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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE CONQUEST OF FOG

Pilot Nelson, of the National Air Transport, flying a plane filled to capacity with mail and express, recently arrived at Bellefonte, Pa., from Cleveland, bound for Hadley Field, N. J. He was told that the weather farther east was impossible, but determined to try out the radiobeacon system recently installed on the airway by the Department of Commerce. At eight o'clock in the evening he took off through clouds and fogs, with no stars to guide him above and no beacon lights visible below. He was obliged to trust entirely to the radio beam broadcast from the range beacon at Hadley Field. A statement issued by his company says:

"Nelson concentrated his attention on the dots and dashes coming through, the receivers clamped to his ears, and on the dancing needles of the instruments which translated the performance of engine and plane into something readable. When the pilot heard a dot and a dash, he knew he was on one side of his course and acted accordingly. When it was dash and dot he heard, he knew he was off the course slightly on the other side. When the dots and dashes blended into one dash, Nelson held his 'ship' there and flew directly toward his destination.

"Tearing through the blinding fog and darkness with his eyes glued to the instrument board and his ears attuned to the slightest change in the buzzing of the radio signals, Nelson brought his ship and its cargo directly to the Hadley Airport, having flown blind all the way from Bellefonte over one of the most treacherous air routes in the world. With just enough visibility close to ground to make a landing possible, Nelson 'sat down' and the mail had been taken through again.

"That same night Pilot Warren D. Williams, flying westward, was forced to rely on the radio directional beam broadcast from the Department of Commerce radio range beacon at Cleveland and flew blind from Mercer, Pa., to Cleveland, the constant signals from the radio beam guiding him directly to his destination."

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