

# *A Life of Flight*



# *A Life of Flight*

One Pilot's Story,  
from Piper Cubs to 747s and Beyond

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*A Life of Flight*

ISBN 978-1-927755-49-5 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-927755-50-1 (ebook)

Cataloguing information available from  
Library and Archives Canada.

Printed on acid-free paper.

Agió Publishing House is a socially-responsible enterprise,  
measuring success on a triple-bottom-line basis.

1 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 a

*To Joy,  
my wonderful lifetime partner,  
with all my love*





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## FOREWORD

A few years ago, my great wife Joy and I celebrated our Diamond Jubilee with family and friends. At the time, our son Brian coaxed me into jotting down some of my flying memories for, as he said, “Dad, your career has spanned flying over a period of rapid development – from fabric-covered Cubs with a little 65-hp engine to Boeing 747s with four engines developing some 240,000 pounds of thrust.”

I cannot deny that I have enjoyed my chosen career through its many ups and downs, and have also been lucky enough to have survived some of its possible sudden endings! Many decades after its beginning though, while my logbooks have been a great help with this exercise, I’m afraid that some of my memories are a bit fuzzy. In addition, I have discovered that some of the aerodromes we operated from are no longer in existence and some of these I can no longer pinpoint their location. And so I ask that my errors and omissions might be forgiven.



## PROLOGUE

Shortly after daybreak, the airfield slowly woke to life. As the sky lightened, the hangar doors were rolled aside and a small group of people could be seen grouped around a glistening new aircraft inside. When they seemed satisfied, it was pushed out onto the apron where it was parked, a knot of interesting observers trailing behind.

Following a thorough check, the propeller turned, the engine coughed and caught, then after a brief pause chocks were removed and the aircraft rolled away under its own power to begin taxi trials. As the sun rose higher in the sky, up and down the grass taxi strip it went. Finally it entered the runway, throttle was advanced and the aircraft began to run faster and faster, feeling ever lighter as the tail came up and air rushed across its wings. Then it slowed.

Turning about at the downwind end, it paused, brakes were released, the engine took on a more powerful note and the exciting moment all had been waiting for finally arrived. Moving more and more swiftly down the runway, the small craft finally lifted slowly and gracefully into the air, commencing a slow climbing turning into the bright blue heavens above.

It dwindled in size with distance, but shortly before it disappeared as a speck, onlookers remarked they thought they had seen another speck closing with it.



## EARLY YEARS

I was born in 1931 and raised in Calgary, Alberta. Just prior to WW2, my parents purchased a lakefront cabin at Sylvan Lake, 100 miles north of Calgary, for which they paid the grand sum of \$1,000. We drove there every summer in Dad's 1934 Chevrolet, frequently behind long lines of Army convoys. My brother and I spent many happy hours at the beach watching seagulls "take off," fold their paddles and glide effortlessly along the waterfront. Then, as they were landing, they seemed suddenly to "lose" their lift. Even today I marvel at the various birds as they cope with this sudden "loss of lift" when landing on land, water or in trees. I also enjoy watching geese flying in loose formation with their wingtips almost touching the water, or high in the sky in their familiar V-shape patterns as they talk to one another.

Dad bought a double-oared rowboat from Peterborough Boats that we used for the three-mile trip across the lake to shop in the town of Sylvan Lake during the week when Dad's car was unavailable. Dad also bought a 12-foot dinghy and we learned the basics of sail by trial and error. One fall, the lake froze quite solidly in calm conditions and on a breezy Remembrance Day holiday, we naïvely tried to sail our ski-mounted boat across the lake. This was a dismal failure as the only direction it would slide was downwind!

My brother and I created a pair of "speedboats" using two plywood drop tanks for each. These drop tanks were auxiliary fuel tanks used



*Our speedboat made from two “drop tanks.” These drop tanks were originally plywood fuel tanks clamped to the underside of wings of Lancaster bombers to extend their range and were jettisoned after use.*

to increase the range of WW2 Lancaster bombers and then jettisoned. While my speedboat might have looked speedy when fitted with our 5-hp motor, it was indeed woefully slow and its stabilizing arm made it look quite ungainly.

During the war years, I became keenly interested in the aircraft flying overhead and became proficient at telling the “good ones” from the “bad.” Of course the enemy aircraft weren’t over our heads in Alberta, but we schoolboys did have aircraft identification cards to show us their silhouette against the sky. We used the cards in games which involved “sailing” our cards against the school wall “for keeps!” Some cards were just so valuable that we refused to play with them and they became “keepers.”

Model warplanes were built by the older boys and one could buy balsa wood construction kits powered by tiny engines. These models were either “free flight” or tethered by two wires attached to their wings and flown in circles around the “pilot.”

I was given a basic model aircraft and, with earnings from my *Star Weekly* paper route, bought a Fleetwind 0.060 engine for it. I was running this noisy little engine on the workbench one day when it almost took my finger off. I hadn't been paying close attention when the drip can behind the propeller started walking forward. In reaching for it, I shattered the propeller and still carry the scar to this day. I never got to fly that airplane!

My older cousin Geoffrey Rannie was killed on August 7th, 1942 in a training accident near Claresholm, Alberta when his Avro Anson collided with another. We were all terribly saddened, but my interest in airplanes was undiminished.

Then, just after the war, a Mosquito Bomber ("F for Freddy") roared over our Calgary home in a victory demonstration flight, cutting branches off the poplar trees along our yard's front fence and we were all very thrilled! It was a great shame when this aircraft took off from Calgary next morning, executed a steep turn and cut a radio antenna causing it to crash, killing all on board. Of the crew only the radio operator survived – he was in bed with a cold.

After the war, I joined the Air Cadets (#52 Calgary Squadron) and they had numerous model aircraft which hung temptingly from their hangar ceiling. However no one even mentioned aircraft during the year I was involved and we just practiced marching around the hangar floor under the supervision of an Army drill sergeant and shot .303s at the rifle range. It was indeed quite disappointing.

There was a manual gas pump in town and I enjoyed pumping gas into its glass tank, then draining it into Dad's car for him. When I turned 16, Dad handed me my driver's license. I was in charge of a powerful vehicle, but it wasn't an aircraft – I must have talked about flying a great deal.

I became a King's Scout and Troop Leader in our 34th Scout Troop and was encouraged by our great scoutmaster Charlie Crowhurst to earn my Silver Wings with every badge on flight that was available.

Dad agreed with Mom that I should "experience" flying and bought

return tickets for the two of us on a TCA Lockheed Lodestar aircraft flying from Calgary to Lethbridge. (Trans-Canada Airlines became Air Canada in 1965.) The pilots let me have a look at the world from their cockpit windows in flight and I was thrilled!

In grade 12, I was struggling in both French and Mathematics until Dad obtained the services of a retired WW2 Lancaster pilot as my Math tutor. The pilot used mathematical principals related to flight to show how calculations applied to height and depth. As a result, Algebra and Trigonometry quickly became my best subjects, although I failed my final French exam. With no “summer school” at the time, my only option was to take an additional year of high school in order to matriculate.

While I was very sorry to see my school chums enter college where we had planned to take engineering together, I was able to take several other optional subjects during the make-up year. Only many years later would I come to realize that my failure in French put me on a course to meet my future wife in Edmonton.

Other than my Star Weekly route, my first *real* job was with the Calgary Public Library as its official collector of overdue books from delinquent readers. I rode all over the south side of Calgary on my three-speed bicycle to collect these. My initial salary in 1947 was *35 cents an hour*.



## PRIVATE LICENCE

In September of 1948 with my library-generated “wealth” (and Dad’s money), I rode my bicycle to the airport and began taking flying lessons from Cal-Air Ltd on a Piper PA-11 Cub. This was a canvas-covered, 65-horsepower, two-seat machine in which the pilot instructor occupied the rear seat. As a student, I flew from the front seat and watched while my instructor started the engine by “flipping the propeller.” I very much enjoyed the feeling of “lift” on take-off and the sudden loss of it on landing. Before my second lesson, I had decided that I wanted to be a pilot. However after five lessons spread out over 5 months, I discovered that the “course” I had been taking was not recognized by the federal government.

In August 1949, for five dollars I joined the Calgary Flying Club and began their certified ground school course which included theory of flight, aircraft maintenance, rules of the air, navigation and radio use. Basic flight training (my first 10 hours) was on an Aeronca 7-AC aircraft, a canvas-covered machine with stick controls, tandem seats and a Continental 90-hp engine. It had no radio! The club charged just \$7 per hour for solo flying and \$9 for dual. The total cost of a licence with text book, ground school and log book was said to be “about \$300.”

As several aircraft had basic 65-hp engines and were not equipped with starters, batteries or generators, I was taught to “hand start” the engine, which involved checking that chocks were in place, throttle set, gas

and ignition switched on. Then, seizing the front of the correct propeller blade with fingers (thumbs *with* the fingers) of both hands, hauling down on it while drawing one leg back to ensure one's body moved away from the propeller as the engine came to life. Although I started the engine several times this way for practice, I never needed to use this procedure because most of the aircraft the flying club use, unlike the Piper Cub I began on, were equipped with starters which were quite reliable.

We always took off and landed on the grass beside the runway in use, as paved runways were deemed simply "too hard on the tires!" No radio work was involved as "stop and go" (red and green) lights from the control tower, – after we "waggled" our ailerons – were deemed to be quite sufficient. The course included take-offs, effects of controls, turns, stalls, spins, steep turns, sideslips, navigation and various types of landings.

Ralph Matthews was an excellent pilot-teacher who demonstrated the aircraft's three axes of flight (*roll*, *pitch* and *yaw*) quite vividly, showing that applying rudder (*yaw*) near the stall speed will result in an incipient spin. The aircraft abruptly rolls toward the stalled wing, pitches nose down and a spin develops until opposite rudder (*yaw*) is again applied and the stick (joystick) is neutralized.

After nearly five hours of dual instruction, Ralph climbed out of the aircraft, showed me where to reset the trim without his weight, and sent me off solo! I waggled my ailerons, received a green light from the control tower and took off, completed one circuit around the airport and landed on the grass again in just ten minutes.

Then it was back to circuits with emphasis on cross-wind take-offs and landings, sideslips and steep turns. I discovered that entering spins when flying solo was a bit more difficult without the instructor's weight in the back seat.

Following a checkout on the club's Cessna 140, an aluminum aircraft with side-by-side seating and *real* steering wheels, I was shown cross-country navigation along the foothills, together with "precautionary" and "forced landings."

I was also introduced to the new world of radio communications and the importance of monitoring the universal emergency frequency of 121.5 mcs which I did whenever I flew “cross-country”.

Following the required minimum 30 hours of flying with the club, I was certified ready by my instructor to be examined for my private pilot licence.

The flying test for my private licence in December 1949 was not at all what I had expected. It was a nice calm day and, as the DOT (Department of Transport) examiner watched closely, I inspected the Aeronca thoroughly where it was parked just outside the hangar. The examiner climbed into the seat behind me, I started the engine and taxied out to the active runway. Then, after explaining what was wanted of me, he opened the door and climbed out of the aircraft!

I was quite stunned. When asked if I had done something wrong and he wasn't going to fly with me, he replied over the noise of the engine, “Do you think I'm crazy enough to fly with an unlicensed pilot?” and slammed the door!

I reset the trim, taxied to the take-off point beside the runway, waggled my ailerons and received a green light from the control tower. I took off, climbed to 7,000 feet (3,500 feet above the airport) as I circled slowly around the airport, entered a spin, did two turns, recovered and glided back towards the runway. I must admit that I cheated ever so slightly and applied just a trickle of power on the approach, got another green light from the tower, landed on the grass beside the runway and coasted to a stop just before the inspector. He climbed silently into the aircraft and we taxied back to the hangar. The whole test took just 30 minutes and he signed my licence application. Shortly after, I received private licence number P759.

The Canadian government at the time wanted a pool of pilots who could be called upon in emergencies (such as a war), and offered \$100 after one obtained a private licence and a further \$100 when one joined the RCAF. I believe my father had paid \$100 to start me going and I

repaid him when I received my licence but can't recall what happened when I later received \$100 on joining the RCAF.

My very first passenger was my mother who sat beside me in the Cessna. Shortly after her flight, my father sat in the back seat of the Aeronca. Both said they enjoyed their tour over the city of Calgary. I next showed the city to a girlfriend in the Cessna and a school chum in the Aeronca before getting checked out on a Fairchild Cornell which had formerly been a primary trainer for the Air Force. It was a low wing aircraft with tandem seating and a fixed undercarriage and was a very basic aerobatic machine, particularly above Calgary airport's 3,500 foot altitude. A few days later, I learned that a wing had broken off from one of the Cornells (CVV or CVY – not sure which one) that I had flown, killing its pilot!

I washed and waxed club aircraft to pay for more flying hours and enjoyed practicing landing in farmers' fields in the fall after they had removed their crops. I remember a few abrupt stops when a wheel caught a gopher hole after landing! To build flying hours that winter, I flew with anyone who paid the \$7 hourly rental for my aircraft. One of these was a hunter who flew with me over the frozen Chestermere Lake in a Piper Cub with its large top and bottom windows open to the noisy freezing breeze while he shot coyotes for \$5 a pelt.

Both my brother Ian and I were determined to become engineering test pilots after high school and technical college training but circumstances were against it. The Korean War interfered with my plans, as I'll explain below, while poor eyesight scuppered his. Ian had studied for his Masters Degree while living below the sidewalk in London, England and, with the high cost of electricity, the low ambient light had affected his eyesight.

## ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE

Shortly after graduating from high school in 1950, I applied to Calgary Technical College (CalTech) to pursue my chosen career of Aeronautical Engineering. When the Korean “conflict” broke out, I cancelled my application with CalTech and instead applied to the RCAF for a Short Service (5-year) Commission. In the event of conscription, I would far rather be flying overhead than fighting with the infantry on the ground!

In late September, I was sent to London, Ontario for my basic training. My choice to avoid infantry service was confirmed when, after earning my share of demerit marks, I received the “privilege” of carrying a heavy .303 rifle around the parade square for one or two hours.

One of the tests we endured purportedly demonstrated that we were not prone to air sickness. Strapped blindfolded into a very large swing, we were swung gently back and forth for about 20 minutes which, I assume, would make some people sick. During those three months of training, numerous medicals and tests were given to “prove” that we were indeed “officer material.” For example, the Air Force sergeant checked our bed-making capabilities each morning with a 25-cent piece which *bounced* on our bed when we passed his rigid inspection. We used safety pins to ensure that our bed clothes were always as tight as could be.

While in London, I joined the London Flying Club and flew several of their aircraft at London’s much lower altitude. One was an Aeronca

7-DC, a side-by-side, fabric-covered machine; another was a Fleet Canuck, a Canadian-built side-by-side, fabric-covered machine with stick controls; and also an Ercoupe, a nifty low-wing, side-by-side, aluminum-covered aircraft without rudder pedals. After I passed the 50-hour flying mark, I boldly asked my Cousin Cardie Smith if I could take her beautiful daughter up for a flight. However Cardie informed me with much laughter that Anne was just 11 years old! My assessment of women obviously needed more work.

I was told that, because of my aptitude for Mathematics (with thanks to my grade 12 pilot teacher) I had been chosen by the RCAF to become an air force navigator! I refused to accept this and only then did they reluctantly allow me to join their pilot training stream.

In January 1951, I was posted to the newly reopened Gimli, Manitoba training station (scene of the famous “Gimli Glider” incident in which an Air Canada 767 landed there, out of fuel, in 1983). We suffered not a little during that bitterly cold winter with bathroom windows that had yet to be installed!

I was assigned to Course #22 which by-passed their Chipmunk primary trainers and went directly on to the noisy Canadian-built North American Harvards, otherwise known as Texans, Yellow Perils, or T-6s. These were equipped with reliable 550-hp Wasp 9-cylinder radial engines, had a retractable undercarriage and, being metal-clad, were quite heavy.

Following an introductory lesson, we concentrated on “flying” their Link Trainer. This was a closed box containing the student which rotated about its axis while the student “flew it” and, by referring solely to his instruments, he determined his flying attitude, his altitude and his position. The instructor had a chart on a table before him on which a “bug” traced the trainee’s “flight path.”

We had many days of  $-30^{\circ}\text{F}$  temperatures that winter which required that aircraft be driven by our instructors into and out of the hangars with the engine running. Half our course either failed or died, so I was very happy to have taken flying lessons prior to this. I was duty cadet one day



*Manufactured from the 1930s to the 1950s, Link Trainers were used by both the civilian and military schools for instrument and cross-country pilot training.*

when Don Z, a fellow cadet, failed to recover from a low-level manoeuvre and crashed into a heavily treed area. As duty cadet, I followed the duty officer and the military investigating team to the crash site and watched in amazement as his remains were removed from the smashed aircraft!

Then it was back to ground school again, covering in more detail the theory of flight, aircraft maintenance, rules of the air, navigation and radio use. Not only did we learn basic communication but also radio navigation. For this, we had to learn Morse code and our course obtained an average mark of 10 words per minute. It was impressed upon us that identifying stations was critically important, as homing in on the wrong station could result in rather disastrous consequences!

As I was having some difficulties with instrument flying in the Link Trainer, Dad generously offered to buy a used one and have it installed in our Calgary basement so I could practice at home whenever I visited. He really didn't know what a huge project that would have involved. I truly



*Above: My 1940 Ford convertible. Back in 1951, a boy's first car, paid for with money from his first job, was generally his first love!*

*Right: The "snow suit" was used for Gimli flying in 1951 when Arctic air covered the Prairies. Before the Harvard trainer became airborne, the cockpit was mighty cold! In addition, the suit would be essential following a forced landing.*

appreciated his offer but after some further coaching, I "got the hang of it" and became able to control both the Link Trainer and the snarling Harvard, even while occupying its back seat and totally enclosed "under the hood."

A few of our Harvards had been equipped with ADF's (Automatic Direction Finders) which pointed a needle at a radio station. After some further practice in the Link Trainer, we flew several trips in our Harvards behind our instructors using the basics of cross-country navigation and approaches while flying "blind" and I managed to pass my instrument flying test.

I bought my first car in Winnipeg for \$800. It was a 1940 maroon-coloured Ford convertible which I had checked at a nearby garage. This





garage was owned, as it turned out, by the brother of the used car shop where I had bought the car! While it ran well, it turned out to be a real “rust bucket” and on our subsequent move back to Edmonton, the road became visible through the floor boards! But it was quite a fun car to drive!

Following our instrument flying course, we moved on to night flying and then to cross-country flying (both day and night) and basic aerobatic flying. Beyond stalls and spins, we were taught rolls (airspeed 140 knots), loops (155 knots) and rolls off the top (170 knots). Flying was cancelled whenever temperatures dropped to minus 40 and, like our instructors, we became quite proficient at taxiing our aircraft right into the hangar as its doors opened, to save our poor ground crews from having to push the heavy machines in.

Canada purchased several surplus American T-6 Texans which were ferried up to Gimli. However at least one suffered structural failure en-route while another had an engine failure and crashed, and I believe the whole lot of them were scrapped due to the discovery of wing spar corrosion.

We were kept so busy learning the RCAF aircraft and ways that we had little time for sightseeing. Flying light aircraft supplied by the Winnipeg Flying Club was therefor a treat and we were occasionally able to fly their Aeronca’s as well as four-seat Stinson “Station Wagons.”

Following initial training, our course was sent to MacDonald, Manitoba for bombing and gunnery school. We fired a .303 caliber machine gun from the Harvard’s starboard wing at a drogue (a sleeve-shaped target) towed 500 feet behind a lumbering Dakota transport aircraft. We also practiced dive bombing, from what seemed to be a near-vertical dive, at ground targets using 11-pound practice bombs. And then finally in October 1951, I received my coveted “wings” from AVM Slemmon as Mom and Dad proudly watched, and moved up in rank from being a lowly Pilot Officer cadet to a fully commissioned Flying Officer – and so began my five-year term of service.

Given the choice between Maritime and Transport Commands (I



*Flying Officer (FO) Gartshore. It is indeed a proud moment when an Air Force pilot “graduates” and receives his coveted “wings” from one of Canada’s top military chiefs.*

was not at all interested in flying fighters!), I chose transports and was posted to Station Edmonton with 435 (T) "Transport" Squadron which had been deployed to Burma in WW2. I arrived there in mid-October and was quartered in a private room in the officer's quarters which came complete with a *batman* who polished my shoes and made my bed! I shared a bathroom with the Roman Catholic padre and he and I got along famously.

I had driven my rusting convertible to Edmonton and, as winter was approaching and I didn't want to see snow through the floorboards, I drove it out to visit my parents in foggy Vancouver where Dad had retired with Mom. Leaving it with Dad to sell, I caught a ride on a service flight back to Edmonton where I bought a lovely almost-new green 1951 Ford coupe. After I had aircraft seat belts installed for the front seats and fixed it up with dual carburetors and exhausts and with its throaty roar, I nicknamed it "The Green Hornet."

Station Edmonton lay on the east side of Edmonton's downtown airport. To get to the control tower and the weather office on the west side, one could walk directly across the field while keeping a weather eye on the control tower for a red or green light as one approached the active runway. Our 435 Squadron was flying twin-engine Dakotas used in Burma in WW2. These were variously known as C47s, DC-3, Dakotas, Gooney Birds or C47 Skytrains and, after flying two-seat Harvards, they looked awfully big to me!

I practiced six laid-down exercises which included landings, take-offs and simulated engine failures, and learned the old rule *Dead Foot, Dead Engine*. Then on to instrument flying and approaches conducted with the aid of single and multiple radio beacons as well as the "Radio Ranges" which formed four "quadrants" (two Morse "A" and two "N") and four "beams" which were the product of overlapping A and N (- and -) radio signals. We also worked on GCA's (Ground Controlled Approaches) using ground-based radar, as well as completing seemingly endless airborne "compass swings" to check the accuracy of our very basic but important centre-mounted B16 standby compasses.

The military transports we were flying had simple folding bench-type seating along each side of the aircraft designed for the twenty-odd troops we normally carried during exercises. These seats could quickly be folded up as freight was being loaded, but I was rather apologetic when women and children came aboard and the canvas seats were unfolded for them, because they certainly had not been designed for comfort.

In January 1952, I was considered “safe” to fly as co-pilot and began flying regular trips to various northern airports. My first working trip was a scheduled flight (RCAF service flights 3 & 4) to Whitehorse with stops at Fort Nelson and Watson Lake and I got to appreciate our rather basic autopilot!

Leaving Whitehorse early next day, our undercarriage refused to retract and upon returning, we discovered that some zealous crewman had re-inserted the locking pins after my preflight inspection! Another run (RCAF service flights 1 & 2) took us via Fort Smith (the administrative capital of the NWT), Fort Churchill and Yellowknife to Cambridge Bay on Victoria Island (the world’s eighth largest island).

While our maximum take-off weight was 29,000 pounds, captains were allowed to raise that to 31,000 whenever the need arose. Our Squadron’s Officer Commanding could permit a further increase to 33,000 pounds in the event of an emergency! Our normal crew complement of five for cross-country flying consisted of captain (pilot in command), co-pilot, navigator, radio operator and an aircraft mechanic. The pilot flying that particular leg of the flight occupied the left seat and it was not unusual to be flying with a Squadron Leader, Wing Commander or even a Group Captain in the right seat. These officers – typically former WW2 pilots — were receiving a small bonus stipend each month as long as they kept up their pilot qualifications. Hence their need to log hours aloft.

I enjoyed our many trips to Whitehorse because of the magnificent scenery en route as well as its most enjoyable townsfolk. During the winter, there were the big sternwheeler riverboats laid up on the river



*These shallow draft sternwheelers carried passengers and cargo from Whitehorse down the Yukon River to Dawson until 1955 when the highway was completed.*

bank to explore. Their wicker furniture and log books were really most fascinating.

In February, I flew across northern Canada from Whitehorse to Goose Bay, Labrador with a very experienced pilot, landing at many different airports coming and going, and we exchanged seats which allowed me to “try out my wings!” Great experience!

In mid-March 1952 with the Korean conflict ongoing, I was detailed to fly an AIREV (Air Evacuation) flight. F/L Bill Devine and I flew to McChord Air Force Base in Washington State where we boarded two nursing sisters together with fourteen Canadian stretcher patients, several of whom were in bad shape. It was late afternoon when we left McChord, flew to Edmonton and dropped off a patient. It was quite dark

when en route to Winnipeg, so we promptly noticed a red light in the cockpit signalling an open door. I was sent aft and found both sisters asleep while a soldier was trying to pry open the main entrance door from his stretcher. He was using his teeth as most of his arms and legs were missing!

It was beginning to get light when we landed at Fort William to drop off a patient and dawn was breaking when we took off. We headed off towards our next checkpoint of Grand Marais and as we reached our cruising altitude of 7,000 feet, the sun was shining mesmerizingly right in our eyes. Some two hours later, *we woke up!*

We called air traffic control and confessed our inattention. They had no radar and we advised them when we had located our position well south of the Great Lakes, and were then cleared to head northeast towards Toronto. While there was no “altitude hold” control, the Dakota had maintained its altitude pretty well by itself as far as we were aware!

After Toronto, we proceeded on to Rockcliffe Airport (Ottawa), dropped our last passenger and, as a hurricane-force storm was churning northward along the East Coast, and with no hangar available at Rockcliffe, we flew on to Dorval (west of Montreal). There was no such thing as a “duty day” for us and it had been a *very* lengthy flight! Bill’s landing was not at all pretty to watch – he simply shut down the engines as we coasted to a stop on the grass in mid-field (we had left the runway) and gladly accepted a jeep ride over to the barracks.

Some time after our Medivac, I again flew with Bill on a very dark night at low level following the rail line between Calgary and Edmonton. Spying an oncoming train, Bill reached up and switched on a single landing light which so startled the train engineer that he applied emergency braking as we zoomed over him! Lots of sparks.

I fell into the routine of flying regular supply flights to Canada’s Arctic stations including Whitehorse, Yellowknife, Cambridge Bay, Churchill, Coral Harbour on Southampton Island and up to Resolute Bay on Cornwallis Island. In this northern area of compass unreliability, our navigators often calculated our position with the use of LORAN (Long





*Canada's transport squadrons dropped thousands of troops and their equipment during practice sessions following WW2. The Army's airbase at Currie Barracks was well used by 435 Squadron despite its close vicinity to Calgary.*



Range Navigation), a radio navigation system developed in the United States during WW2. Although it used an expensive cathode ray tube, it was only accurate to within about 20 or 30 miles!

In Churchill one day, I watched with interest as a crew started a Dakota's engine which had a dead starter motor and the hand crank for this eventuality was missing. I guess we were so intrigued with this procedure that we entirely forgot to offer them *our* hand crank – and they forgot to ask! After the engine had been pre-heated, a rope was looped around one propeller, the five-man ground crew pulled the engine over a few times with ignition switches off, then jerked it rapidly with ignition on and “away it went!”

We also practiced formation flying with other Dakotas and “paradropping” 20 troops from our main entrance door, together with their two 500-pound “para-tainer” bundles from our belly onto a target at the old Currie Barracks airfield in Calgary. The idea was to practice, practice, practice, until our formation of three aircraft could put our 60 fully-equipped troops onto the selected ground target together with their supplies *in less than a minute!*

In April, we attended the Bush Survival Training School near Smith River, northwest of Edmonton. There, we lived in the bush on Army K rations supplemented by shooting spruce grouse with the supplied “over and under” .22 Hornet/.410 shotgun. Following “graduation,” we were flown to Cambridge Bay on Victoria Island for our winter survival course. After a whole day's instruction and practice in igloo building, we moved into our best igloo effort and settled down for the night.

One survivalist went to the bathroom (located in one of our earlier attempts) in the middle of the night and when he failed to return, we sent a search party to look for him. He was found in one of our igloo failures with his pants down which had trapped him when the snow collapsed! He survived because it was late April and “almost spring!”

We shot a few ptarmigan and caught Arctic char to supplement our Army K rations, although the tiny stoves we were supplied with were quite inadequate.

After much practice dropping troops in the Calgary area, I was sent to the Army's training school at Rivers, Manitoba in May and flew their trusty Dakotas loaded with Army troops in more advanced para-dropping *both day and night*.

The Army taught us the basics of parachute jumping and I learned that because of my lighter (150 pound) weight, I should use the smaller 26-foot "umbrella" rather than their standard 28-foot 'chute. Several of us had even "graduated" from the para course with their first free fall and I began training for my own "drop." I had progressed as far as the 600-foot "high tower" one day when several Army troopers were killed in the windy conditions, whereupon all aircrew parachute drops were immediately cancelled!

Britain had been training its Army pilots to return its "used" troop-carrying Hadrian gliders from France and so, following their lead, we had a great time practicing this with our Dakotas, yanking gliders, one at a time, off the ground at 85 knots. We used a line with a hook on the end to catch the glider's line stretched between two poles. Upon reaching a safe altitude near the field at Rivers or Brandon, the glider pilot released his line and we both landed for "another go!"

I enjoyed several rides in gliders as an interested observer and one day a black lab occupied the co-pilot's seat! When told to "brace," it stiffened its four legs as the Dakota roared overhead, grabbed our line and yanked us skyward.

We did several cross-country flights towing gliders which must have been interesting to off-duty pilots. We also trained in night pickups and dual glider towing, both of which could be quite exciting and needless to say, we didn't practice either of these with any frequency. We learned later that one of the Rivers Dakotas had gained 11 inches due to rivet hole elongation and could no longer fit into Montreal's Dorval hangar. We returned to Edmonton better pilots for our experiences and more aware of the Army's many problems in delivering fighting troops and supplies to the front line.

One day, from our east side of the Edmonton airport, several of us



*What Mt. Assiniboine looks like to flight crews passing by!*

of-duty pilots watched with passing interest at the flying show. With surface winds from the north at about 30 knots, several light aircraft taxied to the take-off point with help from their ground crew, then took off and climbed slowly to 1,000 feet above the airport where winds were obviously much stronger. They then slowly “backed up” above the airport and upon reaching the south side, slowly descended for their landing.

Because Dakotas were not pressurized, when flying from Vancouver to Calgary, we usually crossed the mountains at 11,000 feet Eastbound to avoid using oxygen. The green airway at the time took us just south of Mt. Assiniboine – *11,870 feet tall* – which is always an awesome sight in sunny weather, although we felt *very* close to it, both at night and when flying in cloud! A wonderful painting of Mt. Assiniboine hangs in our living room today and it is still an awesome sight.

Westbound from Calgary, we usually flew at 12,000 feet, above which oxygen was used. However, we sometimes practiced “oxygen flights” and on one such flight from Edmonton to Vancouver, we had

just reached our cruising altitude of 20,000 feet with the Rockies in sight ahead of us when we experienced an engine problem, so had to shut it down and return to Edmonton. While there and waiting for repairs, we were not idle and completed a compass swing on another aircraft. Taking our repaired one, we climbed up to 22,000 feet, and slowly became aware that our groundspeed was just a miserable 50 knots in a very stiff headwind (the “jet stream?”).

We flew troops and supplies to Ft. Chimo, PQ where we took part in the Army’s very large winter exercise. As our massed formation flew over the target, it disgorged several hundred troops with their supplies into the rolling hills of a frigid northern Quebec. I also flew into many interesting airports such as Chesterfield Inlet, as well as Coral Harbour on Southampton Island in Hudson’s Bay. While there, I was offered a three-foot long narwhale tusk for the princely sum of \$25!

With some time off in August 1952 as we awaited our aircraft conversion course, I took my Scoutmaster in the Green Hornet down to see the San Diego Zoo. On the way home along the Coast, we dropped in on Commodore Air Services in San Francisco and rented a Republic Seabee seaplane for a tour of the Bay. We had only been up for a few minutes when we noticed an orange smoke puff from an island below, landed immediately and were warned that we had violated the airspace around Alcatraz!

In September, 435 Squadron received the first of its new Fairchild C-119 cargo aircraft, otherwise known as the “Packet” or “Flying Boxcar.” I was trained on this much heavier aircraft (72,800 pounds maximum weight) with its two great big 3,500-hp Wright 3350 Turbo Compound engines. These were far more reliable than the Pratt and Whitney engines the Americans were using on their C-119s, having just two banks of nine cylinders compared with their four banks of seven and thus our rear cylinders received much better cooling than theirs. To obtain full engine power for take-off, we used a water injection system which cooled the superchargers and higher octane gasoline (115/145)



*Early models of our C-119 lacked the lower dorsal tail fin (and the lateral stability) of the later models.*

which was loaded in our outboard tanks, then switched to the inboard tanks where the normal (100/130) octane fuel was loaded.

One day I was very nearly killed by our Officer Commanding as he was demonstrating our speed differential over Jasper Avenue by diving beneath a low-flying Dakota coming toward us from the opposite direction. As we were recovering from our dive, it seemed to me that we were flying between the Jasper Avenue stores!

We completed many more para drops, now with 42 troops and 20 of those 500-pound bundles. The big clamshell doors at the rear of the cargo area could be opened to admit bulky freight such as jeeps which we carried on occasion. They even admitted the motorboat our CO had us fly one day to Watson Lake where he and his crowd went fishing! Later on, we heard that 435 Squadron practiced extracting heavy equipment from the rear of their aircraft as it passed by at low level.

I was quite used to taking people up for rides in light aircraft belonging to the Edmonton Flying Club and one of my passengers that fall happened to be Georgina “Jo” Tooley (which sounded so much like a boy’s name that I soon changed it to “Joy”), one of two girls introduced to me by our minister. She begged me not to do anything “wild” and we enjoyed a nice quiet sightseeing tour.

One of the books I was reading was *Graphology: Handwriting for Fun and Profit*. As I did with several others, I asked Joy for a page of her handwriting. It was rather fun at the time and my written analysis of her handwriting turned out to be surprisingly accurate and I still have it.

I took Joy to the Hallowe’en party at the Officer’s Mess and she came dressed as Li’l Abner’s cartoon character “Wolf Girl.” She turned many heads (including mine!) for she had been the life guard at Sylvan Lake and knew how to wear a tan.

She was working as head of the Proof Department at the Bank of Toronto in downtown Edmonton.

In January 1953, I was posted to the Instrument Training School at Centralia, Ontario and for two months I flew their twin-engine Beechcraft Expeditors. These were otherwise known affectionally as the C45 or “Wichita Vibrator” as they were made in Wichita, Kansas. Following graduation, I was awarded the coveted “Green Ticket” for instrument flying proficiency.

Back in Edmonton, we practiced formation flying with our C-119s while maintaining radio silence until we became quite proficient at tucking our wings just behind the wing of the aircraft ahead. In smooth air, one could draw your leader’s attention by wagging your wings to set up air currents which affected his ailerons which he then felt in his control column. At night, we used the blue formation lights on top of the aircraft ahead to maintain our proper “line astern” separation.

Tight formation flying was required to get as many troops onto the ground with their equipment in as small an area as possible. From the ground, it must have been a spectacular sight as ten C-119s thundered overhead in very tight formation while ejecting 400 battle-ready and



*The RCAF C-119 Flying Boxcar.*

fully-equipped troops together with their 50 tons of heavy equipment into a small field.

I was standing in the back of our aircraft one day while our Commanding Officer was showing a new pilot this procedure and watched the whole operation. When the green light lit up, replacing the amber ready light, the jumpmaster urged his troops towards the two open rear doors of the aircraft yelling, “GO! GO! GO!”

Their static lines slid along the wire and as they left, the lines pulled their parachutes out. As this was occurring, the twenty 500-pound bundles were being pulled along a central rail to the front of the cargo hold and dropped out through the bomb bay doors. All was gone it seemed in just a few seconds and the aircraft simply gained altitude as its load departed.

In April 1953, I flew a C-119 with our CO to Resolute Bay, then paid an overnight visit to the farthest north US airbase at Thule, Greenland before returning to Resolute. In the sunny morning at Resolute next day, I witnessed two interesting experiments. In the first, a US naval officer stood on the frozen sea and deployed a nylon cord attached to his harness.



*Over Baffin Island on a glorious sunny day in 1953, en route from Thule to Resolute Bay.*

A helium-filled balloon carried the end of his cord to perhaps 700 or 800 feet and an American P2V Neptune flew toward it with a scissor-like apparatus on its nose. This snagged the cord, yanked the naval officer vertically skyward and gradually put him in trail behind the Neptune. His line was then caught with a hook by a crew member standing at the open door and he was winched in. We thought that it would be great for use not only off flat terrain, but also in heavily treed areas due to its initial vertical lift.

The second involved a light aircraft which commenced flying a tight circle at perhaps 500 feet before its passenger deployed a basket attached to a long cord which he unwound as the pilot circled. Although the bucket trailed the aircraft initially, as the cord lengthened it became more and more stationary until a person on the ground was able to either take material from it or place something into it. We thought it would be great to use this idea where there was no landing surface for small aircraft.

On June 2, 1953, after weeks of formation practise, we flew a C-119





*As the air armada gathered before the actual fly-past to mark our Queen's Coronation, the loose formations of aircraft over Montreal made for some good photography.*

as part of a mass fly-past in celebration of our Queen's Coronation. Approaching the Ottawa reviewing stand, a Harvard ahead of us suddenly stalled a wing and spun out from its leading formation and came spinning down through the entire formation of Harvards, Expeditors, B25 Mitchells, Dakotas, C-119s and DC-4M North Stars. Radios crackled a warning and ranks were opened as he fell through, then closed up again. He had enough sense to maintain his spin until below the hundreds of forming aircraft and then slunk away out of sight with his tail between his legs. I wondered if Her Majesty was told!

From Ottawa, we flew to Montreal, Seven Islands and Goose Bay where we completed an extensive training program which included a relief map and moving pictures prior to using the airport at Narsarsuaq, otherwise known as "Bluie West 1". This single sloping runway at the southern tip of Greenland was approached from the Simiutak radio beacon via a lengthy fjord having many "blind" fingers to lead the unwary from the main channel and could only be used when cloud and wind



*One of world's few "one-way" airports, Narsarsuaq Greenland could only be used when weather and wind conditions were favourable.*

conditions were satisfactory. It had been cited for being a "one-way airport," landing uphill and taking off downhill with no allowances for prevailing winds or a "missed approach".

From Labrador next day, we flew our C-119 across to Bluie West 1 in clear calm weather, enjoying an impressively close inspection of the spectacular icebergs near Simiutak as we passed, and landed there for a "quick coffee" before returning to Goose Bay. We returned to Edmonton in time to take part in the mass "Operation Mobility" exercise together with dozens of aircraft and hundreds of paratroops and their equipment over central Quebec. It was indeed another spectacular sight.

In June, with two whole days off, I drove my Green Hornet down to Sylvan Lake with a diamond ring wrapped tightly in my pocket. After asking her mom and dad's permission, I presented it to Joy who was still "dressed up" in pin curls. She accepted it!!

In August 1953, I was posted to the #4 OTU (Officer's Training Unit)

in Dorval (now the Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport) for two weeks of captain's training on the C-119. On my return to Edmonton in September, I received my final captain's check ride and while I did not receive a raise in rank or pay, I automatically assumed responsibility for every decision thereafter made on "my flight."

During a hot day that fall, one of our C-119 captains lost his watch near Edmonton. While reaching out of his open window to catch his departing navigation chart, the watch flew from his wrist and through the propeller arc and he considered it to be lost forever. However the following spring, it was recovered by a farmer while ploughing his land, and he noticed the officer's name and rank engraved on the back. After winding, it was found to be still operational!

I enjoyed flying south to Calgary for para-dropping exercises at Currie Barracks Airport as our route took us across Sylvan Lake at 4,000 feet (1,000 feet above the lake). At the south end of the lake, we "exercised" our propellers and were gratified when, in response to our throaty roar, my future mother-in-law, known by many as "Mom Tooley," burst from her home in the village and waved a towel at us! The wife of the commanding officer at Station Penhold one day reported us for "low-flying," but my crew insisted that we had been "at least" 1,000 feet above the lake and so could *not possibly* have been low-flying! Of course, she was used to seeing the much smaller training planes then flying around Penhold.

One day, I was taking my bride-to-be down to Sylvan Lake and decided that she should take her turn at the wheel of the Green Hornet. All went well until we came to the infamous "Nisku corner" where a sharp left turn in the four-lane highway narrowed it into two lanes. In this bend, as we were accelerating to get past a very large truck, we suddenly came upon a road barrier pointing to a detour to the right! Immediately in front of the truck, we turned as instructed and entered the gravel road. Ditches on either side of the gravel road came perilously close at times as we slid back and forth! Although I glanced behind and saw the truck shatter the barricade, I was unable to talk for several minutes and Joy maintains that

I became quite pale! Upon arriving at Sylvan Lake, we visited the town clerk and requested a driving licence for Joy.

“Can she drive?” we were asked.

My affirmative answer got her the licence.

One evening, after picking up my Green Hornet from a garage near the base where it was in for an oil change, I took Joy to a Drive-In movie. Later, as I was dropping her off, I heard an unusual grinding noise and on checking the oil quantity, found to my horror that it was foaming! I took my car back to the garage next day where it was determined that the mechanic had emptied the transmission and filled the crankcase! Shortly thereafter, I went car shopping.

There was a 1952 green and yellow two-door Ford Meteor demonstrator in the showroom, but before finalizing the deal, I phoned Joy.

“Is it a baby-shit yellow?” I was asked.

Upon the salesman’s assurance that no, it was indeed “canary yellow,” the deal went through – and seat belts were included.

I happened to be the Squadron’s “duty officer” that fall when, during a pilot training exercise, one of our C-119’s propellers went through the stops into reverse pitch. This created so much drag that the aircraft spiralled down and landed in a farmer’s roughly ploughed field just after the crew had lowered its wheels. Following adjustments to the propeller and locking it out of reverse, the aircraft took off from the furrowed field the same day and returned to Station Edmonton, little the worse for its rough landing – although it “enjoyed” a wash down.

In November, I piloted one of our C-119s south to the Fairchild plant in Burbank, California for necessary modifications to its tail. While awaiting its completion, my co-pilot and I seized the opportunity to take a peek at the famous Howard Hughes flying boat nearby. We climbed through a guard fence but when shot at, we didn’t hang around to see if the guards were using live ammunition!

Several times we were detailed to fly an empty aircraft northwest from Edmonton, overhead Whitehorse, then south along the west coast and back across the mountains, landing at the Army’s test base at Suffield,



*Following its forced landing, our C-119 sits in a farmer's roughly-ploughed field north of Edmonton while its pilots and mechanics assess the situation.*

Alberta. We continued climbing on oxygen as gasoline was burned, to as high an altitude as our beast could go. (I was once able to coax one empty C-119 above 34,000 feet before it shuddered and stalled.) Every hour, a new filter was placed into a canister which was fitted outside the aircraft to catch “bugs” and the used filter was then sealed. These six-hour-long flights were ostensibly “Met” (meteorological) flights but we later learned that these trips were flown after every Russian nuclear test and the fallout from it was being carefully analyzed.

In January 1954, I was detailed to take a C-119 loaded with supplies to our Canadian troops fighting in Korea. However upon our arrival in Whitehorse for fuel, we discovered that one of our propellers had become distorted. Its electrical filler, used to de-ice its four Hamilton Standard blades, had shifted and we called Edmonton to report that we

had developed a “pregnant prop.” They sent another C-119 to Whitehorse with a spare propeller, which picked up our load and departed, leaving us to replace our problem propeller and return empty to Edmonton. I have yet to reach Seoul and, as I had never been to Korea on “active duty” during the Korean Conflict, I was not considered to be a “veteran” until many decades later.

Bob Husch, a fellow Gimli pilot from Course 22 was flying with 426 (T) Squadron using four-engined North Stars (DC-4Ms). Unlike those used by Trans-Canada Airlines, the Air Force North Stars were unpressurized and very noisy. In February 1954, I flew as Bob’s passenger from Goose Bay to Europe and he showed me three North Atlantic airfields – Keflavik, Iceland; Prestwick, Scotland and North Luffenham in England. (Bob later became Air Vice-Marshal Husch!)

It was discovered one day that our fully-loaded C-119 was unable to maintain altitude if one engine failed. (I maintained it was some jealous fellow from 426 Squadron.) After this, we were required to wear a harness with chest rings to which a parachute could be clipped if we had to bail out, although after some of the landings I had been through, I would have taken my chances! We were never required to wear a harness and carry parachutes when flying our venerable Dakotas and I often wondered if anyone had checked what would happen if one ever lost an engine while fully loaded.

In April 1954, I was asked to ferry one of our Dakotas (#975) to France. As North Atlantic weather was quite unpredictable at that time of year, I insisted on having two 450-gallon gas tanks installed in the cabin with lines and pumps, and filled as “insurance” for the ferry flight. With a co-pilot, navigator, radio operator and mechanic, we landed at Winnipeg, Manitoba; Dorval, Quebec; Goose Bay, Labrador; Narsarsuak, Greenland; Keflavik, Iceland; Prestwick, Scotland and then carried on to Metz, France.

We enjoyed sunny weather almost the entire way across the Atlantic to Prestwick and were then in cloud and sailed through the busy London airspace in cloud at 9,500 feet. While we could maintain radio contact



*Above: Prestwick, Scotland. Following our trans-Atlantic flight, our crew holds its celebration until our successful aircraft delivery in France.*

*Below: The Prestwick Airport Hotel where our RCAF crews stayed. Notice the airport's control tower above the top of the hotel.*





over Greenland and Iceland on their military radio frequency, we had no radio contact with civilian ground control over either the UK or France as our venerable Dakota was only equipped with the very basic 10-channel RCAF radio! Our radio operator was in contact with Edmonton (or Montreal sometimes) of course, and while we hoped that Edmonton would be in contact with European air traffic control, we never found out if this was so.

Over Metz, we were unable to contact the control tower. However, after buzzing the field several times, a fellow was seen running across the field and we finally made radio contact. He told us (in English) that the RCAF Metz operation had recently been shifted to Gros Tonquin, France. We had no onward charts but after we took off and climbed up a bit, we were able to contact military radar control who directed us to the Gros Tonquin airfield thirty minutes away and landed there with our 900 gallons of fuel brought all the way from Edmonton.

Not only did we not have proper radio, we had not been advised to carry either passports or return tickets! We were however able to use our Canadian money in both France and England! We boarded a train, did some sightseeing and took a full week to return to North Luffenham, England where we caught a ride home on another noisy North Star.

On May 29th 1954, I married my beautiful Joy at the Sylvan Lake church we had both attended. The minister who had introduced us performed the ceremony and following the reception, the two of us set off on our honeymoon to Vancouver. Upon arrival, I developed a painful ear infection from swimming in a hot spring's pool and spent a week in the Shaughnessy Military Hospital. With only penicillin available, the painful infection migrated to the other ear – my "honeymoon" had to be extended yet another week and I lost ten pounds.

Our squadron received several more C-119s and our good old Dakotas were being phased out. My last flight on one occurred in August, shortly after I had passed the 2,000 flying hour mark, 850 of which were on Dakotas. Thereafter, all squadron flying with its scheduled services to the north as well as para drop exercises was carried out using C-119s.





*Above: A small but meaningful wedding service, followed by a celebration with families and friends. My bride's name was actually Georgina (Georgie for short) but I changed it to "My Joy."*

*Below: En route in our two-tone Ford Meteor to my honeymoon date with the hospital!*



Joy and I rented a basement apartment on Edmonton's east side, purchased some furniture from the previous renter and spent that lingering Fall and Christmas together. Telephone lines were unavailable and Joy was plagued with morning sickness so had to give up her banking career while I was kept very busy flying – so all was not what we had expected of our early marriage.

In early 1955, my logbook showed 850 hours flying the Dakota and 1,163 hours on the C-119 with 435 Squadron when I was notified that I had been transferred from Transport to Training Command. Despite protests, I was ordered to Centralia, Ontario to attend SIT (School of Instructional Technique), then to FIS (Flying Instructor's School) in Trenton. We had an emergency phone line installed at our apartment and my mother came to assist but I regretfully left Edmonton on February 28th, just two days before Ian, our first son was born. The military was sometimes a very hard-hearted task master.

Shortly after starting my instructor's training, I was asked to take a C-119 to Great Whale River (later known as Poste-de-la-Baleine) on the eastern shore of Hudson's Bay. (For those interested, it is now known as Kuujjuarapik.) They had constructed a rough semi-prepared gravel airstrip there and needed an experienced pilot to drop off some building materials. Our landing on this rocky strip left us all shaking for quite some time after the aircraft had stopped, and our subsequent take-off was the roughest I have ever experienced. I can't imagine what it would have been like for those sitting in the back of the aircraft! My crew and I wondered just how many more hours this aircraft would be able to hold together before it simply fell apart.

Joy was unable to stay in the apartment with our new baby, so had our furniture stored and drove down to Sylvan Lake to be with Mom Tooley. But I missed my lovely wife and was eager to see our new son, and so begged her to join me in Trenton. Trans-Canada Air Lines (TCA) had, as its name implied, a cross-country flight which left Edmonton some time after midnight and after hopping across Canada, arrived in Toronto after lunch! Thus, six weeks after I left her, Joy arrived with Ian



*Two months after he was born in 1955, Ian got to meet his Daddy, in Trenton. Ian was our first child. It was indeed an exhilarating experience!*

who had been “as good as gold,” following the very noisy North Star flight. After a desperately short nap, both were introduced to all my many aunts and uncles who were living in Toronto.

As our two-tone Ford was at Sylvan Lake, I bought a 1940 Austin A40 (with “arms” for turn signals) and we settled into our “new home,” a converted barn in Trenton, for a few months. It was all that was available at the time but it had a stove in the kitchen, a sink and washing machine in the living room together with an ant colony, and a bed and bathroom in the attic. What more could we possibly want?

Following the SIT course, our FIS course became more interesting as our instructors piled on the “mistakes” that students were liable to make. Our flying became good enough to demonstrate take-offs from the rear cockpit “blind” (on instruments “under the hood”) once we were lined up on the runway. One doesn’t realize just what rudder forces are required to control 550 wild horses until taking off blind as the tail comes up and torque turns the aircraft. We were also taught to perfect aerobatics, at least as much as the heavy Harvard allowed, with cuban eights, rolls off the top and eight point rolls.

We drove back to Sylvan Lake in glorious weather while firing sunflower seeds through the Austin’s sun roof. Wee Ian was crammed into a bassinet on the back seat and again, was “as good as gold” but we managed to plug several toilets along the way with his “flush-a-bye” diapers which didn’t quite live up to their name.

I was told that I could expect to be posted to a training school and requested a posting to either the one at Penhold or Claresholm. Instead, I was ordered to #2 FTS (Flying Training School) at CFB Moose Jaw in July. Typical military!

This was shortly after a TCA North Star had collided with a Harvard trainer. Following a short visit with my parents in Vancouver, I left our Austin with Dad to sell, picked up my family in Sylvan Lake and we settled in the rented basement of a private home in Moose Jaw.

In Moose Jaw, I was assigned to “F” Flight and found it interesting to teach brand new students the art of flying “from the ground up” on those

Harvard aircraft, just as most of my own Course #22 had been taught. From the back seat, we taught our students basic flying skills and basic aerobatics and also kept our proficiency up by flying with other instructors. This included instrument flying “under the hood” from take-off to the approach-to-land and included aerobatics both visually and also under the hood with gyros set on 000/180 for rolls and 090/270 for loops in order to “roll around” our spinning gyros.

We were allowed to fly a Harvard almost any time, as well as the twin-engine Beechcraft D-18 Expeditor on request. I much enjoyed flying a Harvard alone on a summer day when fluffy white cumulus clouds were overhead. One could play tag with those fluffy clouds, chasing around them, over them and through them and I practised basic aerobatics on instruments in the larger ones. Interesting to look up at a cloud above you when you are on your back, and indeed a wonder that none of us saw another aircraft as we cut around and through the clouds, but the sky was big and we were quite small.

All went well for the first few months until we were sent groups of NATO students and quickly found that some of them were particularly dangerous, for they could not be failed (which would send the fellow home in disgrace and cause diplomatic awkwardness). Towards the end of my Air Force career, one of them nearly killed us both as we were flying over Regina Beach when he froze during a practice spin. Frantically, I tried to get him to either relax the death grip he had on his control stick or ease off on the lock he had on one rudder pedal.

As the ground spun around and around rising to meet us, I pulled my short control stick from its socket and jabbed his head with it! He shook his head, relaxed his grip just a bit and, as I bent down to return my stick to its socket with trembling hands, the Harvard recovered itself at a very low altitude between the hills of Regina Beach! This flight very nearly ended my life as well as my career.

They weren't all bad, of course, and one day a student experienced an engine failure while flying by himself over Johnstone Lake (also called Old Wives Lake) 15 miles southwest of Moose Jaw. Receiving his



*Harvards over Johnstone Lake, southwest of Moose Jaw.*

“MayDay” call, the tower instructed him to put his flaps down and land “wheels up” on the lake, which he did. Once down safely on the shallow lake, he was told to lower his wheels and the Harvard just sat there in the middle of the lake with its wheels on the bottom while the authorities found a boat to lift him off. He didn’t even get his feet wet!

I had never held a civilian Commercial Flying Licence, but felt the need of one and one day flew one of our Expeditors to Winnipeg and there wrote the five required exams for my ATR (Airline Transport Rating), the top commercial licence. During the exam, I pointed out to the examining officer that I wasn’t able to complete one of the written questions on navigation until I was provided with a true airspeed for the projected flight which, after much haggling, he did and I passed.



In April, a fellow instructor and I flew an Expeditor to Regina where we picked up our flying examiner. On the subsequent flying test, my fellow pilot forgot to close his cowl flaps just before take-off and we suffered through an amazing low level cross-country ride on the “live” engine until this was pointed out to him. Cowl flaps are opened to admit more air to the engines while taxiing as little cooling air flows over the cylinders, but they provide a great deal of unacceptable drag when airborne. As that was unacceptable, we immediately returned to Regina, dropped the inspector and flew back to Moose Jaw. The following month, we returned to Regina and both of us passed our instrument rides, thus earning our civilian ATRs with instrument endorsements. My ATR licence is #721.

On May 31st, with our instructors flying from the front seats, we formed our Harvards into a very tight 36-plane formation and then accomplished a great fly-past by the Moose Jaw control tower in a *very* low and *very* noisy salute.

Following six years of military service, I was offered both a promotion to Flight Lieutenant and a 20-year permanent commission as an inducement to remain in the Service. However I requested and received my discharge from the RCAF. As we drove away from Moose Jaw for the last time in July of 1956, we heard on the radio that one of my students had killed himself by flying into a barn.





## INSTRUCTING

Leaving my family at Sylvan Lake again with Mom Tooley, I caught a ride in an Air Force C-119 to Vancouver and, with 3,100 flying hours, applied for my civilian Instructor Rating to enable me to teach basic flying on “civvy street.” After being tested by the chief instructor at the Aero Club of BC, I was granted a basic Category 3 Instructor’s Rating and my logbook thereafter became filled with short 15-minute to 2-hour-long flights in Fleet Canucks, Cessna 140s and Piper Tri-Pacers, flying with students to such exotic destinations as Chilliwack, Langley, Powell River and Alberni.

In August I was sent with two aircraft to manage the club’s satellite schools at Port Alberni and Westview/Powell River. After initial work with very good students (including a truly excellent one from the RCMP), I was able to go swimming in the Alberni Canal while at the same time “supervising” their circuits and landings. One day I took an excellent student flying our other aircraft in formation beside me from Alberni on over Cameron Lake. Once over the ocean, we descended together through local cloud and landed at Westview. It was indeed a pleasure to have students who were not “drafted” and were most eager to learn.

One evening, after leaving Alberni in fading twilight for Vancouver, my generator failed and shortly after that, the battery died, leaving my student and I without lights or radio. I was forced to make a night landing NORDO (no radio) at the Vancouver International Airport and,

while I got chewed out by the tower operator, I still can see no option. My logbook shows *177 entries* with just 119 hours of flying in August. Instructing is certainly one way to fill up a pilot's log book.

I learned to fly a Cessna 140 on floats from Helen Harrison, an awesome trans-Atlantic transport pilot who had delivered everything from Spitfires to Lancaster bombers during the war by flying them *solo* across the Atlantic. With instructor's ratings in many countries, Helen is a member of Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame.

With my brand new Float endorsement, I flew replacement film to CBC crews who were filming the Squamish River flood that year. While docking in Squamish, I was busy dodging floating logs when an inebriated man on the dock tried to assist me, missed catching my dangling line, and ended up in the water.

With my parents in a Cessna 170 floatplane, I quite disgraced myself on my birthday by trying to take off beside Thetis Island with my water rudders still down which quite neatly prevented my take-off. Experience is indeed a great teacher.

Of course I missed my bride and new son. Joy was the Red Cross swimming examiner at Sylvan Lake that summer and after she finished, I flew to Calgary where Joy and baby Ian met me with bags packed. We drove to Vancouver where I had rented a fairly new furnished house which shortly thereafter, we discovered was haunted! I knew that they have old haunted houses in England, but didn't realize that we also have them in Canada. The owner's spouse had passed away and the ghost kept returning (through the locked front door!) to check on the silverware in the china cabinet drawer before vanishing. After we left the following year, we asked the new renters about the ghost and they informed us that it was indeed still roving about.

In the fall of 1956, I applied and was offered interviews with both TCA and CPA (Canadian Pacific Air Lines). I flew via TCA to Montreal to be interviewed and, while stripped naked in a room waiting for my medical, I discovered a picture with a hole in the wall behind it! Shortly thereafter, I received my examination.

Returning to Vancouver, following my checkup by a CPA doctor, I was offered a job flying their DC-3s. I chose CPA over TCA as: #1, Vancouver was much closer to “home” than Montreal (or Halifax); #2, I had flown DC-3s which they were using; and #3, I would also much rather fly around mountains than through Atlantic fog! As an added inducement, I was told that captain’s jobs were available to experienced pilots flying their big C46 Curtis Commandos which were supplying Canada’s DEW Line.

As Joy had never before been in a float plane, I took her flying one day in one of the club’s Cessnas. On returning to Vancouver, we found it to be covered by low cloud. I tuned in their radio beacon and, with its identifier ringing in my ears, let down through the low cloud, broke out at 400 feet over the Fraser River and made a water landing – illegally, but quite safely.

I also flew with a friend in a float plane up Indian Arm for a fishing trip. After landing, we tied up to a private dock. As we laid out our fishing gear on the dock, our lines became tangled and we spent the entire two hours patiently untangling them! It certainly was a long time before I tried fishing again.

Those were indeed interesting times, although the income wasn’t great. I also flew with Len Milne, a DOT (Department of Transport) examiner, who awarded me an upgraded Instructor’s Category 2 rating.



## CANADIAN PACIFIC AIRLINES

In January 1957, earning the grand sum of \$260 per month “training pay,” I had a four-hour familiarization flight as a first officer in one of their DC-3s and then flew one return trip to Prince George. The passenger terminal, on the south side of the main Vancouver airport runway, was a friendly place and we much enjoyed CPA’s very helpful ground staff.

Following that DC-3 flight, I was offered a job flying as co-pilot in their overseas DC-6 operation. On February 21st, following a two-week instrument course in their Link Trainer, I had a two-hour familiarization ride around Vancouver. While I had flown heavy twin-engine aircraft, the DC-6 was my first experience with four. Flying with two 2,500-hp engines shut down on one side of the DC-6 seemed roughly equivalent to shutting down a single 3,500-hp engine on the C-119. In addition, the DC-6 was my first experience with pressurization which enabled flights as high as 25,000 feet without wearing those cumbersome oxygen masks.

In preparation for international flying, all CPA crews were required to be vaccinated against such diseases as typhoid, yellow fever, tetanus, small pox, diphtheria, cholera and scarlet fever. One of our loathsome shots was TABD&T (whatever that was!). Some shots were required to be done yearly and some every six months. While most were trouble free, cholera provoked such a reaction that several of our flight crew had to be hospitalized and treated for several days. Our caring CPA Doc Wilson agreed that this was non-productive and ended up by giving a

very weakened dose, enabling us all to continue flying. I never heard of anyone contracting cholera while I was employed with CPA.

On February 24th I flew a familiarization flight as a wide-eyed second officer on CPA's NOPAC (North Pacific – Tokyo and Hong Kong) run which made a normal refuelling stop at Cold Bay, Alaska. Tokyo had a great CPA staff house with friendly workers and good beds. The food was very good but the sight of a man neatly clipping the small lawn with what looked like nail clippers was a real eye-opener!

Hong Kong's Kai Tak airport was a "fun" place to land, particularly when its normally gusty southerly winds were blowing. Its celebrated "checkerboard approach" was an interesting one. As we descended, we made our way past many high-rise buildings and over the large hilltop-mounted checkerboard before taking a sharp right turn, then landed while "crabbing" into the wind. While the trip (for me) took just a week, I spent 60 hours in the air, 24 hours of them at night. It might have been less but, en route to Cold Bay on our way home, we were forced to make an additional stop at Shemya in the Aleutians for more fuel.

Our crew consisted of a captain, two co-pilots, one or two navigators, three stewardesses and a mechanic who handled the refuelling chores. As the powers that be decided that pilots could now operate the high frequency (HF) radio for communication with ground operators, their radio operators and their Morse keys had recently been removed. While the HF was often quite noisy due to atmospheric, heavy radio static could always be expected anywhere near thunderstorms or during solar flares and it was all very hard on the ears.

We carried 62 passengers, with first class passengers occupying the rear of the aircraft which was quieter. Each set of four seats in first class made into a lower bunk with a pullman-style upper berth above. Flight crews could utilize these upper berths for a rest whenever passengers declined to pay for them. In addition, whenever the exclusive "club class" compartment aft of the cockpit on the port side was available, it could be used for rest by the flight crew.

Joy and I purchased a brand new six-room bungalow in Richmond