

## CANAL ZONE CONDITIONS MAKE AIR ATTACK EASY

Simms, Times Writer, Inspects Defenses in Panama and Finds Few.

By WILLIAM PHILIP SIMMS

Times Foreign Correspondent

Better to see what kind of a job our airman would face if called upon to prevent an enemy blowing up the Panama Canal from the clouds, I went up with squadron leader, Captain Randolph of Texas.

Before I came down I knew, it will be some job. Nature makes it so. For nine months in the year clouds in dense masses hover over the zone or float lazily across in billowy islands, with the sky showing like patches of blue sea between.

We took off from France field, the only practicable hopping-off place in the zone. It is only half as big as it ought to be. The field is a fill-in, a reclaimed marsh formerly covered with water at high tide.

We took off between showers, and mud and water splashed our fuselage and wings so that when we came down we still resembled a transcontinental touring car after a round-trip run.

Out over the Caribbean we roared to gain altitude. Turning, we crossed the Colon breakwater and headed for the Atlantic entrance to the canal, visible across Navy Bay.

### Zone Is Small

My chief impression was the smallness of the Canal Zone. We were all over the place—from coast to coast and back again in thirty-two minutes.

At the start I scarcely had time to turn my head for one good look at the panorama 3,000 feet below me before the bottom seemed to drop out and we were zooming down, head first, toward the famous Gatun locks, six miles inland. A few

seconds more and we were banking on our wing-tip just above the wonderful Gatun spillway whose machinery controls the waters of the lake and makes electrical power for the entire zone.

With a roar we turned and shot up like a bullet, high over the lake, to get a better view of its dead, tree-engaged, surface. Then we coasted down again, skimming past a Portuguese tramp steamer so low that her funnel towered above us. Then back up again and along over the great Culebra cut, from which our steam shovel had dug 146,000,000 cubic feet of dirt.

One good look and we flashed past Pedro Miguel and the Miraflores locks, which step the ships down to sea-level again, while the next minute saw us careening over the Pacific itself. A left turn and a whirr: Panama City lay below. Then, mounting high, we hit a bee-line for our base at Coco Solo, whence we started.

My second strongest impression—and it is giving away no military secrets to say so—was that from the sky the destruction of the canal would be a cinch, unless made aerially impregnable.

### Wide Open

The locks, the spillway, the control-houses and a dozen other vital spots already known and plotted by every interested foreign power, are wide open to attack from the clouds.

Only maximum preparedness BEFOREHAND will do any good in the event of hostilities. Otherwise every element in the situation would favor the aerial ambushers. To wait until AFTER hostilities begin to build up the necessary defenses, would

likely mean that there would be no canal to defend.

There are not enough troops in the zone properly to police it. Barracks are lacking, we more audaciously to be sent. Many already there are poorly housed in leaky shacks. There aren't enough airplanes, by half, and most of those now in use are old. The one air field is too small and the money to enlarge this one is not sufficient as the only way to make it bigger is by costly dredging.

On the Pacific side there is no air field at all. There is the beginning of one, but it is too tiny and too boggy for use.

### Few Navy Planes

Navy planes are fewer still. They, too, are mostly old stock and are airworthy, thanks to a service personnel that have a genius for making repairs. I saw some planes, the laminated woodwork of which could be pulled apart with the fingers—veterans of the World War which had seen service overseas, but which had been left to stand in French rains too long.

Panama, to be even fairly secure, must have fortifications equipped with modern, long-range guns, now lacking. She must have ample personnel, for the land, sea and air. There must be enough planes to cover both coasts, and do sentry duty 200 miles out to sea. And there must be naval auxiliaries, surface and submarine craft, to patrol the gulf, bays and inlets.

If ever an enemy submarine slips past our cordon and, under the cover of darkness, lands a squadron of demountable planes on a nearby "savanna," only a miracle can prevent the aircraft dropping out of the clouds some morning about day-break and putting an end to the Canal.

### Breaks Wrist in Fall

Mrs. Nellie Heustis, 36, of 1038 E. Washington St., is in Methodist Hospital suffering with a broken left wrist sustained today when she slipped and fell to the icy pavement.

## ARTISTS' CLUB ELECTS

E. R. Sitzman Chosen New President at Annual Meeting.

E. R. Sitzman is the new president of the Indiana Artists' Club. Other officers named at annual meeting Thursday night at the D. A. R. house, 824 N. Pennsylvania St., are: Mrs. Otis Adams, Robert Burke, L. O. Griffith, vice presidents; Miss Marie Todd, secretary; Turner Messick, treasurer, and Paul Hadley, Wilson B. Parker, Ada Schulz, Louis Mueller, Marie Goth, Dale Beasire and Homer G. Davidson, directors.



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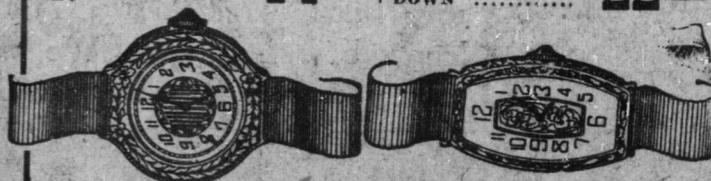
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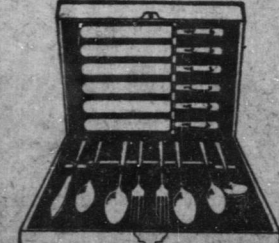
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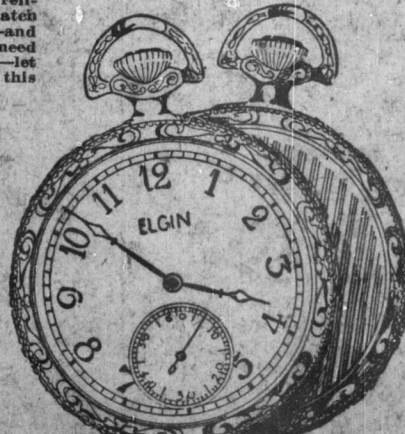


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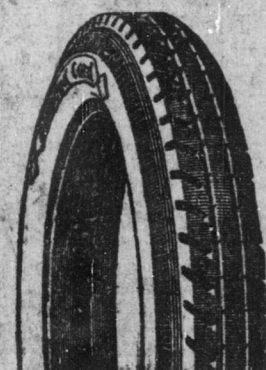
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