



PUMPING FUEL FROM B4D INTO STORAGE TANK NEAR BEARDMORE GLACIER FOR REFUELING RETURN POLAR PLANES.

Oil Mission on the Trail



TONSORIAL treatment on the 644-mile trail. Ben Melton had a closer clip than he is receiving from George Moss when his Cat hit a partial break-through near crevasse.

At Little America B4Ds, Otters, and a helicopter had heretofore flown men, mail, parts, fuel, and explosives to the trail party and tractor train. Now their tasks were multiplied by a demand for 15,000 pounds of food, a dozen men flown in, construction crews flown out, plus sufficient fuel to take a loaded tractor train of 7 tractors and 14 sleds from Little America and return the same empty train to Little America.

With three B4Ds, two single-engine Otters, and one helicopter they began. B4Ds flew men and food to Byrd Station and returned men to Little America. Then all planes concentrated on the fuel project.

The helicopter flew drums to the near-caches on the trail. Otters extended a bit further. B4Ds began caching fuel, 800 gallons at a pass, toward the end of the 647-mile trail. Some days the ski-planes flew up to ten missions.

Cabin tanks that had permitted the B4Ds to make the flight to McMurdo from New Zealand, now held diesel fuel which was pumped into collapsible rubber tanks along the trail until the job was completed.

B4D crews under Lt. Col. Roy Curtis, Lt. Ed Frankiewicz, and Lieutenant Harvey Spood made blind landings on the snow in their ski-planes that search-and-rescue pilots would flinch at. Their motto for landing on the trail in clobbered weather: "Forget about gales and snow mounds that might be there, keep your descent down to 200 feet per minute, then cut your throttle when your skis crunch against the ice."