

# FLYING TO ANTARCTICA

**Genaire Ltd. of St. Catharines maintains the landing skis  
for the planes of the annual British Antarctic survey**

By JUDY KINGSLEY

It is a far cry from the lush summer orchards and fields of Niagara to Antarctica, that bleak and lonely continent at the bottom of the world.

But it is towards Antarctica that the efforts of a group of workers at Genaire Ltd. of St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake have been directed lately. These are the men responsible for repairing and servicing airplane skis for the annual British Antarctic Survey expedition.

Two major fields of study for the expedition are the geophysical characteristics of the continent and its weather, studies that can best be done from the air using the specially equipped planes. They fly day after day, as often as weather permits, taking off and landing on rough ice and snow-covered runways. The aluminum skis, although they are built for such heavy duty work, take a terrible beating.

The special plastic base that keeps the skis from freezing to the snow is

scoured off on the ice. Ribs inside the skis which are shaped like the top half of a plane's nose-cone, break and have to be replaced. Complicated arms and hydraulic controls inside the skis have to be repaired.

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Waiting for them is C.E. Graham, secretary of Genaire. Ski production and repair work is his baby and has been since 1961 when Genaire started making a ski for small planes. Since then, it has gone on to build skis for DC3s, the old Dakotah, a big plane still used in the north to fly barrels of

oil into Yellowknife, Frobisher Bay and Inuvik for aircraft based there. Genaire makes three types of skis at the moment: two with retractable wheels or skis for small planes such as Cubs and Cessnas, and a ski that is fastened on in place of wheels. About 60 per cent of its annual production is used in Canada and Alaska, but the company ships all over the world; anywhere there is snow, outside the Iron Curtain, according to Graham.

Last September, Genaire took over the rights to build the Twin Otter skis from Bristol Aviation, a Winnipeg company that won the contract from DeHavilland in the late 1950s. Bristol, Graham explained, has since gone into other fields, including building the Black Brant rockets used to explore the ionosphere. "The company lost interest in the ski business," he said.

Service work on skis manufactured by Bristol has long been done by Genaire but there were problems with