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RAIN FROM HEAVEN - AT WILL?c/o
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Few persons in R-1 realize that, under the strong emotional urge created by the historic Selway fire, it was decided that henceforth we should take the matter of precipitation for forest fires into our own, self-acknowledged, capable hands. Why not carry water aloft in an airplane? It must come down. Only problems are to get it down in right time, right place and sufficient quantity. The undersigned was delegated to find out.

First attempt was based on engineering plus psychology. If a well-built, oak, beer barrel would stand the shock? If smokechasers heard a rumor that beer barrels were being plunked down from the air on Class-A fires? Get-away and travel time must be lessened. A brand new 8-gallon oak, beer barrel was filled with water; total weight 102 lbs. About 250 feet above the airport it was kicked out of Mamer's Buhl, forward speed about 75 miles per hour. Poor keg! We gathered it up from a quarter acre, no two staves left together. On the field a hole and a wet spot - looked as if someone had tried to drown out a badger.

Next attempt, a specially built 18-gauge, galvanized iron can, brazed and reinforced at the ends, 8 gallons of water. Dropped from 250 feet, it broke like a fresh egg dropped on a concrete walk.

A simple, 18-foot, Irvin cargo parachute let down two filled 8-gallon cans in succession - beautifully, gently, right side up and close to the mark. A home-made chute of cotton sheeting with cotton fish cord suspension lines caused near-collapses among the audience. It opened, a line broke, then ten more broke in rapid succession. Poor passenger! Well, half the chute continued to function. The can punched a hole 6 inches deep in the field but was recovered still tight and undamaged. Chutes work. They are quite a lot of bother, cost something - \$10 to \$30 - and will be torn by trees or snags.

A specially built, welded, 16-gauge, black iron can holding 5 gallons of water stood the shock three times, bounces about 20 feet, is still good.

Next trial: the Ford Trimotor - inside, a 100-gallon tank, lever-opening gate valve, 50 feet of rubber-lined cotton hose trailing out from a door opening, 30 lbs. of sheet lead wrapped around the trailing end of the hose. The hose collapsed from the air blast so that little water went through it, didn't appear such a happy thought when it threatened to wallop the tail assembly of the plane. Women would have known better than to waste

time with cotton hose. Then we got a reinforced, rubber hose, put 5 lbs. of white powder in the tank to make the water more conspicuous. Fine doings. A beautiful rain out of the end of the hose, 30 feet above ground - on the grass the lightest dew, covering a strip about 9 feet wide, half a mile long. Wouldn't have phased a light, grass fire.

One more trial: over green timber, a bigger hose, a nozzle to help concentrate the stream, careful flying down close to tree tops. A little of the fluid reached the forest floor, not enough to wet through a silk shirt. We knew beforehand that 100 gallons of water would cover 500 feet of fire line only about 0.05-inch deep.

Forest Supervisors:

How much water do you need per chain, or per 100 feet, of Class-A or Class-B fire line, if we sent it down kerplunk in 10-gallon containers and let your smokechasers put it on the fire as they see fit? We could carry as much as 350 gallons of water or chemical in a Ford. We may yet drop some more water. - H. R. F.

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Not So Long Ago: Not many years ago, R-1 possessed very few Government cars, and transportation, aside from railroad service, was a difficult problem. In 1924, Elers Koch wrote:

"I have made enough trips with myself or one of my associates seated on a cracker box in the back of a Ford truck so that I am thoroughly disgusted with the whole business."

His memorandum doesn't stop at that point, but takes a punch at the penny-pinching policy of operating railroad speeders.

"Where the Winton Lumber Company and the Ohio Match Company run new up-to-date and suitable speeders over their tracks, the Coeur d'Alene Forest struggled for years with the notorious old 'Molloch' till it practically went to pieces, and now has replaced it with a disreputable old Ford truck which no junk peddler would drive before dark, mounted on car wheels."

Mr. Koch advocated 35 passenger cars for the Region.

Now, more than 10 years later, we wonder if Mr. Koch does not hope for a Sunday morning and the pleasure of motoring without dodging Government-licensed processions on Montana highways?

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There is estimated to be about one billion two hundred million board feet, log scale, of Port Orford cedar in the world, practically all of which is in southwestern Oregon. - Forest News, R-6.