



Before heading for the beaches, men in charge of search parties were briefed in the "Cayuga's" Operations Room. Lieut.-Cdr. C. R. Parker, executive officer, goes over all aspects of the search, points out areas already covered, assigns new territory to each party and informs them of any new clues that may have turned up overnight. A visual picture of the island is obtained from a number of aerial photos clipped together in sequence. Photos were provided by the RCAF. Left to right are: Petty Officers James Brahan, James Ridout, Jack Strachan and Vincent Mielin. (E-10974)

and "Cahoone," as well as two RCAF high speed motor launches.

The "Cayuga" arrived off the beach at 1630 that same day and quickly landed a rescue team to bring out an injured survivor reported "hung up" on a mountain side. The position of this man, as reported by the other survivors, was approximate only, and in the failing light the task of this rescue team turned out to be most difficult and hazardous.

Staff Sgt. Vitoli Trippodi, of Brooklyn, had bailed out of the plane, with the rest of the crew, in pitch darkness and over unknown country. He landed in some trees high up on a mountainside. Caught in his 'chute harness, with both legs badly injured, he hung head downwards for ten hours before he was extricated by some of his crewmates who had landed in the vicinity. After cutting Trippodi down from his painful perch, the others were too weak to take him down the mountainside. They had to leave him and make their way to the water.

Lieut. William Kidd, of Vancouver, and CPO E. Wooley, of Langley Prairie B.C., led the "Cayuga's" 16-man rescue squad to Trippodi's side. Surgeon Lieut.-Cdr. Andrew Weir and Petty Officer Alex Matte, a medical assistant, gave Trippodi a sedative, placed him on a Neil-Robertson stretcher, and made him as

✓ **'Well Done, Cayuga!'**

by C.T.

Destroyer Took Prominent Part
In Search for Lost Airmen

One of the greatest air-land-sea searches in the history of British Columbia took place in February following the loss of a United States Air Force B-36 over Princess Royal Island.

The story of the hunt was one of partial success, of failure and of very tough going through the dense bush and over the rugged, snow-covered terrain of the northern B.C. island.

The giant six-engined aircraft first got into difficulties during the early morning darkness of February 14, somewhere over Hecate Straits. With 16 crewmen aboard, the pilot reported he had three engines afire. The plane was icing badly... then came the last terse message, "Letting down..."

In Vancouver, at 12 Group RCAF Search and Rescue headquarters, the initial moves were quickly made. Flag Officer Pacific Coast was contacted, and by 0815 that morning HMCS "Cayuga," (Capt. M. A. Medland) steamed out of Esquimalt harbor and proceeded "with all dis-

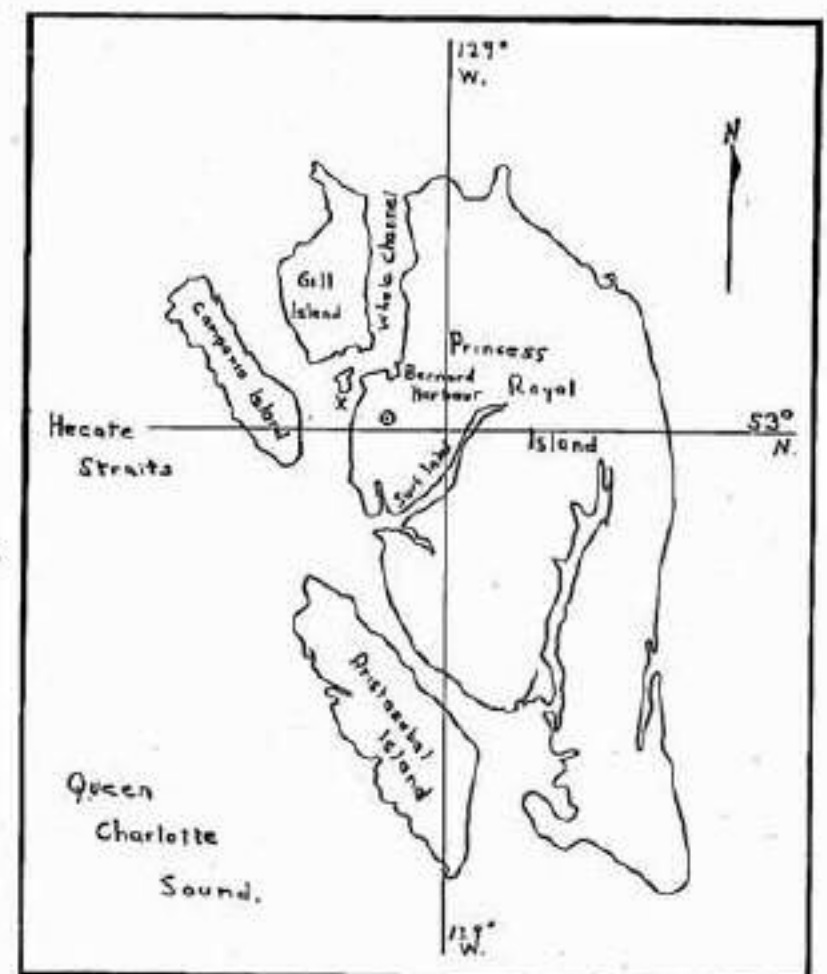
patch" to search the area of Queen Charlotte Sound and Hecate Straits. Meanwhile, aircraft of the RCAF, the US Air Force and the US Coast Guard roared north to scour the coastline from the air.

The first day of the hunt proved fruitless. Like the search for a C-54 down in the northern Yukon, it appeared that another drawn out and unsuccessful operation was underway.

Then, the next day, came the sudden break. A fishing vessel, the "Cape Perry," sighted smoke on the beach of Princess Royal Island. Closing the island, the skipper saw figures walking on the rocky shoreline. Minutes later came the flash: Survivors from the B-36 had been found.

While the "Cape Perry" was picking up ten of the missing flyers, the "Cayuga" was searching 70 miles to seaward. She was immediately directed to Princess Royal Island.

Also converging on the rescue area were the US Coast Guard Cutters "Winona," "Whiteholly," "Citrus"



A sketch map of Princess Royal Island, where the rescue operations took place. Spot "X" south of tiny Ashdown Island is where the "Cayuga" and other vessels employed in the search anchored. The circle indicates the general area where Sgt. Trippodi and First Lieut. Charles Pooler were found by "Cayuga" search teams. Search operations were conducted from Surf Inlet to Bernard Harbour and north up Whale Channel, as well as on surrounding islands.



Most seriously injured of the B-36 survivors was Staff Sergeant Vitoli Trippodi, who spent 12 hours trapped in his parachute harness with both legs broken, hanging head downward from a high tree on a mountainside. He is shown in a Neil-Robertson stretcher as the "Cayuga's" motor boat is being lowered to take him to a waiting aircraft. He was flown to McCord Air Base in Washington for treatment. Standing by Sgt. Trippodi at left is PO Alex Matte (wearing glasses), who, with Surg. Lieut.-Cdr. A. Weir, went ashore with the team which rescued Sgt. Trippodi and provided on-the-spot medical care. (E-10970).

comfortable as possible. In complete darkness they carried him off the mountain to the safety of the ship.

A few days later, still suffering from his ordeal, Trippodi told his doctor from a hospital bed at the McCord Air Force Base in Washington, "Those Canadians are wonderful people. I wouldn't be here if that rescue party hadn't spotted me . . ."

By the third day, February 16, the picture had clarified. Ten members of the plane's crew had been rescued by the "Cape Perry" and had been flown out to McCord Air Base. Sgt. Trippodi, the eleventh to be rescued, had also been flown out. There were still six missing.

At the request of 12 Group RCAF, "Cayuga" assumed full direction of the land-sea search at Princess Royal Island, and the destroyer was also charged with co-ordinating air searches in the vicinity. 12 Group remained as the overall operational control.

Under her direction the "Cayuga" had the US Coast Guard cutters, the RCAF motor launches, RCAF para-rescue squads and units of the 129th Heavy AA Battery, RCA, who had been flown in from Victoria.

5,810 MAN-HOURS SPENT IN BUSH

Summing up the effort put forth during the nine days of searching, the following figures throw some light on the work done by the seamen from the Canadian and US ships and all the others who slogged through the forests of Princess Royal Island, hunting for survivors from the USAF B-36.

| Ship or Unit | Complement | Man Hours In Bush |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| HMCS "Cayuga" | 210 | 3000 |
| US Coast Guard Cutters (4)..... | 170 (over-all) | 1620 |
| Canadian Army | 28 | 890 |
| RCAF (Para-rescue squad)..... | 4 | 160 |
| Alpine Club..... | 5 | 140 |
| Total searchers involved..... | 417 | Total 5810 |

Three rescue teams landed from the "Cayuga." Others were landed from the Coast Guard cutters, and Army and Air Force searchers added to the score. The terrain of Princess Royal Island was formidable. Dense bush, deep snow, mountains and ravines made progress painfully slow.

That afternoon the "Cayuga's" first rescue team, led by Lieut. G. M. De Rosenroll, of Calgary, heard faint cries in the distance. Slowly they made their way to the sounds. There, beside a small frozen lake, they found First Lieut. Charles Pooler, USAF, lying with a broken ankle.

Getting Lieut. Pooler, the bomber's second engineer, back to the beach was a battle in itself. The rescue team had a mile and three-quarters to go. It took them seven hours.

The twelfth man had been rescued. There were still five to go.

Lighting a fire was quite a trick. These men hollowed out a huge log until they came to dry, rotten wood at the heart. Then, with the aid of a flare, they got their fire going in a short order. About half an hour was the time allowed for the searchers to stop for sandwiches and dry out clothes. Left to right are AB W. Sanford, PO J. A. Brahan, AB K. Bowness and Ldg. Sea. M. Pastuck.





These four men, along with four from the US Coast Guard Cutter "Winona," experienced a wild night on Princess Royal Island. Leaving at first light one morning, they made a last desperate bid to find the five men still missing from the B-36. They spent the night three miles inland in the dense jungle-like growth and the following day struck south until they reached Chapple Inlet, where they were picked up by the "Cayuga's" motor cutter. During the night rain and snow, borne on a 60 to 75-mile-an-hour gale, drove in one side of their shelter and whistled out the other. Left to right are: Sgt. George Lecki, one of four RCAF para-rescue men aboard the "Cayuga"; PO Stan James, PO J. M. Pitts and CPO C. J. Padget. (E-10972)

search squads closed in to a few yards.

Through all the messages from the destroyer, the constant battle with the land predominated. Some search parties were out as long as 15 hours at a stretch, at times crawling for long distances on their hands and knees . . . through wet snow, up ravines, over windfalls. The bush was so dense that if a man were lying injured, unable to cry out, searchers could pass within ten feet of him and never know he was there.

Time began to run out on the hope of finding further men from the missing aircraft. But the search went on unabated. Each day came the report, "All search teams returned on board . . . nil results."

An analysis of the jump order from the B-36 and information from the captain of the bomber, who flew back to Vancouver to assist the RCAF, was not encouraging. It was apparent that the men still missing could have come down in the icy waters of Whale Channel. The finding of an empty, half inflated life raft floating in the channel supported this theory.

On February 22, nine days after operations commenced, 12 Group gave the order to call off the ground search.

The "Cayuga" remained at the island to conduct the evacuation of all ground personnel. Then she put back to Esquimalt. In her signal log was a message from the RCAF in Vancouver . . . "Well done, Cayuga!"

Being in No Respect Ready For Sea

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| <i>To:</i> CAYUGA (R) DUNDURN | <i>From:</i> CANFLAGPAC |
| CNAT DUNDURN WILL PROCEED AT 1200U/18/2 TO RENDEZVOUS WITH YOU CARRYING MEDICAL SUPPLIES AND OTHER STORES AS REQUESTED AND 500 TONS BUNKER BAKER FUEL. | |
| | 1200u/17/2 |

At 1200U/17 February 1950, CNAT "Dundurn" lay alongside at HMC Dockyard, Esquimalt, where she had been for three years. On board, about the only equipment that could be relied upon to operate efficiently were the main engines and the steering gear. She had no crew, no radio, no stores, compasses were out of adjustment and the oiler was in the process of an unhurried refit.

HMCS "Cayuga," at Princess Royal Island, had indicated a need for fuel, stores and mail.

The "Cayuga's" requirements had to be filled.

Also alongside at Esquimalt lay CNAV "Heatherton," her crew, all civilian, on well-earned week-end leave. They were recalled, some from Vancouver, to man the "Dundurn."

Working overnight, dockyard radio experts installed wireless equipment in the "Dundurn." Engines were checked, an echo-sounder was installed and stores began to arrive on board. The refrigerator was filled to the deckhead.

By 0900 Saturday all hands were onboard; the "Heatherton's" crew had transferred to the "Dundurn." At 1200U Saturday, the 18th, a message to the Flag Officer announced that "Dundurn" was "proceeding in accordance with previous instructions."

Within the ship, order was emerging from the chaos. Few on board knew anything about tankers. A number of technicians had been drawn from the Dockyard and two naval communicators had been obtained from the Admiral's staff to assist the "Heatherton's" wireless operator.

The cooks, as usual, had been among the first to settle down to routine. They served breakfast and at noon produced a delicious dinner — fried chicken, no less. In the afternoon there were heaping plates of mouth-watering biscuits. Coffee and tea were available at all times in the galley.

As difficulties cropped up they were handled with despatch. The master, Mr. J. Patterson of Victoria, spent most of his time on the bridge.

Down in the engine room the two 400-horsepower Diesels thrashed out a steady nine knots.

CNAT "Dundurn" was operational — a tribute to the teamwork of dockyard personnel, planning by the authorities and to the crew of CNAV "Heatherton."

Tug "Clifton" Aids Disabled Fish Packer

The RCN tug, CNAT "Clifton", last month figured in a rescue operation off the west coast of Vancouver Island.

A fishing packer, the "Co-operator No. 1," after drifting for four hours with engine trouble off Hardy Bay, was taken in tow by the "Clifton" and delivered to her home port of Kyuquot Sound.

The "Clifton" had been on mine disposal duty at Winter Harbor and was sent to the aid of the fishing vessel after the latter's distress signals had been picked up in Vancouver and relayed to the naval tug.