

Snowplane to the Rescue

A VANTAGE POINTS FLASHBACK

The wind was howling and we could hardly see the trail through the heavy snow, but we pushed through, my skis gliding over the drifts.

The storm made the roads impassable so we took to the sleigh trails that ran from farm to farm, my strong propeller pushing us forward.

Yup! You guessed it – I'm a snow plane and I can take on any terrain in the throes of winter!

You might be familiar with the Bombardier snow machine, or more recently the Snow-Bear. I was built much like those, except I had my motor and propeller in the back, and a pair of long skis.



Snowplanes in Lauder - 1940's

My owner, Art Convoy from Boissevain, picked up Dr. Bird and we headed out into the storm to pick up Bill Holmes - who lived south of Mountainside. Bill was seriously ill and couldn't wait for the roads to be cleared so in these cases, I'm the best bet to get anyone to where they need to go during a Manitoba blizzard!

Art's daughter Annie kept phoning people along the way to see if they had heard my noisy engine travel through their yard! Yes, I was loud but that's how she kept track of us.

I've had lots of adventures with Art behind the wheel!

I remember when Jerry Ransom was born back in 1948. It was a cold and blowing mid-January day and the roads were blocked with snow so Art took Dr. Ethel McPhail out to the Strathallan School where a horse and sleigh met her and took her to Bill and Nora's

farm where the baby was born. Sometime later, old Highway #3 was cleared so Bill brought her back by car. BUT the road filled in again on the same day and (laugh) it wasn't open again until March!

We made several trips to the country bringing women who were about to give birth to the hospital. I tried to travel as smoothly as I could but I knew after all that bouncing those babies were eager to be born! But we always got the young moms to the hospital in time!

Regular passengers included the telephone man and the police.... really, anyone who needed to be somewhere regardless of the weather. We were also used by families needing to get to the station to catch a train or pick up a passenger. We took folks to hockey games and weddings, and transported animals to the vet.

Those were the days when you used what you had to get things done!

I guess that's why I was made. Us home-made snow planes were made from parts that were available. But, by the 1950's the roads were built higher, snow plows were more efficient and used more often... some say we were invented ten years too late. But you know, there were also many times when I was taken out of the shed to just go out and have fun – because we were a lot of fun to drive!

Snow Plane to the Rescue' is based on a story in Vantage Points 5.

Vantage Points Flashbacks were written by David Neufeld with help from Betty Sawatzky. They were originally aired on CJRB Radio out of Boissevain, Manitoba in the early 2020s.