	Successful	Sikorsky	YR-4A
1945-11-29	US, CT, Fairfield	Sea Level		<u>First Helicopter Rescue by Hoist</u> . Two men on grounded Oil Barge on Penfield Reef. Conducted during violent storm.	Rescue	Successful	Sikorsky	R-5
1946-09-21	Canada, NL, Gander	<1000'		DC-4 crash. First large scale rescue using helicopters	Rescue	Successful	Sikorsky	HNS-1
1946-11-01	Alps (Gauli Glacier)	11,000'		Rescue was by Fixed Wing Fieseler Fi 156 "Stork" on skis	Attempt	<b>Failed</b>	Bell	47
1947 August	British Columbia, Mt Waddington	4,000'		Recover body of a mountain climber on Tiedemann Glacier, with a Bell 47 from Yakima WA. (Mid August)	Attempt	<b>Failed</b>	Bell	47B
1950-04-15/ /1950-06-12	Canada, MB, Red River and the USA, Dakotas	<1000'		Assisted during Red River Flood ( May 5 1950 Winnipeg "Black Friday" )	Passengers & Air Photograph	Successful	Sikorsky	S-51
1950-09-04	Burma, (Korean War)	Unknown		First helicopter Rescue behind enemy lines	Rescue	Successful	Sikorsky	H-5
1950-09-21	Europe, Alps	Unknown		First Helicopter Flight over the Alps	Record Flight	Successful	Bell	47D-1
<b>SEPTEMBER 23 1950: Rescue of A. D. Flowers from Azure Mtn. by Okanagan Air Services pilot D.K. 'Deke' Orr</b>								
1950-09-23	Azure Mtn B.C.	6,200'		Rescue, Forestry Look-Out Man with injured leg	Rescue	Successful	Bell	47B-3

*A few of the many early helicopter Search and Rescues and attempts.*



S E P T E M B E R 1950						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Septembers Biggest News Events: Korean War (June 25, 1950 - July 27, 1953) Chinchaga Firestorm, Northern BC & Alberta					1 1st Flight of the Avro Ashton Jet Airliner	2 5th Anniversary of the end of World War 2
3	Labour Day 4 1st helicopter rescue behind enemy lines Beetle Bailey comic starts Big Typhoon hits Japan	5	6	Gerald 7 15th Birthday on Azure Mtn TV show; Truth or Consequences debuts Julie Kavner is Born	8 Canadian Forces Act passes; Canada enters Korean War	9 Actor; Joe Lisi is Born
10	Serious Train Accident in Ohio 11 Actor; Amy Madigan is Born	New Moon 12 Solar Eclipse Soviet Union	13	14	15 Ted Helset Family Sweet 16th Birthday of, Clara Helset	16
17	18	1st 19 Quarter Moon	20	21 1st helicopter to fly over the Alps Actor; Bill Murray is Born	22 First non-stop flight over the Atlantic Ocean by jet; 10hrs F-84E Thunderjet	23 Mountain Helicopter Rescue at 6,200' Wells Gray Park of A. D. Flowers by D.K. Deke Orr
24 B.C. Firestorm Black Sunday Skys dark over much of Canada and US	25 Newspapers record Canada's First Mountain Helicopter rescue Korean War into its 3rd Month	26 Full Moon Lunar Eclipse South America Darkening skies over Europe from BC Fires	27	28 Actor; John Sayles is Born	29	30 WSM-TV 4 Nashville Grand Ole Opry movie release The Breaking Point Smoking and Cancer Linked

*This calendar shows what was happening around the world in September of 1950. There was a very serious wildfire in northern BC and Alberta. There were several notable helicopter events this month as well.*

**Any recognition for this story is wholly for Albert and Gerald Flowers and all those involved.**

**Unanswered questions:**

- Where did the boat land to get to the trail head?*
- Where was the cabin that Albert and Gerald built; Location 1, or location 2? (LIDAR may resolve that)*
- Is it possible to locate where the pictures were taken from?*
- Is there a recording of the radio broadcast?*
- Are there other records not found yet, that describe this event or the lookout?*
- If Location #1 was not where this story happened, then what was built there?*
- Is this the highest rescue in the world up to that time?*

## Acknowledgement and Thanks to the Following for their Contributions

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<i>David Flowers</i>	<i>(Albert's Son)</i>	<i>History/Photos</i>	<i>Vancouver, BC</i>
<i>Joyce Flowers</i>	<i>(Albert's Daughter)</i>	<i>History</i>	<i>Victoria, BC</i>
<i>Ken Flowers</i>	<i>(Albert's Grandson)</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Edmonton, AB</i>
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<i>British Columbia Aviation Museum</i>	<i>Gord Bell</i>	<i>Library Inquiries</i>	
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<i>Okanagan Heritage Museum</i>	<i>Tara Hurley</i>	<i>Archivist</i>	
<i>Provincial Archives of Alberta</i>	<i>Karen Simonson</i>	<i>Archivist</i>	
<i>Royal British Columbia Museum</i>	<i>Taryn Jones</i>	<i>Archives Library</i>	
<i>Royal British Columbia Museum</i>	<i>Sue Halwa</i>	<i>Archivist</i>	
<i>Wells Gray Search and Rescue</i>	<i>Rowena Muglich</i>	<i>Training Officer</i>	
<i>Ellen Helset Ferguson</i>	<i>Family of Ted Helset</i>	<i>Clearwater BC</i>	
<i>Clara Jennie Ritcey</i>	<i>Family of Ted Helset</i>	<i>Clearwater BC</i>	
<i>Mike Ritcey</i>	<i>Family of Ted Helset</i>	<i>Clearwater BC</i>	
<i>Frank Ritcey</i>	<i>Family of Ted Helset</i>	<i>Clearwater BC</i>	
<i>Jean Strickland</i>	<i>Local Historian</i>	<i>Clearwater BC</i>	
<i>Chance Breckenridge</i>	<i>Hiker/Guide</i>	<i>Clearwater BC</i>	
<i>Ken Lancour</i>	<i>Yellowhead Helicopters</i>	<i>Clearwater BC</i>	
<i>Kevin Deckert</i>	<i>SAR/ Outdoorsman</i>	<i>Clearwater BC</i>	
<i>Jeff McDonnell</i>	<i>BC Ministry of Forests</i>	<i>Kamloops BC</i>	

### **Reference Books & Material:**

*The Bell 47 Helicopter Story*  
*Vertical Horizons: The History of Okanagan Helicopters*  
*Helicopters: The British Columbia Story*  
*Charlie Shooks' Glimpses Into The Past*

*by Bob Petite & Jeffrey Evans*  
*by Douglas M. Grant*  
*by Peter Corley-Smith & David N. Parker*  
*by Charlie Shooks*

### **Reference Websites & Museums:**

*Helicopter Heritage Canada*  
*Niagara Aerospace Museum*  
*Canada Aviation and Space Museum*  
*British Columbia Aviation Museum*  
*Royal British Columbia Museum*  
*Forest History Association of B.C*  
*Okanagan Heritage Museum*

### **Maps Used:**

*BC Fire Lookouts*  
*Mineral Titles Online*  
*Zoom Earth*  
*GAIA GPS*  
*Google Earth*  
*FATMAP*