

PLANEGRAM

BIGGEST SPRAYER From *The Swath* August 1954 B-17 Battles Bugs

By Stuart W. Turner

The gypsy Moth (*Porthetria dispar*), destroyer of shade trees of the Northeastern States, has bet its match. Since 1869 when the United States, attempts to control this pest have met with only partial success.

In the area surrounding Lansing and East Lansing, Michigan, the work horse of World War II came to the aid of harassed pest control officials under the guidance of Central Aircraft of Yakima, largest aerial contractor in the world.

Late in May this year it became apparent that the Gypsy Moth was present in sufficient numbers to cause serious damage to trees of the Michigan capital and its surrounding areas. There was no time to attempt a

control program from the ground. A call was made to Central's operations manager, Robert N. Ward, who flew to Michigan immediately and surveyed the situation. Ward quickly recognized the need for rapid aerial spraying coverage in hours per day than would be possible with small aircraft and called in the B17, which possesses a much greater safety factor for operations over the densely populated area.

WORKHORSE

The B17, a converted boomer familiar to many as the flying fortress of World War II was equipped with 3000 gallons of insecticide storage space, which was transferred to the boom slung under the wing by a

most ingenious system. Hydraulic pumps connected on each inboard engine were linked to second sets of hydraulic pumps in the hull which were reversed and connected to 200 gallon per minute centrifugal pumps which transferred the DDT in oil insecticide to the spray boom under constant pressure. In other large aircraft used for spraying purposes, the spray pump has usually been driven by a separate air cooled gasoline engine located within the aircraft. This presents possible fire and other hazards eliminated by the dual hydraulic set-up used in the B17. The maximum load carried at any one time was 2800 gal-

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lons of the insecticide which was applied at a rate of 1 pound of DDT in 1 gallon of oil per acre.

SPEED

The first flights were made on Sunday, May 30, when a total of 20,000 acres was sprayed by the B17. Spraying continued as weather permitted through to June 3, when

the project was completed. A total of 59,000 acres having been treated by the B17 and two Stearmans used for smaller areas which did not warrant the bomber. 59,000 acres in five days...undoubtedly a record for this type of operation.

The B17 spray booms were in three sections and the aircraft put out an effective spray swath of 500 feet, flying 200 feet above the ground. Many passes were made between large buildings where necessary and where possible. The entire operation was under the

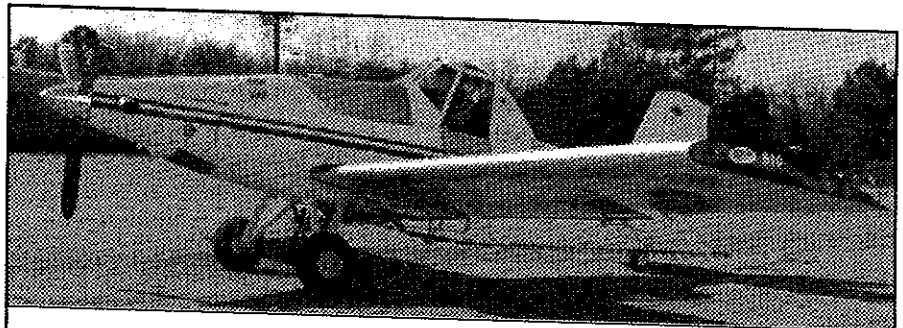
control of Mr. Ward, and Central supplied both the aircraft and the insecticide.

RESULTS

Initial checks show that the program was very successful in control of the Gypsy Moth. State personnel are presently putting out traps to confirm the visual observation of a most welcome to the inhabitants, was the control of mosquitoes and house flies, normally serious pests in the area. State officials who negotiated the contract with Central expressed themselves as very pleased with the whole project.

FUTURE

This striking demonstration of the use of a B17, the largest aircraft used to date in commercial spraying operations will start many thinking of other large scale aerial operations that can be carried out by large aircraft. The theory advanced by many that only small aircraft flying close to the ground can be used for spraying work will have to be re-evaluated in view of the excellent control results by Central with the B17, and after all...it's the result that counts.



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