

SECRET

EDITORIAL NOTES

Military and Civil aircrafts, with their present rate of development, impose such demands on the human body that unless pilots and aircrews can maintain performance at the highest possible efficiency, the chances of survival of those who fly are appreciably diminished. These demands on the human body and its limitations when flying in the stratosphere or at high speeds are difficult to comprehend even by most of us in the medical profession. To take these problems for granted, especially by those who do not fly and yet take vital decisions, could not only mar the progress and efficiency of the Air Force, but may also cause many fatal unexplained accidents.

With the introduction of sonic and supersonic aircrafts, loss of life and aircrafts due to physical failure has shown a significant increase even during routine flying training. It is indeed strange that most of us have come to accept fatal aircraft accidents, and even the man in the street is not much aroused by them. It is only the parents and wives in their personal tragedies who wonder why aircraft accidents cannot be prevented. Must we accept this increasing toll or can something be done about it?

To reduce accidents we must first, evaluate our methods of selection, training and indoctrination; study the motivation of personnel and improve, where necessary, service and living conditions. Various protective devices and flying aids must be modified to suit our flying conditions. Accident prevention is not a static study. Investigation of aircraft accidents and their prevention must be improved continuously.

Western nations who are far ahead of us in Aviation, and where there is a common realisation of the special role and value of Air Force Medical Service, have recently formed a joint committee on Aviation Pathology. This international committee composed of representatives of Medical Services of United States of America, Canada and the R. A. F., will find ways and means to reduce civil and military aircraft accidents. The recommendations of this committee will also be made available to friendly nations. This is yet another step towards the solution of many unexplained aircraft fatalities all over the world.

We in India, have a long way to go before we can achieve any measure of advancement in Aviation Medicine and add to the international fund of knowledge in this important

field of Preventive Medicine. First, we must accept that Doctors are really necessary and have a special job of work to do in the Air Force. Until then our progress in Aviation Medicine must wait.

"Through the centuries earth's unexplored frontiers, jungle, desert, polar ice, have fallen before the determined assaults of man. But the last, the greatest and the most dangerous frontiers of all is just 17 miles from your home.

If you would see it, look up at the stars or scan the blank and seemingly guileless blue of the sky. There, high overhead in the outer reaches of the ocean of air, is the untamed borderland that the men of Aviation Medicine call their vertical frontier".

(Allan C Fisher, Jr. National Geographic Magazine, August 1955)