

## *Chapter 9,*

# **Mountaintop Repeaters**

**I**n the early days we used high-frequency (HF) radios for radio communications. The radios were very noisy, and you couldn't tune the squelch out. It's probably the reason I'm so deaf now. In the late sixties Jack Tibbles, the head electronics man at Service Electric, started experimenting with VHF direct line-of-sight communications using mountaintop repeaters. Today they're pretty well perfected, but in the early days there were all kinds of problems. Each company built their own repeaters. They weren't too dependable, but they worked most of the time. When they failed we had to wait for good weather to get up on the mountain with the helicopter to fix them. But the first step was to put a big radio tower up on top of a mountain, and until Tibbles came along, this really hadn't been done before. With great effort we hauled a radio tower up to Blue Mountain, 3400 feet high. The tower was a triangular affair about 100 feet high. We built a good foundation in the rock, drilled holes, and mounted inch-and-a-half steel bars to form the base of the tower. The tower itself was pipe construction, with lattice work you could climb up. Tibbles put a whip antenna up on top of it, and created a repeater that was working really good—until winter came along.

We found in Southeast Alaska, with over 180 inches average rainfall per year, the winterime freezing rain at about 3500 feet was a real problem. On the back edge of Blue Lake Ridge, where this tower was mounted, the rain would hit the tower, and the ice would build all up. Finally the ice built up so much on one side of the tower that it just bent over. Those inch-and-a-half steel bars bent right over at 90 degrees. This was a real lesson for our mountaintop experience. We'd been working on White Alice repeaters early on, but these VHF units were a new tech-



**One of the Ratz Mountain repeaters, caked with ice.  
Note the size of the tower relative to the men.**

nology. Eventually, servicing mountaintop repeaters became a natural extension of our business.

## **High Mountain**

One by one repeaters cropped up all over the country. The Alaska Loggers put a big plastic cone about 20 feet high with the antenna inside up on Ratz Mountain, and a local community organization built a repeater on High Mountain for TV reception. High Mountain was an ideal spot for us to have a radio repeater. It was 2500 feet high and located right straight across from our TEMSCO office and hangars. We put our repeater there, and had it working smoothly.

One cold winter day I took George Ferrall up to make a final inspection of the TV repeater on High Mountain. The sun had just gone down so the temperature dropped an extra ten degrees. I was climbing up the mountain with full power, and when I started to level off, I couldn't budge the throttle—it was frozen at full throttle. I was in a predicament, still climbing, and there was nothing I could do about it. I called our base on the radio and told them my predicament, but I got no help. Nobody knew what to do.

Out of the blue, Arlo Livingston called me on the radio. He said they had had some problems with the throttle freezing too. He suggested I turn to one magneto only. I tried that, but it didn't work. He said, "All you can do then is shut the engine off." I prepared my passenger to assist me by turning the other magneto off so I could respond faster on entering autorotation. I was now 4000 feet high and climbing. George turned the power off, and I shoved the collective down and started to autorotate, but the blades started slowing down instead holding their RPM. They started to stop-bang (stop-banging means the blades are not tracking which may cause damage to the mast and loss of the rotor system). Instinctively I shoved the nose forward while I still had a little control, got into a steep dive, and the RPMs started coming back. I started to level off again, and the blades started to slow again. I shoved the nose down again to keep up the necessary speed to hold the RPM. To make a landing on the water, I had only one choice and that was to hold my speed up until I was just inches off the water and then make a landing like an airplane. I went for it and greased on a great landing.

After George and I settled down, I felt the throttle, and it was no longer frozen. Heat from the engine and the lower altitude had thawed the frozen throttle cable. I started the helicopter and flew back to the pullout. The mechanics now had to solve the frozen-throttle problem, but more importantly they had to adjust the autorotation RPM of the blades so the helicopter could hold RPM with a minimum weight configuration.

Gary Boles did most of the work on the facilities for the High Mountain repeater so quite often I would leave him up there and pick him up at the last minute. On one occasion, I hovered up the mountain due to low visibility, arrived at the heliport, and loaded Gary and his helper. I had picked up a little ice on the blades, and I warned Gary as I took off that it was going to vibrate for a minute. As I dove off the mountain, I bounced the collective which flexed the blades and shed the ice. I was able to fly off the back side of the mountain which had a little better visibility.

On another trip to High Mountain, moisture was hanging in the air as I waited for Gary and his helper to arrive at the heliport. As I sat there running the engine, I was picking up ice and didn't realize it. When we got loaded up and ready to fly, I had so much ice on the blades that I could only get 2500 RPMs with full throttle. With Gary's help we scraped the ice off of the blades. When I started the engine again and rolled the throttle up, I still only got 2500 RPM. The ice had accumulated in that short time. It looked like we were stuck on the mountain for the night. We scraped the ice off again, and as we were waiting there just after sunset, the moisture condition on the mountain disappeared. I fired up the helicopter again and was able to get the necessary 3200 RPMs. We flew down the mountain in the twilight.

### **Ratz Mountain Misfortune**

These mountain repeaters caused a misfortune for us on Ratz Mountain. We sent one of our pilots, Martin Jetton, up on the mountain with Harlan Olson who was a radio tech for Service Electric. Harlan was working on the Alaska Loggers' repeater. It was a wintertime condition with two or three feet of snow on top of the mountain. You could walk in the snow, but it was very slow going. Before the work was finished, the weather closed in

on them. They called to tell me their situation and I said, "Okay, I'll come up there and keep a check on the outside and let you know if I think you can get out." By the time I got up there, the top of the mountain was covered with fog. I circled around talking to Martin who was waiting in the helicopter. In about 15 minutes the weather started down, and there was no way he could get off the mountain. He was stuck for the night, and the weather was going bad fast—lots of high wind and snow.

The next day we got a radio call, and they said, "We survived the night, but the helicopter did not." The winds were over 100 miles an hour and had blown the helicopter off the mountain. Now they were stranded up there. It was still blowing pretty strong, and they couldn't see much. They were afraid for their lives, and I said, "I'll head up your way and see what I can do."

I flew up the ridge from the west side of Ratz Mountain as



**"We survived, but the helicopter did not." Martin Jetton and Harlan Olson survived a blizzard on top of Ratz Mountain by spending the night inside the black radio cone at left. 84 Victor was almost a total loss.**

far as I could go and got to within about 1000 feet of them. I called on the radio and told them the weather was not improving, but if they could get down to me, I could still get off of the mountain. They said they had suffered enough and wanted to give it a try.

Once they left the shelter, they were committed. They had to find me, or they were in a fatal position. I warned them to keep on the highest point of the ridge at all times as they descended, and they would find me. They took off and slugged down the mountain. Finally about 100 yards from me, two figures emerged wallowing waist deep in the snow. They were two happy boys. They said they had survived just by the grace of God. The previous night, when the wind came up, they had taken refuge inside the plastic cone that housed the Alaska Loggers' repeater. If the plastic sides of the cone—which were buckling in and out—had broken, they'd have been dead in minutes. The chill factor had been more than 100 degrees below zero.

We soon salvaged the helicopter. It hadn't blown clear off the mountain, but it blew upside down. The damage was almost as much as a flying accident. Because the blades were tied down, only one of them was damaged, but the rest of the helicopter was a mess.

Jack Tibbles at Service Electric finally got the radio repeaters working pretty well, and the word started getting around that we had reliable mountaintop repeaters. We tried to talk the FAA into putting repeaters up, but they said it was ridiculous to hire a helicopter to put them up. Every time they had to maintain a radio repeater, they'd have to get the helicopter to go up, and they just didn't have those kinds of funds. They pooh-poohed our idea, but a few years later they had to do it because the repeaters proved to be the best communications you could have.

Now there are quite a few mountaintop repeaters in Southeast Alaska, and communication is fairly good. In some ways it's not as good as the old HF radios that would reach out over 500 miles at times, but it's more dependable to have the VHF repeater.

## Kasaan Mountain Job

The pulp mill at Thorne Bay was going to put a repeater up on Kasaan Mountain so they could pick up a Canadian TV station and shoot it into their camp. An electronic device like a radio repeater needs a waterproof shelter, and the simplest way to build a waterproof shelter on the mountain was to take a 10,000-gallon fiberglass water tank and turn it upside down. The people who built the water tanks conveniently built a door in each one. On this occasion, Martin Jetton was working Thorne Bay with one of our helicopters, and Martin had moved all the men and equipment up to Kasaan Mountain. They got the base ready and were ready to put the tank in. Martin was flying a Hiller, and he couldn't lift the shelter up.

They asked Bob Day, who had just gotten a new Hughes 500 C-model, to lift the shelter in place. His helicopter had the C20 engine in it while ours had a C18, which was a little less powerful. Bob thought he could lift it, but he wasn't very experienced



**Barney Huttelson beside a frozen mountaintop repeater. It's amazing how much ice will accumulate on them in winter.**

in cargo work. He lifted the load and got up just about high enough to put it onto the platform area when he started to lose control. He immediately descended back down and called us on the radio. If I would come over, he said I could use his helicopter. He knew that the helicopter would lift it, but he didn't feel he was capable of doing the job. So I went over and lifted up the load with his helicopter. It was a touchy load because it was right at gross, but I was able to bullseye it right in. The ground crew was pretty happy because I plunked it in with seemingly no effort at all. I'll have to admit I was lucky to be able to fly it in and hit it dead center on the platform. But once in a while you get lucky.

### **Fawn Mountain Heliport**

Fawn Mountain was another mountaintop spot where we worked on repeaters. It was on the south end of town and was only about 1500 feet high. KATV, the local TV station, had rigged up a system where they could pick up the TV signal from Canadian stations in Prince Rupert. They wanted to lay insulated wire from the mountaintop down to the roadside and hook it into the telephone system to give the local people more dependable TV. My job was moving those guys in and out.

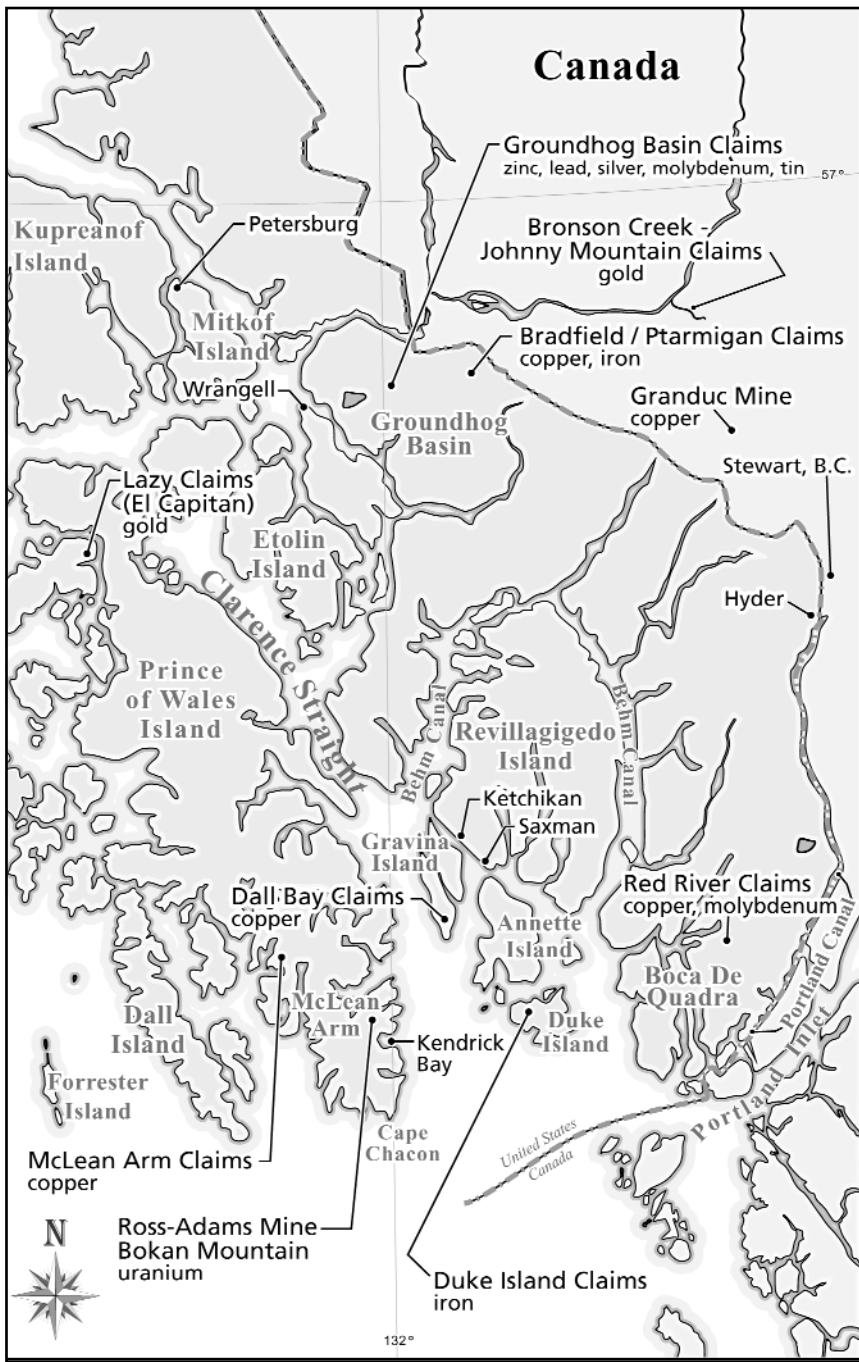
Fawn Mountain was one place where we finally got things "figured out." Wally Christianson was the chief engineer of the job, and he was very respectful of the helicopter. His crew built a shelter to house the equipment, a small tower, and a heliport. I had finally convinced people that when they started working on mountaintops, the proper thing to do was to build a heliport. The helicopter can't land just anywhere without eventually getting somebody in trouble. If we have a specific point to go to, it will be safer for the people operating around there. They'll all know where the heliport is, and they'll keep loose stuff away from it so it doesn't blow around and hurt somebody. The helicopter can land safely and be tied down if necessary. It makes a controlled operation. Christiansen went so far as to cut a narrow swath through the trees giving us a path to come into the heliport, and fly out the other side. Because of the path and the proper helipad, Fawn Mountain really worked out well.

## **Propane Tank Lesson**

Mountaintop work provided a lot of good business for us including a service contract for a television repeater located in Seal Cove. The repeater was located at about the 1000-foot level and reflected a television signal from Ketchikan to Metlakatla. Propane gas generators powered the repeater, and we replaced the propane tanks regularly.

The rule is—you don't haul passengers with your cargo load. Whenever we did haul someone, we had to stretch a point and say the passenger was a necessary part of the crew. On this trip to the repeater, Earl Walker had Wally Christiansen on board, and he was carrying one of the propane bottles weighing roughly 750 pounds. This put him at a pretty heavy gross weight. Earl wasn't familiar with the area, and when he set the bottle down, he pickled it (which means punched it off).

It landed on the corner of a rock ledge about four feet high. As the propane tank tipped over, a sharp rock punctured it. A fog of propane sprayed out of the tank. The only thing that saved them was that Earl pulled up in a hover, and the downwash from the blades held the fumes down. If the fumes had gotten up into his engine, it would have ignited and blown him right out of the sky. There was a lesson learned—from then on we hauled propane bottles with tender loving care. Later, the installation of mountain repeaters for VHF radio and remote telephones all over the country meant regular trips for us hauling propane to them.



**MINERAL DEPOSITS OF INTEREST**

*Chapter 10,*

## **The Wolper Era**

**J**ames Wolper and Wally Martin were a chapter in themselves. Jim was a big fellow, not too good in the woods. When I knew them, his partner Wally was in his 20s and in good shape. Jim said he was not a geologist, but the more you got to know him, you realized he was a very smart, shrewd man. As a self-educated geologist, he knew the right words to intrigue the mining geologists into recommending his properties to those who would lease his claims.

When Wolper found a good prospect, he would set up camp and move his crew in. Wolper, a bachelor from Abbotsford, B.C., would take in some of the boys from the detention home and bring them up to work in his camp, trying to improve the boys' lives. These boys were his crew in the summer.

My introduction to Jim came when he had a Phelps Dodge geologist looking at his claims on Gravina Island. Phelps Dodge hired me and the helicopter to take the geologist and Wolper out to look at the claims. When we arrived at the nearest landing spot, I shut down, got out of the helicopter, and hiked to the discovery pit with them. Wolper was pretty apprehensive about me looking at his claims, figuring that I might be jumping his claims in the future. Knowing I had done a bit of prospecting, he figured that was bad news, but he soon found out I was a real help to him. I would break rocks and find things he was looking for that would help him in his work, and I had no designs on his claims whatsoever. I knew where so many of the old discovery pits and trenches were that I was a big help to Jim. I could take him directly to a lot of the places he was hunting for. He soon was leaning on me to get samples in areas that he couldn't walk to, and we became quite good friends within a working relationship.

## Jiminy Cricket

At that time TEMSCO had the Hillers and a Hughes 269B, N4341F, also known as Jiminy Cricket. The cost of chartering the Hughes was less than the Hiller by about 50 percent so Wolper liked to use the little Hughes. He was a big man weighing over 200 pounds, and when I loaded him, his prospecting gear, his partner, and enough gas to go do the job, we were squeaking out at over gross every time. The 269 was a fun little helicopter to fly, but you really had to be on your toes when you were going out in those overloaded conditions.



**Jim Wolper holding court on a hillside.**

The 269 had a fuel tank on the left side, and on the right side we had a box built in instead of an extra fuel tank. The box would hold one or two fuel cans which held approximately 10 gallons each. In place of one of the cans, we would generally put emergency gear. When we arrived at the area we wanted to work in, we took the extra can out and all the extra stuff we had so the helicopter would be more maneuverable, and we could operate in a safer manner.

Working with those kinds of loads, you always had to really fly that helicopter. You would come in to land on a very low approach and get right down to the ground while you were still moving ahead. You were moving at a very low speed but still in flight, and when you'd come out of your flight into hover, you were on the ground. The same with takeoff—you'd have to lift up, and if your RPM started to fade, you'd have to slow down, stop and touch down again. Sometimes you were in places where you couldn't land, but you could put one skid down and recover your RPM. This would give you a little inertia shot to get to a better spot where you might have a clean takeoff area—the pre-

ferred was downhill or over a cliff. It really kept you on your toes. I never had any problem with it. However poor Jim Wolper did have a problem.

One time I was incapacitated and let Mike Salazar take Jim Wolper and his partner out in the helicopter. Jim said, "We're going out to Dall Bay." Mike thought he was going out to Dall Island, which was a pretty long trip, so he put in full fuel and everything else, and went on this short flight out to Dall Bay. When they landed, Jim and his partner went out and did their prospecting. Mike got bored so he went looking for Jim and Wally, but he couldn't find them and got lost in the process. He finally found his way back to his helicopter, and by then he was all sweated up. Jim and his partner also came back and got in the helicopter.

They were in an area I'd been working in all the time, but I'd taken full advantage by getting clear back into the corner to take off and making sure everything was right before I left. Well, Mike was a little embarrassed from being away from his helicopter and being lost, and when he loaded the passengers in the helicopter, the bubble immediately fogged up because all the guys were sweaty and had rain clothes on. He didn't utilize all his area when he started his takeoff. Since he was overloaded, he couldn't clear the first tree so he tried to stop. The blades hit the tree, and the helicopter crashed. Wolper and his partner got out very easily, but Mike's foot was stuck underneath the rudder pedal. With their help Mike was able to get out, and we survived with just a wrecked helicopter.

## **Testing Ground**

I used Jim as a testing ground for my new pilots. Jim was very critical, and if I sent a pilot out with him and Jim was happy, I knew I had a good man. You had to be able to get along with Jim to prove you could handle the public.

On one occasion Wolper wanted to go up on the mountain above the camp on Gravina to save himself a big climb. Wolper wasn't in shape to be climbing a 2500-foot mountain. Our pilot Don Moore put him up on the mountain, left him, and turned around and came home.

Later on Jim called for the helicopter, and I went out to Grant Creek Camp. He immediately started reading the riot act to me. He said, "Your pilot came out here and took us up on the mountain, and then he left us and didn't even come back after us. We had to walk off the mountain." They were really unhappy about that.

It turned out that Don Moore was starting to have some mental problems that finally got the best of him. He had to be put in a home where he eventually passed away.

### **McLean Arm To Glacier Bay**

Jim created a lot of work for us. He had some molybdenum claims up in Glacier Bay that he hung on to just to antagonize the Park Service. (I think he hoped to sell the claims to them in the long run.) The Park Service was getting really rough on letting people so much as enter Glacier Bay—especially in a helicopter—but Jim had filed claims there years before, so he could just call them up and say what he was going to do.

He delighted in blasting and making a lot of noise in the park just because he had the authority to do that. We would make the long trip up to Glacier Bay from Ketchikan and perform his assessment work by doing a lot of blasting and making a lot of noise, to Jim's great satisfaction.

Jim also had claims on Gravina, out on Prince of Wales, on Hump Island, and quite a few other spots. He optioned his properties off several times which gave him money to operate on.

We made a number of trips out to McLean Arm on Prince of Wales Island where Jim had his biggest find. It finally ended up not being much, but there was definitely mineral there. McLean Arm is out where it gets the bad weather. Unlike most of Southeast, which is relatively sheltered, the mouth of McLean Arm is exposed to the open ocean. While McLean looks protected when you look at the map, it's a terrible place for weather. I have seen big ten-foot waves come hit the mouth and run clear to the back of McLean Arm. We had to be very careful when we flew in that area.

On one occasion we were out at McLean Arm, and we decided we were going to go to town. A storm was coming up, and it

was getting dark, but Jim had a desperate reason for wanting to get to town so I said, "Okay, we'll give her a go." As we took off, it was getting dark, and it was really rough. I got up fairly high to clear the mountains, and looked down at the water. That water looked so ugly I didn't want to be over it any more than I absolutely had to, so instead of flying over the water which would have been smoother, I stayed over the land. In doing so we really had a rough ride—it was like riding a bucking bronco. Thankfully it wasn't very long before we were turning the corner at Guard Island and heading into Tongass Narrows, homebound.

### **Accidental Fire**

Jim had a crew of four or five men at McLean Arm. I'd take two at a time and run them up into the muskeg. Two very interesting things happened on these trips. One day I left them off in the muskeg, and they said, "Come back and pick us up at four o'clock." This was a real hot day in the summer. I came back and looked and looked, but I couldn't find them. I looked around, and I finally had to go back and get more gas.

I continued to fly around looking for them, and finally I saw some smoke about a mile away—totally in the opposite direction from where they had planned to go. I flew over to investigate the smoke and found the crew trying to put out a fire. I don't know what they were doing out there. They had lit a little fire to attract my attention, and by the time I got there, they had a forest fire going. Consequently, we spent the late evening putting the fire out for fear the Forest Service would find out about it. It wasn't hurting anything. It burned a lot of muskeg and a few pine trees.

### **Dumb Stunt**

We were back in the same area a few days later with a mining crew. They were going to blast some rock where they'd found some mineral. They wanted to set off some dynamite to try to expose enough of it to see what they really had. They said, "We'll be through by two o'clock easy so you can come pick us up then."

I came back at two o'clock and sat in the helicopter, and no noise, nothing, no word from them. They said they'd be through blasting by that time easily. I waited until three o'clock and still

hadn't heard any sound from the guys so I hollered—no answer. Finally I decided I would go in and see what I could find. I started back in to the woods. I was walking on a little log when all of a sudden the blast goes off.

A rock came sailing through the trees and hit me on my left shoulder knocking me off of the log onto the ground. How the rock got through all those trees, I'll never know. I laid there for a little bit thinking what a dumb guy I was. I knew they were blasting, but I didn't know exactly where they were. I didn't dare tell them how dumb I was. So I finally sat up and worked my shoulder. It was so sore I could hardly lift my arm. I got back out to the helicopter and sat in it trying my arm to see if I could lift the collective and still fly the helicopter without telling them what happened. Actually once the motor is turning over and the blades are turning, the collective becomes lighter to lift; but when they're not turning, the collective is very heavy to lift. I figured that by the time I started up, I'd be able to lift the collective up enough to fly. The guys came out of the woods, and I flew two trips back to camp. I was the first one in bed that night. Never did tell them what happened. I always was ashamed of myself for pulling such a dumb stunt.

### **Beaver Rescue**

Jim was always trying to go as cheap as he could so he had the helicopter contracted for a month out at McLean Arm. This time I wasn't flying it. We had Hal French flying it. Hal was a good pilot. We rigged up the sling gear on it, and Hal could move a 50-gallon barrel and take it wherever Jim wanted it so they were doing just fine. Jim sent Hal to town one day.

One of the fears all of us pilots have when crossing stretches of water is this: If the engine should quit, whether you are in an airplane or a helicopter, your chances of surviving were slim. To my knowledge there have only been a couple of airplanes that have had to land in the straits. On this particular day, Pete Cessnun had a summertime pilot flying for him who was coming in with a Beaver from Thorne Bay. He had a six-year-old girl with him as his only passenger, and he ran out of gas right off of Niblack Point in Clarence Strait. The Beaver is a good airplane, and he was able to get it down in the rough water all right, but the plane was dead in the water, and they weren't going to sur-

vive too long if it was blown onto the rocky beach.

Hal had just come in with the little 41 Fox and got the message that Pete needed somebody to get some gas out to this airplane before it drifted on the rocks. So Hal rigged up a five-gallon can of gas on a rope, hooked it onto his cargo hook, and flew out to the Beaver. The pilot stood up on the float and was able to catch the can as Hal punched the rope loose. He poured the gas in and was able to start the engine and taxi into a little cove where the airplane was grounded for the night. Hal picked up the pilot and the little girl in the helicopter and brought them to town.

Pete Cessnun sent Al Zink out to sit in the airplane and make sure that nothing happened to it. He took a little extra oil out too because the Beaver used a lot of oil. A few days later on an extreme high tide, I took Pete and some extra gasoline out to the Beaver. He warmed the engine up and took off out of this little tiny cove just before he hit the rough water. He saved his airplane and was pretty happy that everything worked out so well.

### **Barber/Pilot**

Jim Wolper had some claims on Gravina, and Amoco Minerals was looking at one of them. They needed some work done over there, and we were breaking in a new pilot who had been a barber at the airport barber shop in Seattle. He'd learned to fly, and his greatest ambition was to fly for TEMSCO. A friend of his was working for us, and told him about a potential job. TEMSCO had him come up, and we checked him out. He wasn't really too bad a pilot—he was finally able to accomplish the things I wanted him to do, and we were getting kind of comfortable with him.

We sent him out to move Wolper's camp and move a bunch of drill steel—just a good day's work out there. He did everything very well. When he got ready to leave, he loaded up all the gear he had: gas pumps, nets, and slings. Then he went over and filled the helicopter completely full of gas. He was in a confined area where he had to clear some 100-foot trees. At the last minute the cook for the camp decided that he would go to town too so he came out and asked the pilot if he could go with him. The pilot said, "Sure, that would be fine."

What he did was a sad mistake. He tried to take off the wrong way in the muskeg, and instead of using all the muskeg, he took off against the trees and tried to climb out over them. He was absolutely grossed out, and the helicopter didn't have the power to do it. He was climbing as hard as he could climb, and the helicopter started to falter. He attempted to back right down the same trail he'd come up, and with the RPM fading, he didn't make it. He crunched my helicopter, my 52 Victor. I'd flown it 5000 hours without a scratch.

We got the message on the radio that he'd had a hard landing. I said, "Can you see any obvious damage?" He responded, "Well, not much." So I said, "We'll come over and check it for you, and maybe we can fly it home." When we arrived, here was this poor sad thing—52 Victor was totally wrecked. It was a real blow. Needless to say the barber went back to barbering, and we went back to rebuilding helicopters.

### **U.S. Borax**

Jim leased his claims to U.S. Borax, and they started to work on them. The Borax people were very anxious when they called in on the radio, "Get the helicopter over here right away. We've got to move our drill into the drill site." The drill site was all prepared, and they were raring to go.

We had just hired some new pilots, including Stan Maplesden, who was one of the nicest young fellows we'd ever come across. He was what you'd call the All-American Boy, I guess. He'd just come back from Viet Nam, and we had hired him as a helicopter pilot and had checked him out a bit. We thought this was a great time to give him some experience. I told him, "Just fly over to McLean Arm, and I'll go over in the airplane and meet you there. I'll do the moving in the camp. Don't you do anything when you get there. It's very important, Stan, that you don't do a thing."

I took off in the airplane, and Stan had already left in the helicopter and arrived at his destination. The crew said, "Oh, we've got to start moving right away. We can't be waiting. We want you to haul this first load in there. Just move your helicopter right up here, and we'll hook you on to the load." Well, Stan couldn't say no, and the loading area was a little tight. Stan was

not that familiar with the 12E, and the first thing he did was catch the tips of the rotor blades in a tree. Didn't wreck the helicopter, but it cost us a pair of \$5,000 blades.

Much as Stan thought he was going to be fired over that, we figured this was a learning game, and those were the things that cost us money but also taught us lessons. He found out the hard way. Stan's dad was always impressed by the fact that Stan had caused TEMSCO a total of \$10,000 worth of damage, and we hadn't fired him over it.

## **Drifting Helicopter**

I was flying Jim out at McLean Arm in a torrential down-pour one day, and he wanted to go into Copper Lake. We flew out of McLean Arm and around the corner into Stone Rock Bay and up the river to Copper Lake. Copper Lake is pretty well loaded with trees, not much room and not many places to land. We had the big pontoons on the helicopter, and there was a little delta coming out from a creek which had about two inches of water in it. The helicopter could land in that two inches of water and sit very nicely, very solidly on the bottom.

We landed the helicopter and proceeded to go in the woods. I went with them to do the prospecting, and about three hours later we came back to the spot where we'd left the helicopter—and no helicopter. It had rained so much that where there had been two inches of water, now we had a foot of water right where I had landed. We followed the flood downstream and found the helicopter floating out in the middle of the lake. This was a fall day when the temperature was down in the 40s, and sopping wet. What do you do? Do you dare go swim after it? If you don't, you're going to spend the night in the woods, and it's going to be mighty uncomfortable. If you swim after it, you've got to make it or you're going to drown. You've got to make a hard decision.

I finally made the decision to swim for it, but I took every advantage I could. I got myself in a position that was the very shortest distance to the helicopter, stripped off my clothes, and swam to the helicopter. I climbed aboard, started it up, and moved it back over to where I could find my clothes again. We reloaded the helicopter and got back to camp. Needless to say

that was the end of the prospecting for the day.

I spent a lot of enjoyable days with Jim Wolper working those outside shores. Of course oftentimes they'd be doing something that didn't interest me so I'd go beach combing in all the rough little corners. Every time I came home from a trip out at McLean Arm, I'd bring back a bunch of glass balls. Finding those things was fun for me, and we decorated our house with them.

Working with Wolper out on those outside ocean beaches was a real challenge. In order to cover the places he wanted to go, oftentimes we would drop one guy off, and he'd cut down a tree or something and make room for us to land. We improvised a lot of heliports out of driftwood. It was a challenge at every step, but it was fun. I enjoyed that very much.

Jim was here for about four or five years, and then his health gave out. When he died, Wally his partner wasn't interested in coming back up here so that ended the Jim Wolper era.