

***A wise nation preserves its records, gathers up its muniments, decorates the tombs of its illustrious dead, repairs its great public structures, and fosters national pride and love of country by perpetual references to the sacrifices and glories of the past.***

***Joseph Howe, 31 August 1871***

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***And other articles...***

**Submissions:** Text submissions can be either paper, email or electronically produced - Word Perfect (preferred) or Word. We will format the text for you.

Graphics are best submitted electronically, they should be 300 dpi and a .tif file. A jpg file at 300 dpi is acceptable if no compression is used. We will attempt to use any pictures, whatever the format.

**NOTE WELL:** When sending mail of any kind, newsletters articles, letters, membership renewals, donations etc., please ensure the envelope is addressed correctly to :

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**Deadlines for receiving submissions are:**

Spring	10 March
Summer	25 June
Winter	15 October

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**Editors Grunts**

I will not again raise again my repeated warning that without a fresh source of members this Foundation is an endangered species. You ostriches are all headed for the Delta List -- sooner rather than later! So, I did raise it again. So shoot me. Where will replacement members come from? Certainly not from a downsized Shearwater -- reduced to helicopter-only function. Whence then?

Replacement members will come from a revitalized and expanded Shearwater -- that's what the cover is all about. It's aimed over your heads at the politicians to drive home to them the logic that Shearwater is the ideal fit for the **p r o p o s e d** Contingency/Expeditionary Force. Located in one of the greatest natural deepwater harbours in the world Shearwater has it all in diamonds and gold. Just look!:

A deepwater dock for a support ship/carrier and Special Forces marine craft.

Harbourside storage acreage for mission-specific materiel containers and field hospitals.

Barracks and Married Quarters for soldiers, sailors and airmen.

A 9000' runway for heavy airlift Antonovs or equivalent.

Rail and highway services right to and through the base.

Hangars and parking for fixed-wing fighters and other military aircraft.

Open acreage for aircraft manufacturing and maintenance, both civil and military.

Gymnasium and recreation beach for servicemen and families.

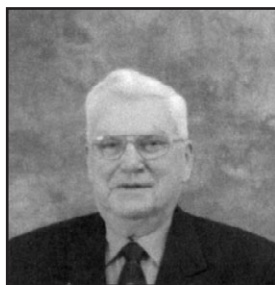
Superb medical and educational institutions right at hand.

Littoral training areas, both sandy beaches and craggy surf-swept coast right at hand.

Ice free - because some would like to see everything moved to Montreal (which would mean that our ships would be frozen in for months every year.

Now look at those red ovals on the cover -- they are explained within.

This editor is now going on a sabbatical for a few months. Kay Collacutt has been more than a secretary -- she has been a full co-editor and the heart and soul of SAMF Newsletter. I leave the newsletter in her capable hands and trust that the Board of Directors will give her their full and unstinting support. I will still be at her disposal for assistance with the newsletter. *(How come Bill gets to take a sabbatical (lazy devil). Seriously, Bill hasn't been feeling 'right some good' lately and is taking this time off to 're-group' so to speak. He was going to say this might be his 'Swan Song' again but given a little rest and he'll come back stronger than ever. Kay)*



**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Welcome - as we look forward to the year 2006. To see the fluffy pussywiooo9ws and brave crocus it helps remind us the end of winter is near!

The Restoration program of the Firefly, Avenger and HUP is progressing well - thanks to the

volunteers who have been willing workers and shared their time and talents. Be sure to drop in and see the new happenings. To date, the Avenger is in the final stages of work.

The BANSHEE Chapter of CNAG out of Victoria, which hosted a very successful Reunion 2005. Graciously donated \$3000 to the Avenger Fund. On your behalf, I would like to thank the Executive and Reunion Committee for their donation and their interest to help preserve our naval Air Heritage.

We have receive a lot of favourable comments regarding personal stories and experiences sent in by the members. Keep them coming!! They bring back memories that are a vital part of our past. All of us have a story or two to share.

June 17<sup>th</sup> is the date for the Annual Dinner Auction to be held in the WO & Sgt's Mess Shearwater. It is a fun time to meet together, enjoy good food and is very rewarding as a Fund Raiser. Plan to attend!

Just a reminder, it is membership renewal time again - if you have not already taken care of this matter - now is the time. Anyone receiving and enjoying this newsletter and are not members - let your conscience by your guide.

On behalf of the SAMF Board of Directors and myself, I wish each one a safe and enjoyable Spring and Summer.  
*Buck Rogers*

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**Time Capsule.** We are currently in talks to partner with the #111 Micmac Wing of the Air Force Association of Canada to put together a series of small exhibits telling the story of the **Hurricane at RCAF Station Dartmouth**, including Dartmouth's connection to the Battle of Britain and hurling Hurricanes from catapults on ships...who'd think it? We are very pleased with our exhibit progress, but I'd love to hear your feedback. Please feel free to contact me at any time for exhibit ideas: we have many more interesting stories to tell, and great artifacts with which to tell them! I hear the call for "more colour and more photos": indeed, squadron and aircraft related memorabilia and photos will be forthcoming, one exhibit at a time. We'll keep you posted on our website!

**From the Curator's Desk**

by *Christine Hines*

Spring has finally arrived and, at time of writing, we are just a few days from opening for the 2006 Visitor Season. Since the last issue of the SAMF newsletter, SAM has experienced a variety of changes: staff, new exhibits, and an increase in visitor and volunteer numbers. Firstly, Roger Chiasson, Asst Curator and Sgt Julie Gallant, Admin Asst and Volunteer Coordinator have been offered other positions at 12 Wing as members of the 12 Wing Air Reserve Flight. I'd like to thank them both very much for their contributions to SAM, and wish them every success in their new postings. A "Welcome Aboard" to John Webber, who many know from the Firefly Restoration Team as our Engineer, and Maria Plasse, our new Office Administrator and Volunteer Coordinator.

Our exhibit program is overwhelming this year! As I write, the **Avenger** is being painted after a great deal of bodywork. The **Bear Trap exhibit** is progressing nicely, with a view to an opening in June. Many thanks to all those who responded to the call for volunteers to support the project; we received a great response from local folks who wanted to wire lights and "paint ship", and from folks who shared their experiences with the Bear Trap, from design to use. The information gathered will greatly enhance the interpretation of this unique piece of equipment. Now on view in our temporary exhibit hall is a show of military art from the collection of the Directory of History and Heritage (NDHQ) in Ottawa, of the **Canadian Forces Artists Program (CFAP)**. Over thirty works of artists such as John Horton, Ardell Bourgeois and Karole Marois, among others, who were embedded with CF units since 2002 will be on loan to SAM until the fall. It is our hope that serving CF members will see their history reflected in this show, and also see the connection between them and their predecessors in our hallowed halls. For more information on the CFAP, please visit the DHH website at [www.forces.gc.ca/hr/dhh](http://www.forces.gc.ca/hr/dhh). Several smaller projects are just about complete, including our **sonobuoy exhibit**, an addition to **the Bonnie exhibit** and the addition of a new mural by Doug Scott in the

The 2005 season was very successful from our perspective; we logged just over 24,000 visitors and approximately 11,000 volunteer hours in ever-increasing areas of activity including exhibits, conservation, restoration, administration, archives, SAMF, Gift Shop, Duty Guides, Air Show, and host of other areas. April 23-29, 2006 is National Volunteer Week: to all of our volunteers in the museum, and SAMF volunteers far and wide, many thanks for your dedication and support of SAM and SAMF. We appreciate all of your efforts. Bravo Zulu to all!

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**REAL AVIATORS FLEW STOOPS (RAFS)**

BY LCDR Gordon A. Bonnel USN (ret)


I am trying to find former S2 Pilots to complete a roster I am compiling to hold a CAN/US reunion.

Roster details - please provide RANK (if applicable), FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST AND NICK NAMES, SPOUSE, ADDRESS, PHONE and S2 OUTFITS (years not necessary).

I am not just looking for exchange pilots, but ALL S2 pilots!!! Trying to find a reunion roster from 880 or other Squadrons that flew the S2....aim is to have a get together in Halifax.

Please reply to: [gab146@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gab146@sbcglobal.net)

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<p>Peter Stoffer, MP          NDP Veterans Affairs Critic</p>	
	<p>Sackville-Eastern Shore          51 Cobequid Road,          Lower Sackville, NS B4C 2N1          Tel: (902) 865-2311          Fax: (902) 865-4620  <a href="mailto:Stoffp1@parl.gc.ca">Stoffp1@parl.gc.ca</a></p>



**ATHLETE OF THE YEAR 2005**  
**Captain Tammy Hiscock**

As far back as one can remember, sports and recreation at Shearwater have gone hand-in-hand with the flying and operational commitments.

Base, Unit, and Squadron Commanders, plus Supervisors were most supportive in encouraging personnel to take part in the recreational activities provided. Hence there was always participation by many of the Base personnel in the variety of sports at all levels of competition. It would be impossible to name all those who participated over the years, but there are some who currently stand out for their athletic achievements.

The Canadian Forces Sports Hall Of Fame, and the Nova Scotia Sports Hall Of Fame have recognized people who represented Shearwater. Until recently, the most prominent inductee being the 1957 Shearwater Flyers Football Team, which was inducted into both Halls Of Fame. Don Loney is also in both Halls. Others in the CF Hall are Bill McBain, Doug Wright, and Ken Whitney. In the Nova Scotia Hall as individuals are Bob Hayes and Rod Shoveller.

In 2005 a new face appeared on Shearwater's hallowed charts of athletic recognition, and I speak of Tammy Hiscock of 423 Squadron/12Wing. For her efforts as a cross country and marathon runner, she was first named Air Command Female Athlete of the year, and subsequently recognized as the 2005 Canadian Forces Female Athlete Of The Year.

Tammy Hiscock is the first Shearwater athlete to be awarded such prestigious honours. She competed in the CISM World Cross Country Championships in Beirut, Lebanon, where she placed as the third Canadian in her race. She finished first in the Master category. Following these performances, Tammy was first overall female in Toronto at the Canadian International Half Marathon/Canadian Forces Nationals. During a period of six months she ran eleven races from 5kms to

marathons, finishing first or second in every race. In the Timex Road Race Series, she finished as first female overall in both the Open and Master Series. This earned her top spot on the Nova Scotia running team. In Venice, Italy on October 23, 2005, she ran in the World Military Marathon Championships and finished a most respectable fifth place against the World's best.

She has shown a sincere devotion to her sport, and has always been able to juggle the time demands as the Sqn Adm Off. with the continuing challenges of a CISM athlete. Tammy Hiscock has certainly done Shearwater proud.

**Submitted by Rolly West**  
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**HELICOPTER HAUL DOWN (BEAR TRAP) EXHIBIT**

*by Bill Gillespie*

For those of you that have not been to the Museum lately, you would be surprised by the amount of activity that is going on during this so called quiet time. Work is still being carried out on the Firefly, Avenger and HUP, but work has started on a new sports display and a haul down exhibit featuring an actual Bear Trap. This exhibit will display a model Sea King being portrayed as if it is being hauled down to the deck. The display will try and replicate the deck and hangar doors of a DDH / CPF.

An exhibit of this size does not come cheap, (I can hear the moans already, "Here we go again, asking for more money", and you are right.), and to see it completed in a professional manner, takes money. There is no magical wand that we can wave and make it happen; therefore, if any of you out there have a soft spot in your hearts for the old Bear Trap and life on a Destroyer, here is your chance help. **To that end, I challenge you to clean the moths out of your wallets / purses, and match my donation of \$100 to this worthy cause.**

If you are worried about how to accept my challenge, I'm sure the Wicked Witch of the East, (Kay our Secretary), will gladly tell you how, and she take any larger or smaller donations for this worthy cause. Kay can be reached at 1-888-497-7779. You do not even have to pay for the telephone call.

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## Sand Kings Over Somalia

Colonel (Retired) Ernest Cable OMM, CD  
Shearwater Aviation Museum Historian

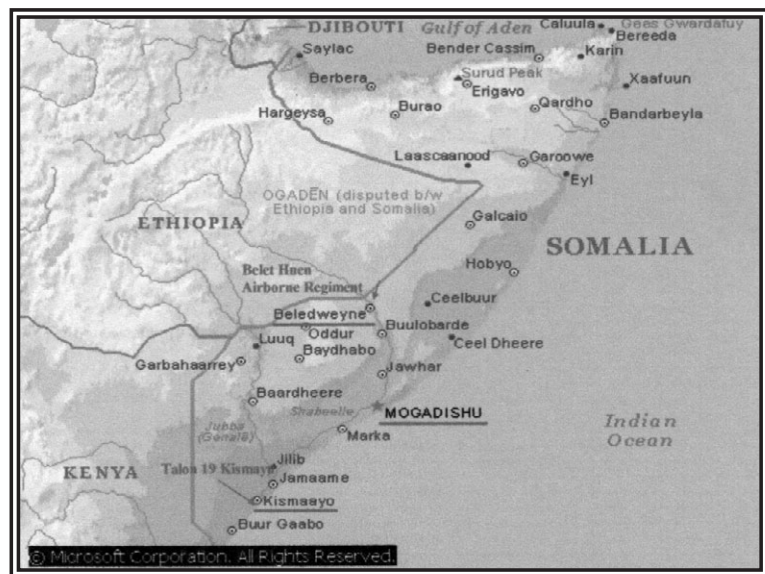
At one time, Somalia was highly coveted for its geographical location, situated near oil wells in the Persian Gulf and along the shipping routes from the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea. The country was released from its history of British and Italian imperial rule in 1960, but when Maj. Gen. Mohammed Siad Barré seized power in 1969, Somalia entered a new era of undemocratic rule. At the dawn of the Cold War, Somalia aligned itself with the Soviet Union.

Soviet money, along with powerful weapons, flowed into the country to seal the partnership. But, in 1977 Somalia engaged in a border dispute with Ethiopia and the Soviet superpower dropped their alliance. The United States subsequently cemented a coalition with Somalia, sending over weapons and foreign aid. As the Cold War thawed, clan warfare in the country intensified as powerful Cold War weaponry fell into the hands of rebel warlords who struggled for power.

The United Nations, recognizing that immediate action was required, passed Resolution 794, which authorized Operation Deliverance (November 1992 – March 1993) in an effort to bring an end to the famine and civil war that was ravaging the small African country. Canada responded by sending *HMCS Preserver* loaded with tons of supplies to help ease the famine. Lieutenant Colonel Jim Cottingham headed up *Preserver's* Helicopter Air Detachment (Helairdet) from 423 Squadron consisting of three Sea Kings, 16 aircrew and 28 maintainers. Fortunately, the Sea Kings retained most of the additional equipment with which they had been modified for Operation Friction in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. In particular, the Sea Kings still retained the Forward Looking Infra Red (FLIR) sensor and the Global Positioning System (GPS). The Tactical Coordinator (TACCO) operated the FLIR that could be steered in azimuth and elevation to acquire and record day and night imagery of targets of interest; the GPS provided the TACCO accurate navigation over the uncharted regions of the desert. The Airborne Electronic Sensor Operator (AESOP) was equipped with night vision goggles to visually search for targets of interest in the night darkness. The AESOP also manned a 5.56 mm, C9 machine gun, mounted in the cargo door opening, to provide self-protection for the aircraft. All aircrew stations had cooling pumps installed for the individual aircrew cooling vests and Kevlar inserts in the seats provided armour protection against small arms fire. The ALE-37 flare and chaff dispenser and the ALQ-144 infrared jammer were the notable exceptions to the Persian Gulf War protection suite.

*Preserver* also had an army headquarters staff embarked that provided a planning and command function for the Canadian army units (1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, the Royal Canadian Dragoons, the Canadian Airborne Regiment and the Combat Engineer Regiment) prior to their getting established ashore in Somalia.

Shortly after arrival in the Indian Ocean *Preserver* took up station off the coastal city of Mogadishu. Since the port facilities could not accommodate the ship the Sea Kings were tasked to sling all of the supplies on board *Preserver* to the Bale Dogle airfield, 55 miles (90 km) inland, where the Canadian Airborne Regiment would soon be arriving.



**Somalia showing the relative locations  
of Mogadishu and Kismayu**

The task required slinging a load of supplies over unknown territory then returning for another. The round trip time plus refueling meant that each crew flew two sorties of three hours per day, moving three loads per sortie. When C-130 Hercules aircraft became available the Sea Kings started to sling their loads into the Mogadishu airport for



subsequent airlift onwards to Bale Dogle. With superb coordination with the ship and exceptional support from the maintenance crews, the Sea Kings were able to sling a load ashore every six or seven minutes. Most crews averaged 20 loads per sortie with a record 23 loads in two and a half hours being achieved. The Sea Kings established an airlift record by slinging over 400 tons ashore in less than seven full flying days.

***Sea King slinging a load from  
HMCS Preserver to Mogadishu,  
Somalia***

Being accustomed to flying in cool weather over the North Atlantic, the aircrew, maintainers and aircraft encountered many new challenges flying overland in the heat of the Somali desert. The heat limited the engine torque available and the sand and dust kicked up by the rotor downwash created zero visibility while landing. To minimize corrosion in the maritime environment most moving parts of the Sea King were lathered with grease, but in the desert the sand not only adhered to the grease, causing excessive wear on the moving parts, but also collected in every nook and cranny on the aircraft. For their remarkable durability in the desert the Sea Kings were affectionately dubbed the "Sand Kings". With no self-start capability the Sea Kings had to remain flying or engines kept running until they could return to *Preserver* to shut down or hot-refuel and change crews. The long duty cycles and high flying rate put a strain on the aircraft and maintainers alike. Despite these challenges the maintainers were able to produce at least two serviceable aircraft more than 90 percent of the time.

After all of the supplies had been slung ashore, the Sea King crews were thrust into the role of providing tactical air support to the army field units, a role for which they were not trained. The Sea Kings were primarily used for reconnaissance missions for the Canadian Airborne Regiment, the U.S. Marines and the U.S. Army Rangers. The aircrews' expertise had been in anti-submarine warfare, surface surveillance, over-the-horizon targeting and ship recognition. But, in their new ground reconnaissance role, the crews had to teach themselves to recognize the various types and roles of army field vehicles, identify the types of weapons observed among the various groups of rebels and become familiar with the techniques that the warlords used to camouflage arms caches and vehicles in the desert. Other tasks included venturing farther inland to map alternative routes for future multi-national ground force moves.



***Sand, the bane of existence for the  
Sea Kings in the Desert.***

Later, when the Airborne Regiment had been assigned to patrol a sector farther to the north, near the town of Belet Uen, the Sea Kings reconnoitered the route the Regiment would take to move all of their vehicles 200 miles (330 km) inland. During the two-day move the Sea Kings provided continuous top cover to warn of impending danger. To fill the intelligence void on rebel activities in the area around Belet Uen, the Sea Kings conducted a series of reconnaissance missions. Departing *Preserver* at night, the Sea Kings staged through Bale Dogle where they refueled and then flew another 130 miles (220 km) to Belet Uen to determine the nighttime movements and disposition of a local warlord faction. Later, when fuel became available at Belet Uen, crews flew to Bale Dogle, refueled, flew to Belet Uen, refueled, and then flew a three-hour reconnaissance mission before returning to Belet Uen and repeating the refueling process on the way back to *Preserver*. These long six to seven hour missions provided excellent intelligence on the rebels, their weapons and their villages that proved to be invaluable to intelligence officers.

Not all of the tasking went as planned as the Sea King crews had to be prepared to respond to urgent requests for help such as when a Sea King responded to a distress call from the *MV Red Cross Free Trader*. The off-loaded cargo of relief supplies ashore was being hijacked by a large number of armed Somali bandits. By the time the ship directed the Sea King to the scene the bandits were readying heavy trucks to move the food away. The Sea King made its initial pass from over the water at 150 knots. Many of the Somalis ran away but those who remained were heavily armed. Continued low level passes by the ten-ton helicopter intimidated the remaining bandits who fled without



a shot being fired. The Sea King patrolled the area for a further twenty minutes until five joint force helicopters landed U.S. Marines to secure the area and ensure the relief supplies reached their intended destinations.

The Sea King crews also conducted several medical evacuations saving many lives including a number of Somalis. On two separate occasions in the early days of Operation Deliverance U.S. Marines were flown from inland after they had been bitten by poisonous snakes and insects. On another occasion a Sea King crew spotted a car accident at a remote location. They landed and loaded five severely injured Somalis into the helicopter and delivered them to a field hospital. The Sea King had extracted the injured before an American

### ***Sea King over Somali Desert***

medical evacuation team could arrive, leading a senior U.S. Navy medical officer to affectionately label the Canadian Sea King crews "The Body Snatchers". In another notable incident U.S. forces requested immediate evacuation of a wounded Somali and a U.S. Army surgical team to *Preserver's* operating room. With a battle raging in the city, Belgian and U.S. helicopter crews refused the mission. A Sea King crew believing the task was within their capabilities, launched, flew a flawless approach into a poorly lighted area festooned with unlit obstacles and returned the patient and a surgeon to the ship. The Sea King crew was lauded by the allies for their professionalism.

Many of the Sea King crews witnessed firefights between rival clans. At night, tracer rounds and mortar explosions were visible as the Sea Kings ferried people to and from the airport or the American Embassy where the Operation Deliverance Joint Staff had set up headquarters. One of the more dangerous missions was Sea King 410, assigned call sign Talon 19. The crew was briefed to conduct a covert Forward Looking Infra Red (FLIR) reconnaissance of the Kismayu area, located about 400 km to the south of Mogadishu, in support of American and Belgian ground forces. Talon 19 launched from *Preserver* and proceeded to their search sector north of Kismayu. The town, smaller than Mogadishu, was built on a gently curving hillside overlooking the ocean (like an amphitheatre); there were some buildings up to three stories high. The infrastructure was in a state of decay hence there were no lights in the town and only the port area on the peninsula to the south was lighted.

To minimize the visual signature, Sea King 410 was flown "lamps black" with all external lights turned off. To further reduce the nighttime visual signature the crew wore their dark blue flying suits rather than the tan suits normally worn in the desert. Instrument lighting had to be switched on, as neither pilot was equipped with night vision goggles. Unfortunately, their white helmets reflected the cockpit's dull red glow, providing a potential aiming point for enemy gunners. All lights in the aft cabin were off so as not to degrade the performance of the night vision devices worn by both observers. The cabin window over the port sponson was removed to provide an optically "pure" field of view for the night vision devices. The pilots' side windows were open for no tactical reason other than to provide some relief from the hot night air.

Towards the end of their planned mission, *Preserver* tasked Talon 19 to investigate a suspected concentration of heavily armed rebel troops that had been detected by a previous mission. After a thorough search of the area yielded inconclusive results, the Talon 19 crew believed that the troops could be advancing on Kismayu. A search closer to the city revealed a small group of possible rebel forces. Low on fuel, the Sea King was forced to return to *Preserver* to hot refuel, change crews in which Majors Sam Michaud and Bruce Ploughman were the pilot and co-pilot respectively and return to Kismayu.

Intelligence assessed that the troops could be part of a Morgan (one of the feuding warlords) move to attack Kismayu and the crew was tasked to search west of the city to search for further troop movements.

Talon 19 was then called upon by Bandit 11, the American ground force controller, to investigate reports of gunfire in Kismayu. Approaching the city from the west, the crew observed small arms and heavy machine gun fire and numerous flares throughout the city. Although the threat from ground fire was high, the crew decided to fly over the city at 300 to 400 feet to optimize the FLIR's effectiveness in detecting targets of interest. This was demanding flying as without the aid of night vision goggles the pilots had to rely on their instruments and directions from the FLIR operator. As the aircraft began to fly over the city a major battle was being waged, muzzle flashes from small arms, the flash-pause-bang from Rocket Propelled Grenades and tracer fire from heavy machine guns were apparent in several areas





Air force changed the Sea King squadrons' prefix nomenclature from HS (anti-submarine) to MH (maritime helicopter) to reflect their unique capabilities over both land and sea. By forging the way ahead with new-found capabilities the Sea King community demonstrated that they were true to their Air Force motto, "Sic Itur ad Astra" (Such is the way to the stars).

**Bibliography:**

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- Airforce Magazine April 1993
- Airforce Magazine Spring 1997
- Sam Michaud Comments 28 May 2003
- Author's Recollections as DCOMD MAG

**Author's Postscript:** In February 2006, the newly elected Conservative government announced that five CH-124B Sea King aircraft would be modified to carry up to 12 troops or cargo to support Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan. The decision to convert the Sea Kings to the ground support role was made with confidence; undoubtedly based, in part, on the Sea Kings' performance in Somalia. This is not a new role for the Sea King as the Royal Navy currently uses the larger Mk 4 Sea King (carries 27 troops) to support the Royal Marines. The Canadian Sea Kings will retain their FLIR systems to conduct reconnaissance missions and their self-protection capabilities to operate in a hostile environment. Much like their CH-146 Griffon helicopter counterparts who have historically supported the army, Sea King crews will have to be trained to provide air support to land operations (e.g. Brigade command and control, communications, tactics, maintaining aircraft and living in bivouac in the field). They will also need to learn the intricacies of operating in a hostile ground environment (e.g. anti-aircraft threats, camouflage techniques, and land weapon and vehicle recognition). The transfer of the five Sea Kings will reduce the Air Force's ability to train Sea King crews and to provide shipborne integral air support to the Navy.

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**406 Squadron 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
**By: 2Lt Myk Gray and Capt John Davies**

2006 marks the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of 406 Squadron with many activities planned in Shearwater and Halifax 10 – 14 May when 406 Squadron members past and present will celebrate its proud history.

406 Squadron continues to build upon the excellence of all those who have contributed to the unit's illustrious and varied history. If you are interested in participating in the festivities contact 2Lt Ian McIntyre at 902-720-1402 / [McIntyre.ID@forces.gc.ca](mailto:McIntyre.ID@forces.gc.ca) or MWO Dave McDonald 902-720-1394 / [McDonald.DJ@forces.gc.ca](mailto:McDonald.DJ@forces.gc.ca).

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**Paths Crossed**

While visiting her daughter in Geilenkerchen, Germany one of our most respected Museum volunteers, Barb Ryan, attended a Canada Day function and met up with Mike Collacutt, one of the sons of your Secretary. Mike is serving with the AWAC Squadron. (New job Mike? Mom)

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## MAGGIE'S SPEED STRIPE

From Bill McDermott



Although several light fleet carriers took part in the 1953 Fleet Review in the Solent, only HMCS Magnificent sported a speed stripe that ran down and aft from the starboard after weather deck adjacent to a gash chute. Despite the best efforts of the Ship's Company, the purplish/grape coloured stain bled through several coats of grey paint prompting a few ribald remarks from similar class aircraft carriers with more conventional paint jobs. Fortunately for all concerned, the queen's barge motored down the port side during the formal review.

Vengeance for the stain on the hull was exacted while still at sea, although the culprit possibly escaped harsher punishment due to an interesting hair colour scheme he would wear the whole time we were in Portsmouth. But what caused the problem?

For those not familiar with the old style sonobuoys, they were fitted with a fragile glass capsule that when broken released a powerful dye to stain the ocean bright green over a large area. Preparing these buoys for aircraft loading (without cracking the capsule), required care, because even a few grains could vividly stain your skin for days. Even so, breakage was quite common, and disposal involved wrapping the damaged capsule in numerous layers of toilet paper, and dropping it (carefully) down the gash chute. This disposal was based on an

assumption the vessel would be long gone, or the package well submerged, before the capsule leaked. I don't recollect there being an official process, while environmental protection was years in the future!

On this fateful day, with wind driven spray breaking inboard, standeasy was piped. In the mad rush, a poorly aimed and damaged dye capsule must have missed the gash chute, escaped its layers of bumff, and produced an airborne cloud of crystals. You have to keep in mind these crystals did not change colour until mixed with sea water, so the thrower, (who we all assumed must have been the last guy in line through the hatch), immediately acquired suitable hair and clothing highlights. The proverbial hit the fan when it became obvious that copious amounts of water only aggravated the situation. In the normal scheme

of things a culprit was essential and punishment mandatory, so all of us Radio Mechanics were immediately put on Commander's Defaulters as either suspects or witnesses. From our location, facing the Commander's desk, it was most obvious to us who had done the deed, but to no one else. The chief witness produced by the Master At Arms quickly fingered then PO Freddy Devlin (later LCdr) as the culprit. As the witness was sporting a wide, grape coloured, semi-permanent stripe on the back of his head, blue jean shirt and pants. We witnesses found it all quite hilarious. Quicker than a solution in a TV detective show coming up to a commercial, Freddy was dismissed and suspicions redirected. I was on loan from the Royal Navy, and not sure what fate befell our purple dyed compatriot. Like many things we plan, I intended to ask Freddy Devlin who it was and get the details, but he passed on before I remembered it again.

Once in Pompey, several coats of grey paint failed to mask the purplish coloured stripe, and we had to line with the distinction. On the bright side, I feel it did help the liberty boat coxswains locate Maggie among all the gray fleet.

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## WAS THERE A MUTINY IN THE CANADIAN NAVY IN THE LATE 1950?

*Ed Skelding, Airdrie, Alberta as written in Reader's Digest*

There were no known mutinies in the Royal Canadian navy (RCN) in the late 1950s, but there were a number of mutinous incidents in the RCN at the end of the 1940s, including three in early 1949; one on-board the destroyer HMCS Athabaskan off Mexico's Pacific Coast (February 26);



**HMCS ATHABASKAN**

one on the destroy HMCS Crescent in Nanking, China (March 15); and, five days later, aboard the aircraft carrier HMCS Magnificent, on fleet manoeuvres in the Caribbean Sea. In each case, the mutineers locked themselves in the lower deck, refusing to report for duty.



**HMCS MAGNIFICENT**

Tension was diffused on all ships when the respective captains agreed to look into the grievances.

The Canadian Minister of Defence, at the time, Brooke Claxton, ordered a Commission of Inquiry, in

part because of the fear that communist elements had infiltrated the Navy. The other, and more obvious, reason was because the government and the Navy could not ignore three mutinies over the course of four weeks. The result of the "Mainguy Report" named after its chairman, Rear Admiral Rollo Mainguy.

He concluded the mutinies were the result of the officers' failure to provide welfare committees through which lower-deck sailors could air their grievances; of frequent changes in the ships' manning and routines without adequate explanation; of a deterioration in the traditional relationship between Officers and Petty Officers; the absence of a distinguishing Canadian identity in the Navy; and the collapse of the chain of command. The report also stated that the RCN was not a haven for communists.

"The 'Mainguy Report' blamed the mutinies on an uncaring officer corps whose supposed aristocratic British attitudes conflicted with democratic Canadian sensitivities," says Naval Historian Richard Gimblett, research fellow at the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies at Dalhousie University in Halifax. "The report did not address the fact that low-level disobedience such as that seen in 1949 had been practiced in the RCN since the mid-1930s and was widely accepted by all ranks as a democratic, indeed uniquely Canadian, expression of collective grievances."

Although the Navy's official position is that only three mutinous incidents occurred in the RCN, anecdotal evidence suggests there were more. Each of those was resolved when the Captain agreed to look into the sailors' grievances. Recommendations from the "Mainguy Report" to improve shipboard relations were adopted by the RCN in 1949.

Since then, there have not been any mutinous incidents.

*Submitted by Gerald Marshall*

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## VIGNETTES

FROM ED JANUSAS

### Bonnie Decommissioning

When the Bonnie was decommissioned in 1969 "Farewell" parties were held in Shearwater and the Bonnie on the same day, a FRIDAY.

The last parade, Divisions in Navy lore was held on board Bonnie between 2-4PM. In addition to the Ships Company, two busses from Shearwater were laid on to transport anyone who wanted to attend this last ceremony.

After the ceremony there was Up-Spirits in 'A' Hangar. Welded to the deck (no aircraft were on board) were four large kitchen/galley pots filled with rum. Anyone who wanted to imbibe was invited.

Four o'clock comes, end of rum ration. Everyone go home. This 4PM Friday and I'm thinking, with all the traffic on the road to Shearwater in our two busses, we'll never get back til 6 o'clock (1800) when the party there will be over.

We sailors from Shearwater depart the ship and lo and behold, there are six Halifax motorcycle cops to escort us across the Angus L. MacDonald bridge, sirens going all the way to Shearwater. Just marvelous, bloody marvelous. Don't know who or how this was organized. To Halifax Police, BZ. Any comments from anyone? *Ed J.*

### Armed Duties

This writer, being in the business of "mechanizing" an aircraft was, during my career, expected to perform so called "Armed Duties" from time to time, like my shipmates. Exclusive of weapons familiarity in Basic Training with live ammunition, there were three episodes of yours truly carrying arms on duty detail.

First time was as an AB guarding #16 RADAR UNIT outside of Base at the end of one of our runways. From midnight to 0400 was issued with an Enfield 303 rifle (1949) with five blank cartridges.

Second instance was in 1969 during the FLQ crisis when rumour had it that a faction of members of the said FLQ would attempt some form of terror on our Base/airfield. As a P1, I was issued a Sten Gun and a civilian driver and told to patrol the perimeter of the Base. I was not issued any ammunition, but was instructed to return to the Regulating Office for ammunition if the need arose!!

Finally, the only other time I was on armed duty and this was with ammunition with a Sten Gun was 1953-4 escorting the Pay Officer to the Bank of Montreal bringing back the payroll for the troops on pay day.

Those were the days (50 years ago!!) When you were paid by the Pay Officer "Paybob" with cash placed in your cap, on the table. As an aside, the Regulating Staff (RPOs) (MPs for pre-CAF days) would take this opportunity to confiscate your Station Card if he found that you needed a haircut, new shoes/boots etc... This 'card' would be returned to you after these infractions were corrected. Without this 'card' in your possession, you could not leave the Base - your official passport so to speak for all manner of use.

### Prince Charles

Who will own up to this story? It is true. Who will own up to investigating this rumour?

Sometime in '68 - '69 there was a British destroyer that tied up to the Shearwater jetty on an overnight visit, then to proceed to Halifax the following A.M.

Someone circulated the 'information' through the Officers housing area that Prince Charles was going to be paying an informal visit to the Wardroom approximately 9:30 - 10:00PM.

A number of Officers and their wives, dolled up in their finest, awaited the arrival of the 'Prince'. Alas, no such 'Prince' was on that Destroyer!!

Can anyone corroborate or elucidate on this tale? *Ed J.*

### The Bragging West Coaster

This true story takes place mid/early 1950's at Shearwater and involved Petty Officer Peter Brittan. He was a West Coaster who forever bragged about it and dreamed of being posted to Pat Bay on Vancouver island at our Reserve Squadron there.

A few of his 'friends' concocted a scheme whereby they 'forged' a draft/posting to the West Coast and had 'arranged' to have this 'order' given to him. (At this time, Air Canada was flying out of #1 Hangar in those early years.) On receipt of this 'order', Peter packed up and proceeded to board the flight to Victoria (Pat Bay). At this point his 'friends' apprised him of this joke pulled on him. Well... he refused to believe it!! There was nothing to do but approach the Commanding Officer of the Base, give him the

story of this joke and ask the C.O. to please go to the A. C. Terminal and order him off that flight, which he did.

Who his friends were is not known by yours truly but maybe after 50 years someone can enlighten all of us? *Ed Janusas*

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#### Veterans Service - 9 Nov 05

Rear Admiral Robert Welland speaks:

The reason I am standing here is because I didn't want to offend the Admiral who asked me to do this, by refusing.

Because there used to be so many wars, where a lot of people got killed, their passing is remembered every year, around the middle of November by parades and church services. Young people are often made to attend the church services because it is said to be good for them to know about past wars. So now that you believe that you will also believe that the best person to talk about wars is a person who has been in one or more. That's me. I am called a veteran. A veteran is someone who has not been killed in a war. See!

Wars are always started by old people and fought by young people, the old people always stay at home and the young people are often sent far from home. I can't see much likelihood of that recipe changing. But if it were reversed, where the oldies had to go off and fight, I wonder how many wars we would have? Right!!

The aftermath of wars persist for a long time, so giving you a few examples gives me the chance to tell you a couple of personal war stories. Most veterans tend to tell war stories!

A pretty lady from Italy visited me a few weeks ago. Her name was Anna, She said that her father had been rescued from drowning in the North Atlantic ocean by me. Anna said she was making a documentary film of the sinking of the liner, the Arandora Star, and the rescue of 900 people, including her father, by the Canadian destroyer St Laurent. The Arandora Star was carrying German and Italian prisoners who were slated to be locked up in Canada. But a German U-boat torpedoed the ship. Something ironic there! Anna had found that I

was one of the few people still around to tell about it. It happened in 1940.

I remembered it well. It was one of the greatest rescues of the war. My ship rushed 200 miles to the position of the sinking at full speed. We picked up all those still alive, and left as many behind - who were not.

We had over a thousand people on board. Our destroyer was normally crowded with just our crew of 125. It took a day and a half to reach the Scottish harbour, some died on the way. But we saved over 850 and Anna's father was one of them. There were other Italians amongst those rescued, and they came from a town called Bardia. Anna's home town is Bardia. She said the townspeople have put a bronze plaque in the town square telling of our destroyer St Laurent making the rescue.

So I told Anna all about the rescue of 65 years ago. How we saved her father. Anna said that I'll get a copy of her documentary.

I asked her to hurry!



Five years after that most notable rescue, the war continued. I was in another destroyer, the Haida. I had been promoted into being the captain. The crew called me the Old Man, as is the custom to call the captain. I was 26. I was quite old compared to the average for my crew; we averaged out at 21. Proof that the young do the fighting as I explained earlier.

Haida was part of the escort of a convoy to Russia, to Murmansk, which is well above the Arctic circle. We got them there, about 40 ships, successfully. Now it was the task to take a returning convoy, again about 40 ships from Murmansk to Scotland, about 2000 miles.

Before we sailed we were told that 22 German U-boats were poised to attack with torpedoes, and also aircraft. The escorts job, ships like mine, was to fight them off, sink them or shoot them down. A great scenario for a video game! 40 ships, 15 destroyers guarding them, 22 submarines intent on torpedoing every ship. But video games hadn't been invented then, we had to do the real thing!

It was a calm bright day, the merchant ships plodded along at about 12 miles an hour, we escorts surrounded them, pinging with our sonars to detect the submerged U-boats, searching the air for bombers with our radar. All guns and depth charges ready.

A lookout, a young seaman, yelled at me that he saw a torpedo approaching. I turned the ship to dodge it; we saw two torpedoes run along the ship's side missing by about 20 feet.

Three years ago, 57 years after that event I received an e-mail from a German gentleman, called Stefan Gudenus. He had accessed Haida's web site (Haida, the same ship, is now a museum in Hamilton Ontario). He read about the above event. His e-mail told me that his father, Lieutenant Stefan Gudenus was in command of the U-boat, U-427 off Murmansk that day. He had fired the torpedoes. And at the time was greatly disappointed when they missed. He said his father was grateful that I was also an equally bad shot when I depth charged him.

Enough war stories.

Almost everyone deplores wars and the misery they cause. But it is a fact that the borders, the physical borders, of most countries have been decided through wars. One side defending what they have, the other side trying to take over the land. The borders of Canada are no exception. So it is a good idea to know about the borders of one's country, how they got to be that way, and what we ought to do to defend what we have.

So some wars are indeed justified; if you don't fight for them you'll lose your country.

Should any of you, girls are now included, have to fight for your country, you will either be killed or become a veteran. Like me.

There is a greater chance of becoming a veteran if you win. So it is a good idea to support our Armed Forces in everything they do.

Canada, right now, has soldiers fighting in Afghanistan. Two of our ships are patrolling the Persian Gulf where there is a near state of war. Those Canadians are far from home, they are young, and they are fighting for us. It's all to do with keeping our country. Got it!

Carpe diem. Have a nice Armistice day.

*Submitted by Rolly West*



## **IN THE DELTA**

***Baldwin, George***

***Berry, Peter***

***Brown, Cliff***

***Buzza, Percy***

***Conroy, Shirley***

***Dainard, Barbara***

***Decker, Joan***

***Dixon, Michael***

***Gervais, Pearl***

***Isaac, Nora***

***Ley, Charlie***

***L'Heureux, Yvette***

***Nelson, John***

***Netterfield, Stella***

***Porter, Frank***

***Robilliard, Larry***

***Ross, Larry***

***Tobias, Jim***

## THE 85 MINUTE FLIGHT

BY L. Wayne Halladay

Thirty minutes after a night tracker launch from HMCS Bonaventure (Bonnie) the following incident occurred on 14 Mar 68. The crew, consisted of yours truly, Walt Mercer, Knobby Clark (I think) and certainly Scotty Stewart who I flew with for four years.

Following training at approximately 1000' , we descended to conduct night mad trapping exercises when I felt a restriction in the aileron controls. I immediately told my copilot to "not touch the controls" since I felt his knee could be the only culprit jamming the controls. Walt indignantly told me he had "not touched the controls". Upon hearing this all crew members seemed to stop breathing and all conversation ceased as power was advance to gingerly crawl to altitude to put some air under our derrieres.

At a safe altitude we determined our aircraft would move freely to starboard but the old girl (CF2F 1576 required strenuous effort to achieve even small port aileron control. Many questions arose. What if I initiated a starboard turn and increased binding prevented return to level flight? There were numerous "what ifs"; however, the only solution appeared to be, make small aileron input and land ASAP.

Contacting Highground (Bonnie) we briefed them on our predicament. Since she was sailing past Bermuda on our return from New Orleans, I was asked if I wanted to transit several hundred miles to Bermuda. Negative. Despite my love for BDA with its beaches and bikinis, I just wanted to land while we still had some aileron control. The sea was calm, the sky star filled and I thought we could safely land.

Bonaventure acquiesced and authorized a landing. I was relieved and appreciated the fact the carrier would go to flying stations to recover one lonely aircraft. The other three were not due to land for another three hours.

Problem - night carrier controlled approaches (CCA) were to port, a direction we could not turn except in small difficult increments. Solution - RCAF Air Traffic Controller Ft/Lt Joe Wright stated he would set up the radar for a right hand CCA. I was impressed and promised myself I would ply Joe with duty free rum forever. Joe was Air Force but really a navy man at heart. He talked me

through the approach just like the CCA controllers at Shearwater used to do when things were a little dicey. Give me a CCA approach any time rather than an ILS (showing my age!)

One mile from the carrier we lost all port aileron control, but continued, using heavy rudder and staying slightly high. Now under LSO control (Wes Postma?)



### LSO

Down we came using a lot of rudder wrestling the sturdy tracker to the deck. I do not remember landing, I do not remember what wire we caught but I do not think it was an okay three wire.

Departing the aircraft I do remember several things. On the flight deck my legs were weak and wobbly. During the debriefing my normally tanned face was apparently ghostly white as I guess the ramifications of what could have happened that night were finally sinking in. How glad I was that the brass on Bonnie permitted us to land. The next day, Davy Williams (I think) scheduled us to fly again and our previous flight became a thing of the past.

A flashlight was found in the vicinity of the port spoiler control rod; after the flashlight was removed, control movements were normal. A mistake was made which so easily could have happened considering the almost impossible conditions our maintenance personnel faced at sea.

Surprisingly, the incident was accepted for a Good Show Award in Flight Comment. The flight duration from catapult launch to arrested landing was only 1.3 hours. In retrospect the flight seemed much longer.

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## **A BARREL TO STAY AVIATION WAY**

*by Jerry Marshall*

Ever since I've known her she has always said "Dear-heart" - have you guessed whom I mean. It all started in Clarence Park where we all lived. Yes K C has been bugging me to write a story and every time I pick up the newsletter, which is with every release, I'm reminded yes you still haven't written any interesting article that most are just waiting to digest. So here goes.

In my younger days while in training I was most impressed with the Harvard that was a stripped down version with no wings but a great training aid, I'll never forget the first time I sat in the cockpit. They said do what the handout instructed you to do. This was a verbal instruction on how to start a Harvard, given by an English gentleman of which my ears were not accustomed to hearing. Some how the thing started much to my surprise and what a roar. Movement of the throttle and other ancillary controls completed the lesson. My greatest accomplishment was the understanding of the brakes (pressing on top of the rudder pedals stopped and held the aircraft in a fixed position), mystery solved.

This training aid stayed with me all through my years when in many instances I was disappointed to learn that many of the junior servicemen had little or not hands on training on the real thing or an reasonable facsimile to running an engine. So what I did was use an engineering guideline written by an engineering officer which served as a guideline to get guys started and it worked (Written on Yellow Paper). This all leads up to the story that I have in mind, a training aid to get people hands on experience with the real thing. What really reinforced my aspirations to this goal was at VU-32 when an electrical guy made up a mock of the heater system of the Tracker. This made it so easy to check the heaters. Countless hours were saved, and made our serviceable record soar. Basically he used parts used in the A/C but installed on a board that simulated the working real thing.

After twenty years working on the squadrons and at sea someone said you are going down to the school. Really I wasn't impressed, but when I started to work with the guys down there and they said that improvement in training aids could be achieved I was off and running. First I fixed up the Wing Folding System to reflect the Canadian version of the aircraft, naming all the components and as we had them in the aircraft on the Squadrons. Then much to my surprise I was posted to a new organization that was sweeping the whole of the Services, Standards.

This meant writing what the student was to achieve and how they were to achieve it.

Teams were set up and courses on how to write these procedures filled hours of extra study, travel to inland places like Borden Ontario, helped to make a conversion.

Since most of the courses were male oriented and we had to make plans to reflect real situations, I thought I'd use a subject of interest at that time. "What is a vasectomy" which included some photos not suitable for all audiences. Little did know that they would change the schedule to include female students as learning participants. Talk about foot in mouth. With some major changes and about a ton of sweat a program change happened and panic changed to anger which finally ebbed. Then the mark said "passed". Big lesson, be prepared for the unexpected.

As part of the big picture on the Tracker aircraft, accomplishments were not completely achievable with out a real aircraft to do the things that the guidelines that we were writing about stated, so words that should have said "show" "point" "indicate" and like were not able to reflect the real meaning of hands on training that the package intended us to write about.

As luck would have it in a busy environment with flights going on in every direction, not to mention the Cold War, an incident happened that was much to our favor. A Tracker did a wheels up landing that seemed to only damage the (fodsick), a device under the aircraft to catch arrestor wires if all else failed. A TSR in Ottawa known to the gang with in the Service knew that an aircraft at the school would be a great asset. Ottawa assigned this aircraft to training at the school. When this happened we immediately went to rewriting our Standards to reflect that students would actually RUN aircraft the same as they would if they were at the squadrons that sent them down to get qualified on type.

One little hitch happened, one engine was damaged in the wheels up landing and shortages of engines was being encountered. A complete aircraft could not arrive at the school. However several years earlier a fellow tech devised a replacement weight which substituted the weight and balance, along with undercarriage safety to allow a barrel filled with cement be attached to the aircraft to allow regular movement, this is what we needed at the school, since they would not give us an engine for our aircraft.

What a challenge, could we really train students and pilots to run aircraft away from the flight line and arrive fully trained to meet operational requirements and to the standards that we were writing. Well that's what we did. With the barrel attached to one side of the aircraft we were able to convert the aircraft to a suitable training aid that we stored in a hanger that the fire



department would certify as safe, since we could not store fuel in the training hanger at the school. How it was achieved was that the whole aircraft was emptied of its fuel and that all the fuel lines had to be vented to no fume status, hours of compressed air flowing and it worked. Next removal of the LRFT (Long Range Fuel Tank) system from the bomb bay and fitted to 45 gallon oil tank dolly filled with fuel to run the aircraft. To get the fuel to the engine flex hoses with quick disconnects were attached to area adjacent to the wing fold and external hydraulic supply fittings. All the tech(pilot) student had to do was select the Aux pump ( a normal start procedure) that started the LRFT pump that delivered fuel to the aircraft and normal operations of a serviceable engine were accomplished. Shades of the past "Harvard training".

This system worked very fine when original staff were on hand but with change of personnel and request for changes to standards due to noise nuance the system was dropped and personnel not trained to meet squadron standards like we did on the Harvard. Really the greatest single thing, apart from having an aircraft, was the ability to use an aircraft with a cement barrel attached simulating weight etc. was the icing on the cake. This task was accomplished by the input of most of the training staff who spent off duty hours to achieve this goal, however in those days no digital camera was ready to take pictures as far as I know, any one with a picture of the aircraft so fitted with the cement barrel would be greatly appreciated at the aviation museum. In summary, all the things one picks up along the way, will sometimes be of great use if nothing else but in your mind.

(Anyone out there with a photo of this aircraft with a barrel attached? Kay)

\*\*\*\*\*



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by Al Snowie

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## ACROSS THE FLIGHT DECK



### NAVAL AVIATION FAMILY REUNION 2006

On looking back at the era of Canadian Naval Aviation, one cannot help but think of the people who came from various parts of Canada, and other countries, and spent a portion of their lifetime contributing to the development of the community we call "Naval Air". It is difficult to determine exactly when this distinct society came

into being. It may have originated with those who served on Canadian Squadrons during WWII. There is a greater possibility that, within Canada, it took roots in 1945, when the Royal Canadian Naval Air Section was formed at the wartime establishment, RCAF Station, Dartmouth. That original Naval Air complement comprised three officers, six technicians, six civilian employees, and an unknown number of dependants.



As the unit grew, married personnel began to occupy quarters and temporary housing at Clarence Park, a small community with wood frame cottages located further down Eastern Passage adjacent to the air station. The focal point of this community was a recreation centre with a bowling alley and canteen. Bowling was the "in" thing in those days.

#### **Clarence Park - by Ron Beard**

When RCAF Station Dartmouth was transferred to the RCN in December, 1948, it was commissioned as Royal Canadian Naval Air Station, HMCS SHEARWATER. From that date onward, our distinct society became firmly established within the former community of existing chapels, a small post office, messes and a gymnasium, now the site of the Shearwater Air Museum, which included a small barber and tailor's shop. The gym also served as an entertainment facility. Within a year, a theatre group, the Shearwater Players was formed. One of the first achievements of this group was to arrange for the Navy Variety Show to perform at the Shearwater gymnasium, now the site of the Air Museum. Admiral Bidwell was among those who were entertained by cast members and music of the Stadacona Band during that performance. In addition, the Player presented three of their own plays each year. The Naval Air community also quickly gained prominence in regional sports activities by fielding competitive hockey and football teams known as the Shearwater Flyers.

As Naval Aviation continued to grow, additional married quarters, the Hampton Gray Memorial School, new chapels, gymnasium, ice rink and other facilities were constructed. A Shearwater Dependent's Association was established to administer the needs of volunteer group activities.

Some may recall Bob Cook who helped organize the Bluefins Swim Club, and Nancy Garapick gained wide recognition as a member. Mike DeSallebury looked after the skating club. Mary Fink conducted Highland Dancing classes. Elizabeth Murray organized an equestrian club. Ivy Spicer and Nursing Sister Sylvia Shepperd were active with the Guide and Brownie packs. Stuart McNeill, a Medical Officer who had played for the Detroit Red Wings, coached a little league hockey team. Goose McLennan imbued the enthusiasm that prompted the Shearwater Teen Club to hold the Saturday morning car wash that would remove dirt, paint and hub caps from any vehicle. These were just some of the many activities and people involved in contributing to the development of our Naval community over the years. Regardless of whether one lived in

married quarters, apartment complexes or housing co-ops, we were part of a unique neighborhood. Many of our children attended the same schools, churches and club activities, and spent some of their time growing up together. It was not unlike an extended family, a part of which included members of VU-33 squadron located on the west coast at Patricia Bay. Moreover, it encompassed those who were not among the aviation trades or classifications, but who served in Naval Aviation and participated in our community's endeavours.

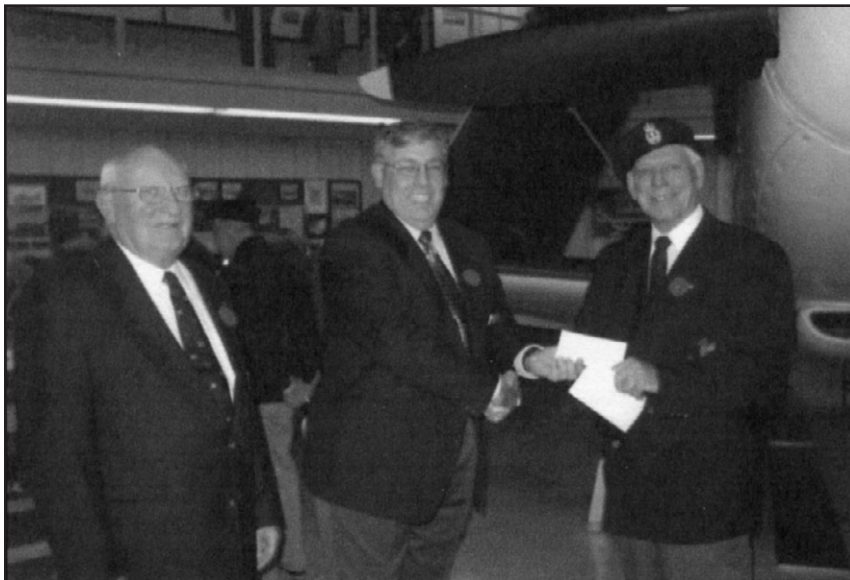
December 2005 marked the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Royal Canadian Naval Air Section at RCAF Station Dartmouth. That was a long time ago. The carriers have gone, as has HMCS Shearwater. Although helicopters operate from ships in the fleet today, Naval Aviation, as we knew it, no longer exists. Nevertheless, the launching, flying, retrieving and maintaining aircraft from a ship is a unique experience. and, although they are few in number, those still involved deserve to be recognized as members of our community.

The number of those who served during the era of Naval Aviation is also diminishing. However, there remains a large contingent of the community family members among their dependents. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that they have some interest in rekindling memories of their earlier days in the era of Naval Aviation. Patrick Dawson, the son of the late naval aviator Shamus Dawson, has talked with Dave Tate, Eddie Myers and others to learn more of his father's experiences as a squadron pilot. Pat Whitby's son, Mike, is a historian and is always seeking information of past events. Among our own children, we have all heard them enquire as to whereabouts of some former neighbours and contemporaries. "Has anyone heard where Paddi Malasgar is?" We older members also sometimes wonder what happened to that kid next door. Does any one remember that red-headed boy, Jack Dunn's son, who hung out with the football team and acted as water boy?

The Hampton Gray Chapter of CNAG will be hosting the 36<sup>th</sup> annual reunion in Ottawa on Sept. 15 to 17th, 2006. This reunion has been designated a FAMILY REUNION, and an invitation is extended to all who were part of the Naval Air community. We solicit your support in extending that invitation. Details of the reunion itinerary, together with registration information, will be forwarded to CNAG Chapters in May.

Come and join us and meet old friends, neighbours, schoolmates, and other members of the Naval Air Family. **Jack Moss**

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***A cheque in the amount of \$500 was recently presented by CNAG representative Lambert Van Alstine to Mr. Glenn Hardie, President of the Naval Museum of Alberta. The pre-presentation was made following the 11 November Remembrance Ceremony in front of the restored Seafire aircraft on the main Drill Deck of HMCS Tecumseh.***

**CNAG crests** The CNAG Sea King Chapter Secretary now has a supply of these crests. Large blazer crest is \$20, beret crest \$18. Please forward a cheque payable to "Canadian naval Air Ottawa" and the crest will be mailed, postage free. Please contact:

Bob Findlay  
 31 O'Neil Crescent,  
 Trenton, ON K8V 5Y5  
 email: findrob@sympatico.ca

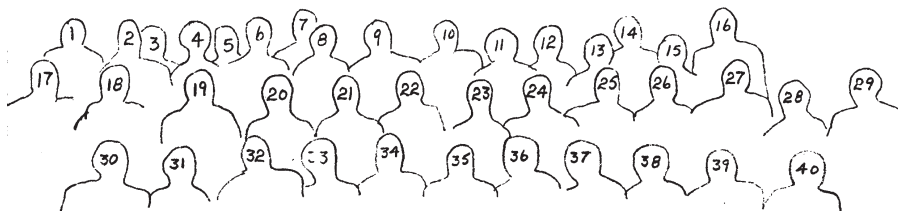
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C.N.A.G. ATLANTIC CHAPTER 1982

PICTURE # 1 of TWO

- |                    |                   |                   |                     |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. PETE LEVIGNE    | 2. ERIC KING      | 3. BILL           | 4. JEAN NUNNERLY    |
| 5. NORM LAMBERT    | 6. CHARLIE        | 7. DON RUBIN      | 8. SANDY WOOD       |
| 9. LORNE WOOD      | HOLDSWORTH        | 10. TOM WHITE     | 11. DOROTHY WHITE   |
| 12. GULLI          | 13. LAURA BACON   | 14. BILL          | 15. ISABEL LAMBERT  |
| WHITEFIELD         | 16. DAN DALEY     | WHITEFIELD        | 17. MARTIN HAMILTON |
| 18. FREDA HAMILTON | 19. FRED HILL     | 20. GLORIA HILL   | 21. MARIAN OSGOODE  |
| 22. OZMIE OSGOODE  | 23. LYNN BRADY    | 24. JOHN BRADY    | 25. GUS SCRIBBANS   |
| 26. CLAUDE         | 27. MURDOCK       | 28. MARIE         | 29. AUEREY YORK     |
| LAPOINTE           | MACDONALD         | HOLDSWORTH        | 30. JACQUES         |
| 31. DOROTHY        | 32. PETER SMITH   | 33. CORA CALDWELL | LAVERDURE           |
| LAVERDURE          | 34. GLEN CALDWELL | 35. CHARLIE WHITE | 36. TOM TONKS       |
| 37. NORMA WHITE    | 38. LAPOINTE      | 39. YVONNE        | 40. YORK            |
|                    |                   | MACDONALD         |                     |



## PLEASE NOTE!!!

*Pull out Section*

Canada Post is insisting that 911 Addresses be used on all correspondence or it will be returned. In some provinces, local addressing has changed as well as postal codes. Many newsletters were returned due to mailing address changes. Several were returned from the Saanachiton area. Please advise if your address has changed in 2005 or 2006.

\*\*\*\*\*

## PURCHASE WALL OF HONOUR TILES AND LIFE MEMBERSHIPS BY MONTHLY INSTALLMENTS

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**Half tile \$300** \$100 when ordered and \$100 per month for next two months

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**Quarter Tiles** are now available at \$150. Please note that an order for a quarter tile may be some time before it is mounted on the Wall of Honour Board. They will be mounted as soon as the full tile is filled. There is no guarantee of the length of time before a quarter tile will be mounted.

**LIFE MEMBERSHIP:** You can now purchase Life membership as follows:

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Mail inquiries to:  
SAM Foundation  
PO Box 5000 Stn M  
Shearwater, NS B0J 3A0

## NAVAL AVIATION RENDEZVOUS

The Naval Aviation Rendezvous held annually in May in the Crowsnest of HMCS Bytown in Ottawa will take place at 1200 on Wednesday, 17 May.

All those associated with Naval Aviation in any way are welcome, including those who might even like naval aviators.

Cash bar, cost is \$10 for soup and sandwiches, excess if any to Shearwater Museum.

Last year I used the "honour" system at the door, just a sign in and a box full of money, came out exactly to the penny, had no idea naval aviators were SO honest. Same this year, bring exact amount if possible.

Please let me know if you will attend so that mess arrangements can be made. 613-737-4766 or [admgorde@rogers.com](mailto:admgorde@rogers.com) Please spread the word to those not on email, etc.

Flag Foxtrot close up, see you there.

*Gord Edwards*

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## 8th Annual BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC MUSICAL GALA

Commemorating the 61st Anniversary of Victory in the Atlantic.

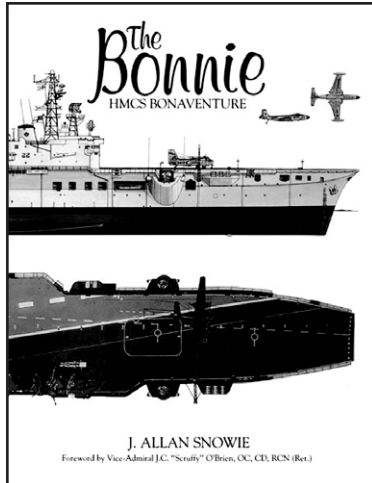
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All members are listed in our Donor Recognition Book in the Museum. When your contributions total \$1000 or more, your name will be mounted on our Donor Recognition Board also in the Museum. To check your total contributions, please call our Secretary.

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The tiles in the "Wall of Honour" are high quality marble tile, 12 inches square. The tile can be scored to form four 6" X 6" squares; diagonally across to form two triangular halves or used as is. All letters will be in upper case configuration (capitals) and the tile will be mounted in a diamond orientation as opposed to a square orientation, with the line of your message running diagonally across the tile. There are four options to choose from:

- Option 'A'      One quarter tile 6" X 6" Square with up to 6 rows of 1/2" letters for a maximum of 40 letters and spaces. The 2 centre rows can accommodate up to 12 letters and spaces with the remaining rows decreasing as the border/edge of the tile dictates.
- Option 'B'      One half tile 12" X 12" by 17" and triangular in shape, with up to 5 rows of 3/4" letters for a maximum of 60 letters and spaces. The longest row can accommodate up to 20 letters and spaces. The remaining 4 rows will decrease as the border/edge of the tile dictates. It should be noted that the upper half of a tile will start with a short row and the lower half with a long row.
- Option 'C'      The full tile with up to 6 rows of 1" letters for a maximum of 55 letters and spaces. The two centre rows can accommodate up to 16 letters and spaces. The remaining rows will decrease as the edge of the tile dictates.
- Option 'D'      The full tile with up to 10 rows of 3/4" letters for a maximum of 120 letters and spaces. The two centre rows can accommodate 20 letters and spaces each. The remaining rows above and below centre will decrease as the edge of the tile dictates.

The colour of the tile will be "Belmont Rose".

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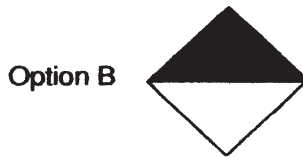
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## Ornithology and Zoology Terms

For some years now the Developer Vultures, an odious and malodorous sub-species known as Vulturi Haligoni, have been circling the skies over Shearwater hungering, drooling and slaving over what they see as their next free meal. That meal was presented to these scavengers as a mortally wounded animal.

**Back to cover. See that red oval smack dab in the middle?** That encloses the inner and outer ramps, hangars and control tower -- together, able to accommodate heavy-lift fixed-wing aircraft, tactical support helicopters and fighters -- and also civil commercial aircraft when DND awakens to the wisdom of sharing operating costs with the commercial aviation industry. There exist combined military/civil airfields around the world. They work well.

**Go back to the cover. See that red oval just above the water in the lower left hand corner?** That's the married quarters. Just outside it, at about two o'clock, is the barracks. An Olympic swimming pool, a gymnasium and a lakeside beach go with that personnel accommodation complex. In the surrounding city are hospitals, schools, high schools, universities, theatres, yacht clubs, golf courses and more. If we hope to recruit and retain the best of our citizenry, inducements of comfortable, stable community social life should be strong drawing cards.

The prospect of "shifting camp" every two or three years as is now the case may explain current recruiting and retention problems. There must be a lot of "desperate housewives" out there -- and a lot of insecure youths without enduring, lifelong friendships.

**Flip to Cover Again. See the small red oval near the bottom of the photo?**

That's the dock and surrounding hardstand. That's where our carriers berthed and whence they departed for war, peace keeping and disaster relief missions. It's also a potential home for Special Forces landingcraft. Surrounding it is hardstand acreage for ready-to-embark containers packed for specific categories of mission -- disaster relief, peace-keeping, war or whatever. With a carrier/support ship at the dock, containers loaded and standing by and troops in barracks ashore Canada can be "Ready, Aye Ready" when the call comes. And, when Canada finally tries to catch up with the rest of the world in acquiring a tall ship for cadet training, what a home for such a ship! As our separate services draw closer together tall ship experience for soldiers and airmen, as well as seamen, will be a recruiting draw attracting the cream of Canadian youth. To the best of my knowledge this asset has not been offered to the

Vulturi Haligoni but I'm getting a bit gunshy these days. Ed.

**Back to the cover again. See that red oval near the Y axis, about an inch above the water?**

That's where a four-lane highway and a railway intersect the main base road that connects the airfield with its 9000' runway with the marine base and its dock and container yarding area. It is all such a perfect fit for envisaged "expeditionary" operations that a charge of prescience could well be laid against those who made the base grow in this direction over the past half-century. If one were to build a new base from scratch one would have to use the present base as a template. But where would he find the land to build on? Mark Twain again "buy land son. They ain't makin' any more of it".

**Flip back to the cover. See that large red oval near the middle of the photo?**

That's a 9000' runway capable of handling the largest heavy lift aircraft in the world (the Russian Antonov we rent when we go to war as an independent self-sufficient nation state). That runway is absolutely irreplaceable -- there is no place close to our Halifax naval base on which a replacement could be built. As Mark Twain said when asked for advice on investing "buy land son, they ain't makin' any more of it". Airlift, as well as sealift, are essential to any independent Canadian expeditionary or contingency force. It truly boggles the mind that government has not long ago abandoned the hare-brained idea of selling-off this vital Canadian defence asset to the Vulturi Haligoni (See ornithology lesson).

**Back to the cover one more time. See the sprawling area lying outside the red ovals?**

That's unused land that could be used for urban/guerrilla warfare practice and/or general aviation manufacturing and maintenance. Off-screen to the left is an oil refinery for fuel supplies and further off-screen ship-repair and ship-fabrication yards. Ye Gods and little fishes! How did Canada luck into owning a defence asset tailor-made to its 21<sup>st</sup> Century needs? Maybe the Gods just like us more than we know?

*Prepared by Bill Farrell*

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## MORE FIRSTS – MY FIRST DETACHMENT

NOTE: As is the case with many of us, more so with me, history tends to get confused with the story telling to the detriment of historical fact. Please bear with me and if you are better able to recall any events mentioned here I would be delighted to hear from you. I also wish I could remember all the incredible maintenance members of the detachment. I could kick myself for never putting names on those pictures but considering some of the “events” we shared that may not be a bad thing. They seemed to fall into two categories ... UNFORGETTABLE and those I would be embarrassed to have someone remember.

*Joe Paquette*

As I left off my last chapter, I was training on the SEA KING. I went to the SEA KING world under the belief that they had serious morale problems and the arrival of a dedicated Naval Air LCdr. (albeit with no helicopter background) would do much to correct the situation.

This “Savior” image I had of myself was shattered one night in the FOXTROT HOTEL bar when my introduction was met with the comment; “Just what we need ... another LCdr to overcrowd our detachments!”

In fact, this statement appeared to be true. As I completed my training I was told that there was no billet for me at sea. But you never know .....

In spite of the “nay sayers”, within two weeks of my Unit Check Out I was on a HERCULES headed for Puerto Rico to join the air detachment of HMCS ATHABASKAN which was at sea off St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. It turned out that the Shearwater hockey team was in need of their star player, Sgt. Wally Istchenko, a co-pilot on board. I had been drafted to take his place in the QUAD on the ATHA B and in the cockpit of the Air Det’s Sea Kings.

Wayne Rheume was the Detachment Commander, Gerd Moritz was the senior pilot with Ivan Sawchuck, Carey Wilson, Chris Cole (USN) and “Arch” Archambault sharing the pilot duties and Dave “Pedro” Neal as one of the Tactical Navigators (TACCO). Dave was my first exposure to this breed called TACCO and it was a heck of a first impression. Dave worked hard and played just as hard. In fact his “playing “ skills won him “Best Fly past” at a SAPSUCKER’S Fly-in at Bagotville. Not bad for someone who is not a pilot. As Dave is now a Colonel I will leave the details out of this story.

This first exposure to detachment operations lasted only two weeks until our return on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1978. My logbook shows that my first trip was a flight with Carey Wilson back to Roosevelt Roads. For the rest of the two weeks there were no night flights and my logbook has entries like “San Salvador Island Recce”, “Crew Trainer out of Nassau”, “To Bermuda and Return” and “Fly off”. Not bad for my first two weeks “at sea”.

Things didn’t get any less sweet on my first full deployment six weeks later. We left on April 16 for a

seven-week deployment but the initial leg was three days to Norfolk where we had a nine-day port call to participate in the Azalea Festival. If memory serves me right, we were almost too embarrassed to mention this “tough” duty to our families. Not only did we host the Azalea Queen and her 29 woman court on board but I was also tasked to escort the wife of a senior British Officer to the Azalea Ball. This seemingly onerous duty turned out to be quite a marvelous evening.

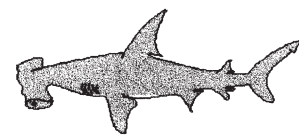
We sailed nine days later enroute to the exercise areas off Roosevelt Roads in Puerto Rico. By April 30th we (but not the ship) were back ashore again. The ship was doing missile and gun trials and we had to clear the deck of aircraft (FOD risk I think). We would do one flight and land at Rosy and repair to the CPO’s beach. When we would see the ship in the approaches we would rush back, start up and recover aboard. A successful missile shoot was cause for one of those ship parties that encompassed all the messes at various times during the evening. At one point on the pretense of the noise created by the Wardroom, the Main Cafeteria invaded the Wardroom. This led to a Conga line led by Dave Neil and Ivan Sawchuck down into the Chiefs’ Mess.

The gun trials were not so successful and by our third day in the area the ship called it quits and sailed for San Juan and the delights of the Black Angus and the numerous casinos.

We sailed May 6<sup>th</sup> to exercise with the USS Independence and her Task Group, the destroyers Peterson, California, Hawkins, Forrest Sherman and Mississippi and the supply ship USS Calisteo. We had been away from home for three weeks and had spent two weeks of that in port ... but the fun was over. We now faced a month at sea on exercises with only two days alongside in Bermuda.

Given the heavyweights in the exercise, we expected our helicopters to be lightly used but the USN Sea kings were grounded for a maintenance problem and our two helicopters were tasked for plane guard duties, utility flights, parts and personnel transfers as well as the exercise itself.

One of our taskings was to support the USS Hawkins and the USS Forrest Sherman during their torpedo firing exercise. Our role was to assist in spotting the torpedo when it surfaced at the end of its run. The ships would then launch a boat with divers to retrieve the torpedo. Things got interesting when Wally Bereza called us around on a torpedo sighting only to realize that the “torpedo” was a very large Hammerhead shark.



Our job now was to keep the shark in sight (away from the recovery area) while the divers entered the water to secure the torpedo.

Things were more sublime on a night crew trainer when we spotted a cruise ship and after a few passes (bright moon) we came to a hover low and close alongside and watched the festivities in the ballroom. One lady came out on deck and, as we watched, slowly came to realize that she was not alone (four Canadian fliers were sitting in a hover staring at her). When she finally spotted something in the air above her she rushed back into the ballroom to announce her discovery (I assume). At this time we pulled pitch and climbed up and out of sight blocked by the structure of the ship itself. I still have visions of some poor cruise passenger being removed in restraints mumbling about the UFO she saw.

During another flight, which involved a number of ship-to-ship transfers of bits and pieces, we were still being tasked when night fell. The manual guiding Ship / Helo Operations notes that we can only land on non-CF ships in Day-VMC but this was a beautiful moonlight night and it was "like" Day-VMC so off we went. We checked the ship information publications and found that the USS CALIFORNIA could recover a Sea King but there was no information on her sister ship the USS MISSISSIPPI. But hey! They were sister ships! The landing on the CALIFORNIA was surprisingly turbulent and to a very small deck with a very large missile installation close by. The approach to and landing on the MISSISSIPPI was mine and I was quite excited. After a few practice approaches I moved over the deck and intently tried to follow the Director's hand signals. It was a bit confusing but eventually the wheels settled onto the deck. This is when someone realized that the Director was giving us a "Wave-Off" not a "Land Now" signal. This was followed by a radio call stating that the Mississippi was "Not rated for H-3 helicopters." Well we had just proved different but we decided not to push the point and conducted the transfer from the hover using the hoist.

It was interesting working as a single Canadian ship amidst a US task force, especially as the one carrying the only serviceable helicopters. We piled up the hours and did everything they asked of us and received a great deal of praise as the exercise ended and we left to join the Canadian ships in Bermuda. When the INDEPENDENCE sent over an A-6 Prowler to take our picture we had another surprise for them. Having proved our mettle during a busy exercise (I had flown 25 hours and operated off six different ships), the ship had declared a stand down ordered everyone into "Pirate's Rig" for a banyan on the flight deck. The A-6 crew was saluted with raised beer cans and lowered trousers ... work hard – play hard ... Canadian eh!

Epilogue: When I learned that I was headed back to sea I was really curious to see how this experience would compare to my tours at sea with VS-880 and the "STOOF". In fact I think I became a bit of a pain in the a\$\$ with my comparisons but it was a natural thing to do ... and there was quite a difference. Certainly it was in

part due to my position and "maturity."

The first difference I noticed from carrier Ops was the accommodations. On the carrier I had always had my own cabin ... even as a Slt. Now as a major I was in the Junior Officers four man cabin. Mind you, this would change when I got my own detachment ... NOT. In fact the only single cabin I ever had was below the flight deck on the ASSINIBOINE. Even then I shared it with one of my extra pilots.

The flying was not as nerve wracking, even during night ops, which were never a routine operation on the carrier. Departures were routine when compared to the intensity of a four aircraft catapult launch and nothing can compare to the thrill of the cat launch itself. In cruise the autopilot on the Sea King was very effective even though we spent most of our time at 200 feet and dipping during the day was normal helo ops provided you were not too heavy.



*Sea King*

At night the departure was a little more exacting as you lifted into the hover and moved left to fly in formation with the ship at about 80-100 feet. Once everything was stable the pilot made a pedal turn 45 degrees to the left (to ensure we cleared the ship on our departure) and pulled pitch to accelerate and climb out in the departure. The copilot's job was to call headings, speed and altitude. Ironically I ended up using the same procedure in throughout my time in search and rescue and in fisheries whenever we departed from the hover alongside a vessel at night. In a related case in the UK, an inexperienced crew departed the hover after a rescue at night and clipped the ship and subsequently crashed just out of sight over the horizon without the ship being aware.

In poor weather, an IFR departure was only a problem when you considered that some four of five ships in a fleet might have been launching their helicopters in the same cycle. The problem here was getting the ships ops staff to remember to let us know if their position in the fleet had changed so that the helicopter from the starboard side of the screen wasn't tasked to operate on the port side of the task group and vis-versa.

The IFR recovery was simply a question of getting the helicopter down to 80 feet at wind & ship speed +15 knots. Even in the worst weather, this "creeping" approach up the wake on the auto-hover mode was relatively controlled if tense. Compare this to four Trackers departing the holding pattern at exact one minute intervals to feed into the radar controlled approach hoping to pick up the ship at ½ mile at 200 feet and 70 – 90 knots closing speed. There was never an approach to the carrier when my knees weren't shaking. I don't want to minimize the skills required in recovering 24,000 pounds of helicopter on a pitching destroyer but I remember hanging on to a wild deck one night saying, "The next steady period and we are on!!" and we were. In the helicopter we had a lot more control of most of the factors in the landing ... but for one. More than once our "creeping" approach was interrupted by another vessel changing station by passing astern of our ship (do not cross another ship's bow) and trying to occupy the same piece of space (we are at 80 feet in the fog at night) as we were. Try to tell a ship's Captain to "Keep his vessel out of your way!"

This conflict was indicative of many of the problems of deck operations on a destroyer. On the carrier, in spite of some reluctance on the part of the ship's officers, there was little doubt that the ship existed for the air department. In the destroyer world, we were just another weapons system. When you think of the coordination required by the Air Ops staff on Bonaventure, the Helairdet performed all these functions in their own ship and during normal working hours regardless of the fact that their current deck cycle might be 8pm to 8am. The same went for our maintainers who were required to respond to "Clean ship" and "Rounds" without any consideration of the fact that they had worked all night.

On the positive side, I felt far more a part of the ship's crew and the operation in general and flew at a far more intense rate than I ever did on the "Bonnie".

I was to get even more involved over the next 2 ½ years with detachments on ATHABASKAN, ALGONQUIN and ASSINIBOINE as well as a year at the D-1 Air Officer. I loved every minute of it and was disappointed that it was all over so quick. Ready Aye Ready!

\*\*\*\*\*



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Dartmouth artist Doug Scott has installed a new feature at the entrance to our "Time Capsule" exhibit. Designed to introduce visitors to the exhibit, Doug's mural is entitled "Our History, Our Pride" and features ships, aircraft, and of course the people who flew from Shearwater from the very beginning. A wonderful addition of colour to our exhibit, we are all very grateful to Doug for his hard work and dedication. Well done Doug!!

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### HMCS / CFB CORNWALLIS REUNION

The Cornwallis Reunion Association is planning a reunion from Friday 25 August to Sunday 27 August 2006 to be held in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia.

During the fifty years that the Base was in operation, over 500,000 military and civilian men and women worked and trained at HMCS / CFB Cornwallis.

Early registration is encouraged as we are limited to 800 registrants.

Information may be obtained by mail:

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PO Box 33  
Cornwallis, NS B0S 1H0

Tel: 1-902-638-3434  
Fax: 1-902-638-3101

email: [cornwallisreunion@fundymail.ca](mailto:cornwallisreunion@fundymail.ca)

website: [www.cornwallisreunion.ca](http://www.cornwallisreunion.ca)

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## CARRIER MEMOIRS

by Ed Smith

Memoirs are very personal, and often involve others who may not wish to have the memories revisited. I was reluctant to send some stories to the Newsletter sooner because not all are happy chronicles, this being one. But on the other hand recalling the unhappy events in which one was directly involved also forms a prominent part of the history of naval aviation.

On a lighter note my decision to finally start sharing these experiences has quite a lot to do with moving from a twenty year old word processor to a second hand PC with Windows 95 to a new computer with Windows XP and finally, I mastered to some degree, touch typing. It does make "authorship" easier.

One of the most prominent memories I have occurred in my first years in Bonaventure.



Many of you will remember the hurricane in 1959, which Bonaventure endured on her return from England. Virtually all aircraft on board suffered some salt water damage. Those on the upper deck-park were inundated by the wind blown waves but much water also got into the hangar deck area thanks to a lift that had not been properly secured. The ship would have been in serious trouble if the flooding had not been stopped thanks to quick action by one of our Chiefs.

When we finally got through that frightening experience and were about 400 nautical miles off Newfoundland, it was decided to make serviceable one Tracker and fly it to Shearwater to pick up some badly needed parts. These parts were

necessary to be able to fly off at least some if not all of the aircraft as the carrier approached Nova Scotia. I was selected to fly the trip. Getting in a day early was well worth a few hours in the air.

A briefing was given to me concerning the trip's requirements and I was advised my aircraft would be the only one airborne until I returned the following day with the necessary parts. I was advised to plan the trip route via St. Johns Newfoundland thence to Shearwater. (Hardly an Eisenhower decision as the distance involved meant that I did not have enough fuel to go anywhere else except the Rock on that first leg.) My co-pilot was Barry Montgomery who had an urgent family reason to get home as soon as possible. I was to acquire the parts at Shearwater, find a co-pilot, get some sleep and be prepared to return to the ship early the next morning. Shearwater operations would be advised of the rendezvous details.

So much for the theory. Now to fly the trip.

We launched in the morning and after looking at water for some four hours or so (there is "So Much to Sea" a naval aviator must have coined that present day Doers and Dreamers motto) we arrived in St. Johns. An IFR flight plan for 9000 feet was filed for Shearwater and off we went. Then comes the first little problem-the temperature is about -20 degrees C and you guessed it! DeHavilland built good aircraft but heater ignition was not their forte. We were at the assigned height but couldn't get the heater going nor clearance for a lower altitude. Barry may remember better than me, but the radar coverage was not great in those days soooo-before we froze we managed to find a little warmer temperature probably without ATC'S approval.

On arrival at Shearwater, believe me, after three hours we were suffering severely from the cold and did not need the delay when finding an unsafe nose wheel indication after lowering the wheels. It appeared down but it was necessary to go through the whole procedure to confirm its position and set up for a nose wheel collapse on landing. It didn't!

After thawing out I made arrangements for the parts and the squadron duty officer [remember Lt. Bill Dall] said he would get me another co-pilot. Bill would also keep me informed so I could make the rendezvous with the carrier the next day.

With everything arranged I went home for a brief visit with the family. I told my wife Alma what the trip was about but unfortunately I made a point of saying that I was the only one flying off the ship and until I returned to the ship there would be no other flying taking place.

When I went into Shearwater very early in the morning all was ready. My aircraft had been loaded with the spares and the new co-pilot had been assigned. He was a reserve officer brand new to the squadron and keen as mustard, but, had little training and absolutely no carrier time. I had never seen him before, name of Bill Moffat. "No problem Bill," said I, "I will do the navigating and the flying as well as the co-pilot functions when we land on the deck, so sit back and enjoy the new experience. We will all be home tomorrow."

We arrived overhead the carrier right on time but all was not as briefed. Flying Control sent us into the "Delta" to wait for the launching of two Trackers after which we would be recovered. As we learned later they were on an ASW training mission utilizing some last minute submarine time which became available. They would recover at Shearwater after the mission. While orbiting in the waiting position we had started a left turn away as we came up astern of the ship. Because of the turn I had lost sight of the ship but Bill still had it in his view. I had observed the take-off of the first aircraft and the start of the second before I had started the turn. Suddenly Bill said "Holy S--t" or something similar and his animation and hand movements alerted me to turn back toward the ship. It was a chilling sight! The second aircraft was in an exaggerated left-hand wing-over, almost like a badly executed loop. It looked as if it might complete the manoeuvre and pull out of the dive but was still about twenty degrees nose down when it crashed into the water ahead of the carrier. The carrier was almost immediately alongside. Just the tail of the aircraft was visible for only a very brief time and I recall thinking there was little possibility of survivors. My self-survival instincts kicked in because someone was going to have to make a decision about me landing on or going ashore. I had to focus on the task in front of me. It was a little worrisome to all concerned I suppose, made even more so because the mirror landing aid was broken so my landing would have to be accomplished the old-fashioned way. Anyway, the decision was made to recover our aircraft on the carrier. Having been trained in Pensacola on straight decks and visual landing signals, I was ok with that. We landed without any

problem. (Tex McNab was the Landing Signals Officer, but I never did tell him that I paid no attention to his "wavings". It was an OK trap).



### *Bonaventure in heavy seas*

I did all the good stuff after landing and was taxied up into fly one [right close to the pointed end] and shut down the aircraft. I sat for a time in a rather numb state as events sank into my mind and finally thought about Bill the new co-pilot. I looked over at him. I think he was entitled to his next remark- "ffff--k mmme, I'll never hack this."

THE EPILOGUE: It was Roger Harris' crew that was lost that day. Roger was the squadron safety officer. Les Hull, the squadron operations officer and his crew were in the first aircraft unaware of what had happened until later. Besides the terrible devastation to those four families, others suffered some traumatic impacts. How the information regarding the crash got out of the ship and to the media I have never found out, but my wife and I'm sure Bill's wife found out about the crash and the lost of life without any names given. We were dead men as far as they were concerned, because I had made it clear no others would be flying off the ship at that early time of the day. Of course, all other families with aircrew on the ship would be deeply worried until the names of the lost crew were finally released.

I'll always remember meeting Tom Pollard on my way down below after I had left the aircraft. He looked very strangely at me. Then he told me that he thought it was my aircraft that had gone in. He was not aware of the change in the flight operations from what I had been briefed and drew the obvious but wrong conclusion.

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## THREE ACES FOR THE AGES

### Nova Scotians made their mark in skies of WWII

by John Boileau

Battle of Britain Sunday specifically honours the greatest air battle in history, an epic conflict that took place in the skies over Britain in 1940. In recent years, the day has taken on a wider meaning by commemorating all air campaigns of that war.

Although only about 100 Canadians fought in the Battle of Britain, by the time the war ended thousands had served in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) or the Royal Air Force (RAF), participating in several theatres around the world.



**Buck McNair**, from the Annapolis Valley, was one of the most highly decorated fighter pilots of the RCAF. With 16 confirmed kills, plus two probables and 14 damaged, he was the RCAF's top scoring ace to survive the war.

In the spring of 1942 McNair flew to the beleaguered Mediterranean Island of Malta and immediately went into action. In the space of three days he damaged one Messerschmitt 109 fighter and destroyed another. On another occasion he damaged four German aircraft in one day.

On May 22, 1942, McNair destroyed an ME-109 and his award of the Distinguished flying Cross (DFC) was announced. His citation read in part: "This Officer is a skillful and courageous pilot. He invariably presses home his attacks with the greatest determination irrespective of the odds."

By the time he was posted back to England in mid-June, McNair's total was eight aircraft destroyed and seven damaged. He assumed command of 421 Squadron and shot down three Focke-Wulf 190 fighters, earning him a bar to his DFC. The citation praised this "skillful and determined fighter." But his victories had not come without risk.

On July 28, his engine caught fire. As he fought to get out of the blazing aircraft, flames damaged an

eye. From the pain and migraines that followed, he knew he had suffered permanent damage. But he kept flying operational sorties at the head of his squadron, accounting for a total of 15 enemy aircraft destroyed by the time he stepped down as Commanding Officer in October. In the same month he was awarded a second bar to his DFC for being a "tenacious and confident fighter" and was promoted to Wing Commander. With four years experience in combat, McNair was only 24. But he only completed a few sweeps as Wing commander before it became obvious his eyesight was impaired and he was taken off operations.

In April 1944 McNair was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, second only to the Victoria Cross.



**Sid Ford** came from Liverpool where his father was a Doctor. He scored his first hits on an enemy aircraft while flying Hurricanes in September 1941. In February 1942, he was posted to the RAF's 175 Squadron, then attacking shipping in the English Channel. Ford flew several bombing missions and sank a German destroyer. In June he received the DFC for these attacks, his citation observing: "He is a keen and zealous flight commander and leader."

Later that summer, Ford was promoted to Squadron Leader and took over 403 Sqn. In August, he shot down two Focke-Wulf 190s while flying in support of the disastrous Dieppe operation.

These victories resulted in a bar to his DFC. The citation noted "his inspiring example instilled great confidence in his fellow pilots." Despite these two awards, Ford had only destroyed two aircraft and damaged half another one. Over the next winter and spring, flying his Spitfire Canadian Pacific, Ford damaged two FW-190s and destroyed four others. He was now an ace.

In June 1943, while leading his wing on an attack against German motor torpedo boats off the Dutch coast, Ford's Spitfire was struck by anti-aircraft fire and he failed to return from the mission. His body was later found in the water.



**George Hill** was born in St Peter's but grew up in Pictou. He had qualified as a private Pilot before the war and joined the RCAF as a Commissioned Officer.

In the summer of 1942, he joined 403 Sqn under Syd Ford and scored his first victory over Dieppe. Although Hill claimed to have shot down two FW 190s and damaged another, he was only credited with sharing in the destruction of one.

In February 1943, Hill was posted to RAF 111 Sqn in North Africa. He quickly scored nearly a dozen damaged or probably destroyed enemy aircraft.

In March, he had his best day when he shot down two Stuka dive-bombers and damaged a third. Other victories followed, resulting in the Award of the DFC on April 17. The citation proclaimed he was "a skillful leader whose ability has been well in evidence during recent operations" and noted he had destroyed four aircraft.

The next day, Hill was promoted to Acting Squadron Leader. He led his unit on several missions before the North Africa Campaign ended in mid-May 1943. This coincided with a bar to his DFC, its citation noting: "This Officer is a courageous and skillful fighter."

Hill next served in Malta, flying in support of the Allied invasion of Sicily in July. In the space of five days, he destroyed a mixture of six enemy aircraft, including an Italian Macchi 202.

On the Squadron's return to England in September, Hill became the first member of the RCAF to receive a second bar to his DFC.

Hill was given command of 441 Sqn in January 1944. On his third mission, in April, he was forced to crash land in northern France. He successfully evaded capture for nearly a month, while making for the Spanish border. Unfortunately, he was betrayed to the Gestapo and taken prisoner until liberated by the Russians at the end of the war.

His official score of 14 and a half destroyed, three probables and nine damaged had already put him in

the top 20 percent of Canadian aces.

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*Ivor Axford & Pete Davidson*

## PEACHES AND CREAM

While reading Rolly West's article, page 27, of our Winter 2005 Newsletter, regarding the Shearwater Volleyball team dynasty from the late 1950s to the mid 1960s, I was prompted to write about the Shearwater Volleyball team of an earlier era: the mid 1950s.

The mid 1950s team was composed of Pete (Peaches) Davidson, and Ivor Axford, both ground crew and active football players. I was on the team, Peter LeGendre, the pay writer for N.A.M.S. Then add, Jake Birks, and Gordie Edwards, both jet pilots, and a sixth member of our team whose name escapes me. This mid-1950s senior men's team depended greatly on the determination, teaching, and encouragement of Pete and Ivor to survive.

Don Loney's football team monopolized support and attention at Shearwater then.

Volleyball, in its infancy, simply had no wind under its wings. Pete and Ivor had to scrounge for everything, including court time and volleyballs. We played in the metro league in low-cut running shoes, black socks, white sports briefs, navy-colored or white long sleeve sports top, all pusser issued. It was not till late 1954 that we were each given one open arm light-weight top, nearly white with light blue trim, to be used all year and returned at the end of the season in immaculate condition!

Our team had no regular substitute and a few times we showed up at scheduled games and had to 'borrow' one of the other team's substitutes to play.

People like Ray Langlois who played for Stadacona then were very good about lending us a player.

Pete and Ivor, in the mid 1950s, would patrol the balcony in the old gym and in the new gym looking for anyone who could help our team. Convincing new players to join "the weaklings" was another matter. That was also a time when scooping and holding the ball was starting to be called a foul more and more, and when the overhand serve was coming into being. Pete and Ivor tried their best to teach our team and players in house leagues at Shearwater how to spike serve, and hit underhand with clasped hands.

I was not a good spiker, but could serve very well underhand. By mid 1956 both Pete and Ivor kept giving me agitated 'cut' signs as I tried to serve overhand. I knew then that my career as a finesse player on the Shearwater Volleyball team would soon be over. Finesse players were becoming a thing of the past.

Pete and Ivor's resourcefulness during the mid 1950s kept us in the game. For example, in 1955 we won the metro championship and thus were to go on to the Maritime championship. Problem was that in no way could the base supply commander be convinced to let me leave earlier than the usual 4 p.m. on Friday, and our first game of the Maritime Championship was scheduled for 6 p.m. at the YMCA in downtown Charlottetown!

So, Pete and Ivor convinced Jake Birks and Gordie Edwards to sign out a C-45 Expeditor. Jake would fly Pete, Ivor, and the 6<sup>th</sup> team member to Charlottetown late Friday morning and return to Shearwater to pick up Gordie and then taxi to a pad between the Trans Canada Airlines terminal and the RCAF hangar, a point nearest to the pay office. At four o'clock I was to come running out of the pay office, across the high road and into the waiting C-45 and the whole team would be on the court at the Charlottetown YMCA by a few minutes before six. That is exactly what took place.

I was extremely pleased to see Pete and Ivor in the picture of the 1960 team in our Newsletter. Imagine, nine players, in resplendent Shearwater volleyball uniforms, and great jackets to boot! And a dynasty at that! It reminded me that Pete and Ivor had truly been the PEACHES AND CREAM of our era; the mid 1950s. **Peter Lawson (LeGendre),**

Biography: I switched to Observer's Mate in 1956. After trade group threes in 1959, I was drafted to the

west coast where I served at Naden and on VU-33 and VC-922 while studying to be a teacher. Commissioned in the RCN on September 1, 1961, I transferred to the reserve and became a teacher in civilian life in August 1963. I was a naval reserve officer till 1975. I changed my surname to Lawson in 1976. I ultimately became Chief Inspector of Schools for Nova Scotia and retired in 1994. I am a member of the SAMF Board of Directors and a volunteer on the membership committee. I will be one of the ones calling you in late March and early April if you forget to pay your 2006 dues!

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## 2006 SHEARWATER AVIATION MUSEUM 8<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MODEL MAKERS SHOWCASE & CONTEST

This year's show was a great success! We had approximately 500 people through the door, 125 entries in the Model contest and over 100 tables of displays ranging from basic plastic, and wood model builders to the wonderful world of dolls and doll house making!

We raised over \$1000 toward day to day operations of the Museum. Overall a great day for all that attended.

My sincerest thanks to all of my volunteers who helped make this event the success it was: Susan Staley, Ed Hill, Yvon Quintin, Simon Bennett, Jason Johnston, Jessica Sentner, Helen Trenholm, Alex Boniface, Jillian Lawless, Matt Andrea and Lucas LePine. Special thanks to John Hatt of Maritime Hobbies and Crafts for all his support of the model contest.

**Robert S. LePine**  
**Contest Director, Show Organizer**



## Readers Response

From **Mike McCall**:

Page 32 last nsltr. Missing Name. Bruce Vibert, as I expect many members have already said.

**Hugh Fischer** writes: I did a T 33 refresher course at Portage in 1968 and was introduced to the maneuver. If I remember correctly you went into the uncontrolled part around 25000 feet ,released or centered the controls and it flew out nicely. This was never in Jake Birks course when he checked us out back in 59. Air Force guys seemed to enjoy the exercise, I personally found it a waste of time. The T Bird was hardest to fly at high altitude with a full fuel load , new guys had trouble holding altitude within 500 feet up at fl 350.

**Geoff Bennett** writes: Quite a coincidence. I saw Earle Cale's story of the rubber deck on Warrior (p.13 of the latest Newsletter) and had a senior moment. Where had I recently seen a magazine picture and cutline story on the Royal Navy Vampire trials to investigate the operational feasibility of landing jets on carriers "gear-up"?

Answer: On pages 44 and 45 of the December 2005 edition of "FlyPast". Copies of it are on newsstands at this very moment. You can look it up!

It seems Mr. Cale got it half right; the Vampire landed on the rubber deck clean, and not with skids. It landed OK but the problem was in the subsequent aircraft handling on the deck. I suppose they needed a method of raising the Vampire high enough off the deck to allow the undercart to be lowered, thus enabling normal taxiing.

Question: How many RCN aircraft handlers would it have taken to perform this lift using a "handraulic" system?

From **Jack Amott**. What threw me with the Lt Williamson story is the lead -in , age 33 , Sarnia. Whitey was an observer, and like many Observers, "Lookers" he got the chance to convert to pilot. I guess it must have been at age 33, I can't remember what year the RCN did this, or what the options were.

With Alfie , it was Joe Paquettes remarks that got him babbling. He remienced about the fact that many a Pilot had the runs while wearing his Immersion ( pooppy) suit. They usually went from

aircraft to shower rather than the briefing room ...^^. ( Yes, including Joe).

*Well, isn't that special. K*

In the photo of 825 squadron the two on the end really look like young, Cam Maxwell ( front right) and perhaps young Cal Smith ( back right) .. I think they were both "Lookers" who eventually became Pilots ala Williamson.

Other guesses .. front second from left E.G. Brooman ( Observer)??, I should know the guy next to Cam Maxwell, second front right... but the name won't pop up.

### We get brickbats as well as bouquets

**John Slor** writes: Please delete my name from your mailing list for the "Shearwater Aviation Museum Foundation Newsletter".

The reason, I am tired of reading the Editor's belly aching in almost all of his columns, the constant pleading for articles for the newsletter after I sent one in in 2004 and receipt acknowledged by, I assume the Editor. I waited 6 issues for the story to be printed but to no avail. I obviously assumed, wrongly of course, that there were articles to be printed that were submitted prior to mine. Then I read in this issue "From the secretary" top of page 24 second column mentioning having a dull life at Shearwater, that you only wanted Shearwater stories. My story was a west coast story. Then I saw the article 'Bridges at Toko-Ri' and knew that was also not the case. I acknowledge that the editor may "...reject copy to suit the requirements of newsletter" (Page 3) so that is the only reason I can see that my story would have been rejected. How many articles can you have on the same subject without getting bored. Case in point T33 Tumbling.

**PS** You will notice that I did not pay my membership for the last two years. That was my silent protest for not seeing my article in print. The above is a verbal protest. End of story!

**Kay replies:** Mr. Slor - thank you for your email. First and foremost, my apologies for the 'lost article/letter'. Unfortunately for me, I do not have a copy of your letter here at home - how it was missed, I have no idea. I do not have a copy of the latest newsletter at home where I'm working today; however, I never intentionally wrote anything

that would suggest that we only take articles on Shearwater. We print articles from the West Coast, USA, even overseas.

There has been the very odd time, in these past nine years or so, that the Editor utilized his prerogative as Editor to "reject copy" . I can't say why your's wasn't printed because I don't recall it. If it had been rejected, you would have received it back with a note giving the reason why. If your letter had been sent as a letter to the Editor it would have been printed that way or if it was sent as a stand alone article, it would have been published that way - with the approval of the Editor - of course. I wish I knew what happened to it. Even I make mistakes.

I was dismayed at your suggestion that the letter's we received on "tumbling" were boring. I'm sorry you feel that way, but then, that is your prerogative to be bored. We publish all the letters to the Editor we receive including email messages.

If you wish to re-send your letter, by all means do so. It would be most appreciated. Our next issue goes to print in April. In the meantime, I respect your wish and your name will be deleted from our mailing list.

BTW - I don't recall ever saying life at Shearwater was dull. It never was in the 35 years I worked on Base as a Secretary nor even now working at SAMF.

I hope you and yours have a wonderful Christmas Season. Perhaps it will soften your heart and you will want to see our newsletter again. Again, my apologies for the 'lost article/letter'.

**From the Editor:** At last we get negative feedback and with it an opportunity to win credibility by proving that we have not been selective in our Reader Response choices, printing only the bouquets and ignoring the brickbats.

Mr. John Slor (on our mailing list but not a member) offers some views on newsletter deficiencies -- which views we would share with you here. It will be apparent to all that under my tutelage and guided by my politically-correct example Kay has forsaken her customary feisty response to criticism and responded in language sensitive to the genuine feelings of an offended reader. We are indeed fortunate to have this gifted and cultured lady as associate Editor.

Bill Farrell, Editor.

P.S. Kay, I damned near choked typing that final sentence. (*I'll just bet you did. K*)

#### **Greetings Kay & Mates From George D. Hall:**

Just a brief note to say I just received my 2006 Membership renewal. Thanks for the prompt service, but now comes a real *GRUNT* to your Editor. We have a great publication, so why ruin it with "*CRONOS*"? No way! !

*CRONOS* means nothing to me and my mates. Perhaps it means something to Bill and his *CRONIES*! ! If we're not going to keep the title of the newsletter the way it is, as a Wartime Naval Officer, let me add this suggestion based on a recent experience.

For the first time since the war, we visited Halifax, and I took my wife around intending to visit the Naval Base where my mates and I embarked for overseas duties. It was called *HMS SEABORNE*. It's history! It no longer exists. We asked a taxi driver to take us there, and he'd never heard of it--nor had several other people in Dartmouth.

It's important to remember the historic name *SEABORNE* because at that point during the war when aircrew were desperately needed by the British Navy, many more than a hundred were "secuded" (transferred) from the R.C.A.F. to the R.N.V.R. Fleet Air Arm, and stationed at *HMS SEABORNE* until they embarked for a Naval Base in England.

Shearwater is a Museum dedicated to preserving Naval History in Canada. A simple way to preserve the name *SEABORNE* for hundreds of Canadian Airforce/Naval volunteers is to incorporate the name in our publication, such as: - The *SHEARWATER Airborne/Seaborne News-* - - or, *SHEARWATER-SEABORNE Aviation Magazine--* -, perhaps *Airborne-Seaborne History Bytes* from *SHEARWATER Aviation Museum*.

Try it (without any *Grunts*), you'll please even more veterans than *CRONOS*.

**Bob Bissell** writes (in part) This year, 2005, we greet you from terra firma, Johannesburg, South Africa. We are on our way back to Meander and will be sailing again early in January. As usual the year has been busy with travel but only 3000nm afloat, the majority of the travel was in a Boeing.

So wherever you are the message is the same Good Will to All and to all a very Happy and Safe Christmas and a peaceful New Year. *(As always, Bob's yearly letter is sensational but a mite too long for the newsletter. If anyone else would like a copy of it - and it's very enjoyable - please let me know and I'll email you a copy. Kay)*

**Martin Brayman writes:** I have been receiving copies of your newsletter from an ex navy type who is a neighbor. Having spent some time in the Air Arm, I find some of the articles interesting and quite nostalgic. Hence I enclose a cheque to cover my membership. One of these days I hope to visit the museum to admire the good work that perpetuates the memories. Several years ago while in Halifax, I attended a reunion for Maggie and Bonaventure. I met two pilots I knew out of the hundreds that served while I flew in VF870, VF 871 and VX10... 'a long time passing'. Keep up the good work.

From **Bob Murray:** Kay, I would like to pass some comments on the article by Derek Chandler on his trip to the Arctic to investigate the loss of two Bell HTL helicopters on 26 July 1957.

First the picture, the missing name is LCdr Bruce Vibert, DSC, CD, RCN Ret'd. The team from Shearwater was three, not four, as LCdr Vibert was, at the time of the accidents, the Officer-in-Charge (OIC) of HU21 Det 2 embarked in HMCS Labrador and was returning to Shearwater having been re-appointed to HU21.

In para two, the Bells were not taking a spin around the area, but were conducting hydrographic operations. The first helicopter, Bell HTL-4 202, flown by LCdr Vibert did not make a safe landing but, due to severe turbulence, crashed on touchdown rolling over onto the passenger side, shedding its main rotor blades. The pilot escaped through his side door which was facing skyward, the passenger, Mr. Sidney Van Dyck, a civilian hydrographer, exited through a hole that had been made when he was thrown forward and his head hit the bubble. They put some distance between themselves and the downed helicopter to see what would happen. They returned to the Bell and found that the radio was still operational so they made contact with LABRADOR to report the accident.

The second helicopter, Bell HTL-6 205, flown by Lt Larry Zbitnew, which was heading for another hydrographic site was diverted to see if he could

render any help. He did land safely but after dropping his civilian passenger, Mr. Stu Dunbar, and all survival equipment, decided to fly back to LABRADOR and return with the HUP which was, at the time, undergoing main rotor blade rigging. On take-off the Bell was caught in a vicious gust and his tail rotor slammed onto the ground leaving him stranded with the other three.

Meanwhile the stranded crews thought they could find a way to climb down the mountain. Three sides turned out to go 2400 feet straight down with the fourth side a very dicey possibility. A brief attempt over a sliding rubble field was made but soon given up as far too dangerous. Work on the HUP was progressing at a good pace and a flight test was scheduled for later in the afternoon. At the same time, a mountain rescue team was organized in case the HUP could not be repaired. Due to strong winds a rescue by HUP could not be made but food and water was dropped to them. The food was no problem, but the water in a jerry can wrapped in mattresses burst on impact. A second flight was made with ice cubes in a sack to solve the water problem.

The decision was made to pick up the survivors at first light next day, the time of least air movement from Grinnel Glacier. They had four sleeping bags that were carried in the helicopters in case of such an emergency. A shelter was built using the rubber from the floats and poles from the survey stations. They called LABRADOR at 0730 saying that the winds had decreased. HUP 2147, flown by Lt. Dave Oliphant with crewman P2RA Ken Cann made two trips to the mountain top to pick up the survivors and return them to LABRADOR.

LABRADOR remained in the Frobisher Bay, Brevoort island area until 5 August when it returned to York Sound/Peter Point to land a party of 18 men for Operation "Hells Bells", an attempt to salvage the two Bells. The ship then set sail to rendezvous with the US Coast Guard icebreaker EASTWIND WAGB 279 to transfer HUP 246 that it had picked up in Halifax and the HTL-5 on loan from the USN for the summer operation and 1000 lbs of stores.

On 9 August LABRADOR returned to York Sound to pick up all but three of the "Hells Bells" salvage party. The party got to within a few hundred feet of the crash site but were turned back by poor visibility. The remaining three were to make another attempt to reach the crash site.

LABRADOR returned to Frobisher bay on 14 August to pick up the members of the Board of Inquiry and supplies, I also arrived to take over as OIC of the Detachment 2. Early next morning

LABRADOR returned to York sound to embark the remaining three members of the "Hells Bells" salvage party, their equipment and the helmets, sun glasses and shot guns they recovered from the crash site. The ship then sailed for Resolution Island to drop off 30 USAF personnel then to Resolute Bay to drop off the members of the board of Inquiry. The HUP pilot who flew the board of Inquiry into Resolute Bay was Lt. Dave Not Bruce Oliphant.

We returned to York sound on 3 October for another salvage attempt. On arrival a "PAN PAN PAN" call from a pair of USAF H-21 helicopters, one of which was forced down with low oil pressure near Peter Point. We answered their call and sent a maintenance crew ashore to assess their problem and, if possible, rectify it. The crew found the oil was thick and dirty and had to use a stick to remove some of it. They then flushed the system and replaced it with fresh oil.

It was late in the evening when the oil change was completed, the H-21 was test run and declared serviceable so it was decided that the aircrew should be brought aboard LABRADOR for the night and fly back to their base in the morning. One of the H-21s was flown aboard LABRADOR where it just fitted across the aft end of the flight deck. The crew were fed and accommodated for the night. A request to the H-21s operating base to use the helicopters to lift the Bells off the mountain was turned down although the pilots were willing to help. Early next morning the H-21 was flown off to join the one ashore and together they returned to their base.

The winds and visibility were ideal on 4 October for an attempt to recover the Bells. A salvage team was flown to the crash site by HUP with the stipulation that, if the winds in York Sound rose to 10-15 Kts, the team would be removed from the mountain immediately.

In order to ensure that both HUPs would be readily available, one was flown ashore to Yuka Flats - the other to remain on deck aboard LABRADOR, both in radio contact. The winds, in fact, increased suddenly to 25-30 Kts on the deck. The HUPs were quickly launched and the salvage team, the Bell consoles, radios and electrical gear they had removed were airlifted off the mountain. Pilots, Lt Dave Oliphant and myself reported the turbulence at the crash site as severe. Winds prevented flying for the remainder of the day.

LABRADOR departed the area enroute Frobisher Bay returning to York sound on 5 October for a final attempt at salvaging the Bells. Strong winds and

low ceilings prevented flying and no change in the weather was forecast for the immediate future so the ship set sail enroute Halifax late in the evening.

I recall that there were two proposals put forward to salvage the Bells. The first was that we would fly two H04S-3s to the area to lift the helicopters off. It was dropped due to distance, weather and possible lack of H04S-3 lifting power. The second was to hire a civilian company to remove them. I can't recall the results but the Bells were written off 3 Nov 58.

The whole account of the Bells accident can be found in the story of "The Piasecki HUP-3 in the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) 1957 Arctic Cruise" Two copies were delivered by me to your museum and should be available in your library. The story is also available on the Canada Aviation Museum web site. A condensed version of the final voyage of LABRADOR as a naval asset might be interesting to your readers. Yours Aye, Bob

*J. Sosnkowski* writes: Greetings, salutations and best wishes from the "Big Island in the Pacific" (not Hawaii). As always, thoroughly enjoyed the newsletter which was duly read from cover to cover. BZ to all concerned. With thanks.

From *Bob Green Sr.* Keep up the marvelous work, I really enjoy getting the newsletter and Letters and Stories. May everybody at the foundation and their loved ones have a Happy and Prosperous new Year.

*Bob Cocks* writes (in part and our first reply) I am delighted to be able to supply a reasonably accurate list of the names of the flyers from 825 Squadron (1949 or 50 I would guess) pictured on the back inside page of the Winter Edition.

Standing left to right are: Bill Babbit, Jack Anderson, Al Shimmin, John Lee or Ley, Jack Stokes, Bob Cocks, Ed Gigg and John Murphy

Kneeling left to right are: Fred Bradshaw, Ted Brooman, Sheldon Rowell, Dick Quirt, Victor Johnson, Doug Fisher and Kam Maxwell

*Note:* We received other notes with names regarding the 825 photo from Jack Walter, Harry Dubinsky, Kam Maxwell, Peter Grady, James Bond (006 ½), Ken Duff and Les Brown. The only difference to the names submitted by Bob Cocks were: for Al Shimmin the names Mike Wasteneys

and Frost were submitted, for John Lee or Ley the name Bell-Irving and for Ed Gigg the names Danny Feagon and Robbie Hughes and for John Murphy the name Vince Murphy - also for Kam Maxwell the name Shell Rowell was submitted.

For those of you who are still with us, confirm your place in the photo. Thank you everyone. *Kay*

From **Bruce Vibert**: Dear Bill: there are some inaccuracies in Derek Chandler's account of that episode in the Arctic on 26 Jul 57 printed in the Winter 2005 Nsltr.

1. Peter Pointe Mt. Baffin Island, is not much more than 1200' rather than "a few thousand feet".
2. Neither of the two landings was "O.K."
3. A passenger in the first helicopter later stated that the pilot went for a straight-in landing. He did not.
4. That Pilot, unaware of the dangers of being caught in a downdraught in the lee of a mountain peak, attempted to come to a hover about 10' above ground; there to seek a suitable spot. He applied collective but got no response and the machine crashed, then rolled on its side. Bits of rotor blade were scattered about.
5. This machine was beyond recovery except, perhaps, by airlift.
6. The second helicopter, another HTL-4, landed further down the slope but struck its tail rotor guard on the ground. Now also helpless due, as stated, to the prevailing conditions.
7. Both Bells were on a flight with a hydrographer aboard. They to gaze at each other, peak to peak, through instruments. Nothing to do with "a spin around the area".
8. Three, not four, "air types" flew up from Shearwater to hold an enquiry. They correctly fixed on the fourth man in your photograph and officer-in-Charge of 'Labrador's flight. Their verdict, a fair one, read: -

"Helicopter crashed while landing in severe downdrafts (sic) and turbulence. Causes contributing to accident were lack of adequate flight planning, poor airmanship and pilot inexperience in operating at altitude in mountainous terrain."  
Sincerely (Bruce Vibert (?) In the photo.)

PS Do you know that one of the three HU21 HUP-3's now sits in a field at the Helicopter Museum at Weston-Super-Mare?

PPS Dave, not Bruce, Oliphant in Chandler's departure HUP

From **Bruce Vibert**: Dear Bill: I must be getting senile. Have just taken a shufti at my photographs. Peter Point Mt on Baffin Island is 2400'. There Derek Chandler was correct. Many apologies. Must be residual vertigo from the experience.

**Ken Smith** writes: I experienced things quite different with #1DTU.

It wasn't disbanded as stated in the article. I joined the unit in Sept '58 replacing Carl Wright as S.E. Tech and remained until Mar '59 and was replaced by Smokey Lamarch who finished off '59. Lt Newman was CO - and ex Avenger Pilot, Chief Ernie Woodall was the senior rating but Stu Beakley was the brains of the unit and supervised all the operations.

There were a total of 22 Air & Fishheads aboard the "Jean Boat". HMCS Port St Jean was never meant to go to open sea with its round bottom and single screw. Its top speed under ideal conditions was 11 knots - a 60 degree roll was not uncommon. The 700 miles to Bermuda would take us 3 ½ days.

Returning for Christmas in '58 we made headway but ice was making us top heavy. We had to be taken in tow by a Frigate to Halifax.

As for the reliability of the KIEKHAEFER MERCURY engines, we would wash them down with very scarce fresh water - set them up on a test stand and they were run up adjusting the carb etc for the next flight. Not one failed during my stint on DTU. Heading into the wind to launch - no problem. It was quite an experience aboard ship with new DE's, old Tribal Class and the odd Frigate in front and astern with us in the middle. Lt Newman would fly a figure eight pattern. The new DE's would sometimes fire a few rounds and their Fire Control System would shut down. Only once was a drone hit and that was by HMS Ceylon a Brit Cruiser. We had the parachute sucked into the fresh water evaporator intake and once wrapped around the screw which required Stu and myself to go overboard and cut it away.

We would tie up in Ireland Island and downtown Hamilton but mostly in St Georges a sub wharf across from Kindley Field wherever the fleet wasn't.

We also tied up at NOB the seaplane base during the time HS50 had a detachment there in '58.

During that time the USN were operating the Martin Mars the present water bombers in B.C.

Our duties were never ending. Standing a 1-3 Watch doing quartermaster duties, steering the ship & lookout. The torpedo's bouncing off the hull was quite an experience, picking up the drone and the torpedo's in a swell was a never learned skill. Some of the fellow crew mates I remember were, John Wiley, George Carless, Skin Coolen, Roger Brown and the head cook P2 Les Myers.

I really enjoy the articles and letters submitted - keep up the good work. *Ken*

From **Stan Brygadyr**

In the winter 2005 issue, the article by Brian Finucan (RCAF flight Cadet, 1960) tumbling a T33 may have some Naval Aviation pers wondering just what connection Brian might have had to our Fraternity, and on which I can shed some light! It was Aug1998 when my wife and I were sitting in Vancouver airport waiting to board an Air Canada 747 for Toronto (actually enroute to Hfx to be "audible" witnesses to the crash of Swiss Air 111, but that's another story). Over to us came Bill Todd, a Transport Canada flight inspector also awaiting the same flight. Bill was a major in VP407 when I was the CO and so we had a nice chat and then we boarded the aircraft. When settled in our seats we soon felt the "push-back" from the Terminal; we were on our way. Just then Bill Todd came back and says "Stan, the Pilot knows you and invites you to the cockpit for the take-off". Well I couldn't refuse (never having been in the front end of a 747 before!), and so after assuring my wife that I would arrive at the "crash scene" 150 ft and a milli-second before her, forward I went. I did not recognize the aircraft Captain and so I blurted out "from where the hell am I supposed to know you?" He chuckled and said he understood why, after 40 years, I would not remember one of my Juniors at "Venture" (who had a very short Naval career!) He joined the "Venture Officer Training Plan" in 1958 (classmate of Eric Nielsen, Jack McGee, et al) but parted company with the Navy at Christmas. He remembered me as the chief Cadet Captain who "paraded" him to various activities for his 4 months of Naval Service. He subsequently joined the air force for Pilot training, and after a Short-Service stint, he joined Air Canada, and there we were 40 years later in the cockpit of a 747; it's a small world!

**Phillip Eisnor** writes: During 2005 I sent a letter expressing my concerns about finding a Sea

Fury as I had heard that the Museum was on a drive to obtain one in the States that apparently still had it's Canadian markings on it. I also mentioned that in several of Pettipas' books, there is mention of a number of Sea Furies that had being force landed in the woods of perhaps eastern NS or nearby Shearwater Airport. The photo's of these planes show very little damage and I was wondering if they were removed from the crash site and taken back to Shearwater or left on site. I raised many questions and was hoping my letter would be published in the Newsletter so that some RCN personnel may know what happened to these aircraft. It would be great for the Museum to obtain a Sea Fury as it is my opinion that she was the most beautiful of Naval aircraft and a real pilots plane to fly - so I am told. A Sea fury as a complete aircraft would be great but very expensive to purchase I suspect, however, one removed from a crash site in any sort of condition is worth the time and effort to rebuild even as static exhibit.

My interest in the Sea Fury goes back to the late 1940's when I worked on these types at the old Fairey Aviation plant in Eastern Passage. I was an Air Frame Tech making numerous repairs and modifications on Furies and recall one that I worked on for many months was the Sea Fury, serial number TG-127, she had been involved in a major crash and had substantial damage, eventually she was completely overhauled and put back in service. Other aircraft I worked on was the Grumman Avenger helping to convert the type to an anti-submarine aircraft....lots of work went into that modification.

I do hope that someone will be able to shed some light on "pranged" Sea Furies, as I would appreciate hearing from others.

Wishing you and the staff there at the Museum a Merry Christmas and all the best in 2006.

Email me at [philip.eisnor@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:philip.eisnor@ns.sympatico.ca)

**Ralph Fisher** writes (in part): Many thanks for the gems in recent emails. Still hopeful Bill Farrell or one of the old crowd from "Warrior" will produce a 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary tribute to our post-war Naval Aviation, following up mine in Starshell on its 50<sup>th</sup>, ten years ago.

Some may see younger but still familiar faces in this photo taken when we were guests of Director John Farrow, Paramount Studios, father of Mia

Farrow and a former Canadian Escort Group Commander during the Battle of the North Atlantic

The striking little blonde in one pilot's embrace is Jean Wallace, former wife of legendary actor Franchot Tone and a star along with William Bendix in "Blaze of Noon" then being filmed.(Dec 1946)



\*\*\*\*\*

**Ed L'Heureux** writes: Enclosed you will find my 200s membership dues which are a bit "Adrift of Station" as the pointy nose sailors would say. But better late than never. In fact, it looked in July 2005 that it might have been never as I had a heart operation which worked out well.

I gave my wife of 49 years some concern as it was touch and go. My wife Maureen (Shearwater 1953-56 as Sub Lt Maureen Vaughan OIC Links Trainer Section.) She relieved the late Harry Swiggum as OIC Link Trainer but Harry said he was not bothered by being relieved by a woman as she could not fly; but, she qualified for her green ticket at 1 TAG with Harry, Wally Townsend and Vern Cunningham so Harry bought the beer. Old Shearwater friends, Dave Tate (best man at my wedding, Art Percy and Gord Moyer were most supportive during my illness and even said I was the only Paybob who has been proven medically to have both a heart and a brain!

I was please to see the excellent reports in the newsletter of the CAHS Ottawa Naval Air Presentations by Pat Whitby and Glenn Cook. As a member of the Ottawa CAHS Chapter for a

number of years, I've listened to a number and variety of presentations. Though I may have just a touch of prejudice, the Naval Air meetings were among the best.

Hopefully Maureen and I can get down to the Museum this summer. *Yours Aye, Ed*

**Petty Officer First Class/Warrant Officer Ed Janusas (Ret'd)** writes:

Hello to all you wonderful people in that/those lovely maintained buildings called SAM.

As time is getting on and "Wingers"/Shipmates have gone on to that great Naval Air Station in the Sky, I have finally put pen to paper, at last, before the following "stories" fade away eh?

I look forward and enjoy every edition of the newsletter. The only comment/criticism I have is that the pictures could be clearer? But what do I know!

Very happy to see all of you, Rolly, Brushett(Sir), Ron Beard, Bill Gillespie hustling, bustling around my many "home" memorabilia if I may put it that way.

More stories at a later date. Yours in caring and sharing. P1/WO CD With Clasp 1948-73 (Retired) (*Shades of ..... Ed's stories will be found elsewhere in this newsletter under Vignettes. K*)

**Ernie Cable - SAM Historian** writes:

I just recently had a chance to review the SAMF website and it looks very good. However, there is one minor inaccuracy. In the third paragraph in the CNAG section we say Royal Canadian Naval Air Station HMCS Shearwater was formed. In fact, it was officially called Royal Canadian Naval Air Station (RCNAS) Dartmouth. But in keeping with the Royal Navy tradition of naming naval air stations after sea birds, RCNAS Dartmouth, shortly thereafter, became officially known by its more familiar name HMCS Shearwater.

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**SAM Foundation, Kay speaking.**

Hi. Hey winter is finally gone. Can't say too many bad things about it as it wasn't all that terrible this year. (If you are a Christmas lover, it will be here again in 8 months.)

The SAMF website ([www.samfoundation.ca](http://www.samfoundation.ca)) is coming along nicely - at least I think so. If there is anything in particular you'd like to see there or if you have stories or photos to share - just let us know at ([contact@samfoundation.ca](mailto:contact@samfoundation.ca) or [samf@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:samf@ns.sympatico.ca))

The Foundation is working hard to pay off the loan for the new (now old) Building, Atrium etc and, of course, to generate funds for another extension which the Museum will require in the very near future. Nothing changes. The most important thing today, is that work continues on the Avenger, Firefly and HUP. Thank God for the volunteers for these aircraft and for all the Museum volunteers and yes, thank God we have you to help us.

For those asking about photos being displayed on the hangar walls and keeping the Museum open on Mondays during the summer months have been brought to the Curator's attention at SAMF Board of Director's Meetings but have not been addressed to date.

The above items are the responsibility of the Museum - perhaps it would be best if you contact the Museum itself:

Curator  
PO Box 5000 Stn Main  
12 Wing Shearwater  
Shearwater, NS B0J 3A0

[awmuseum@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:awmuseum@ns.sympatico.ca)  
Or call 720 - 1083.

Rolly West continues to volunteer in the Archives and he has been most helpful with sports articles etc for the newsletter. Thank you Rolly!

Although Chuck has retired (again) he continues to be a very active part of the Museum. It's nice to see him around. (Keeps the staff on their toes. Ha)

We hope you visit our pride and joy - the SAM, especially if you want to see your heritage displayed.

A serious note. I agree with Bill (yes, I do) that sooner or later we will need to have our membership go on the rise. None of us are getting younger. Why not get your families involved. No, I don't mean that you have to pay for their membership, they should take an interest in your service time and you personally and join. What a great way to remember someone after they've gone on to a better place.

There are still over 900 retired Naval Air people out there who still have not joined us. Surely the 8 cents a day can't be that bad. If you see any former Naval Air people, please ask them if they are members, if not, encourage them to join to preserve your heritage (and theirs). The only positive thing I do know about most of them is that they like to read the newsletter and have said so but have never joined.

Our membership fee has been \$30 a year since I came to work here. However, in September, a motion will be made at the AGM to raise the dues to \$40 year. This will take the dues up to a little over nine cents a day. Big Whoopie. If any of the 900 are reading this, you owe it to yourselves to make the commitment and join.

Take care. Kay  
Happy Birthday, Aries.

\*\*\*\*\*



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**Due to space limitation articles submitted will be printed when space permits.**



## THE 'WISDOM' IN CARRIER OPERATIONS?

BY Dave Williams

The following tale ends happily, but at one point held the potential for a deadly disaster. To make the story easier for the reader to follow, I have rounded off all times, airspeeds, windspeeds, groundspeeds etc.

A piece of background information that has a great bearing on this story is as follows. At some, the agency responsible for these matters assigned civilian aviation the Very High Frequency band (VHF) for voice communication and the Ultra High Frequency (UHF) band to the Military. The shuffle did not happen overnight. The RCN made the shift from the old VHF to the new UHF with the acquiring of BONAVENTURE and the CS2F. At the time of the event, 1958, the Royal Navy had not yet switched and was still using VHF.

My log book says that it was 13 March 1958 and Bonaventure had joined with HMS Bulwark, an RN carrier, and others, participating in an exercise called MAPLE ROYAL while transiting from Bermuda area to Halifax. Bonnie was keeping two Trackers airborne around the clock in a Sustained Operation (SUSTOPS). The night of the 13<sup>th</sup> was black. No moon, no stars, no horizon, just black as the inside of a cow! It was also blowing hard, but the sea had not built up...yet! It was one of those classic times with two carriers operating together in borderline weather conditions and neither one wants to cancel flying first. Even though Bulwark was twice the size of Bonnie and we could not talk to back others ship or aircraft, we launched two aircraft with eight souls on board into that black-assed night.

If memory serves me correctly, Ian Webster was flying the other a/c and his area of operation was up-wind of Bonnie. Ken Sheedy was my co-Pilot and we were to operate downwind of the ship. After one hour, the wind had not only increased but the sea had built up and the ship was really moving around - the decision was made to recall the a/c. Ian Webster flying at 150 kts into a 50 kt wind has a groundspeed of 100 kts so in one hour he could have been about 100 miles from Bonnie. Turning towards home, he now has a groundspeed of 200 kts to cover 100 miles so he is over the ship in one half hour and lands on safely. Operating at 150 kts with a tailwind of 50 kts gives me a groundspeed of 200 kts which after one hour could place me as much as 200 miles from the ship. Turning for home,

my groundspeed is now 100 kts to cover 200 miles, so it is going to take 2 hours. Did I mention that all of this was going on in the middle of a black-assed night?

An aircraft carrier at night in an Exercise situation is almost totally blacked out. On a black night, it is invisible. The only lights illuminated are the landing area and these are hooded in such a way that they can only be seen by a Pilot on the final approach. One other very faint light just forward of the Island called the Carrier Identification Light flashes in morse code the first letter of the carriers name, ie 'B' for Bonaventure. Right!

As I closed the radar contact, I called Bonaventure to receive the landing instructions which I received loud and clear. I overflowed the radar contact which appeared to be on the flying course and I noted the ident light flashing 'B'. At that moment, I saw what appeared to be the lights of another a/c. I called BV to confirm that another a/c was in the circuit and



their answer was NO. Thinking that I had been mistaken I continued my approach and was about to turn final when I saw an aircraft land. I called BV to confirm that an a/c

### **HMCS Bonaventure**

had just landed and the answer was NEGATIVE. You are probably all way ahead of me by now, but the penny finally did drop. I was about thirty seconds away from landing unannounced in the middle of the night on a different carrier than I thought. One can only imagine the carnage that would have occurred had that landing approach been completed.

I cleaned up the a/c and removed myself from that area pronto. I discovered that the entire time I had been talking to BV, she had been just another 20 miles or so beyond Bulwark and unaware of what had just occurred. She was moving around pretty good by now but I got safely aboard and I think that the Ship was as happy to see me as I was to see them. (They could now secure Flying Stations after a very long wait.)

During the debriefing, there was no discussion about the wisdom of two carriers operating a/c in close proximity, in filthy weather and a black night to boot without being able to communicate with each others ship's and a/c, and both carriers with the same first initial.



**HMS Bulwark, as seen in Naval Base Singapore, few years after the Kuwait Emergency of 1961. (Fleet Air Arm Museum**



**A sad tale....**

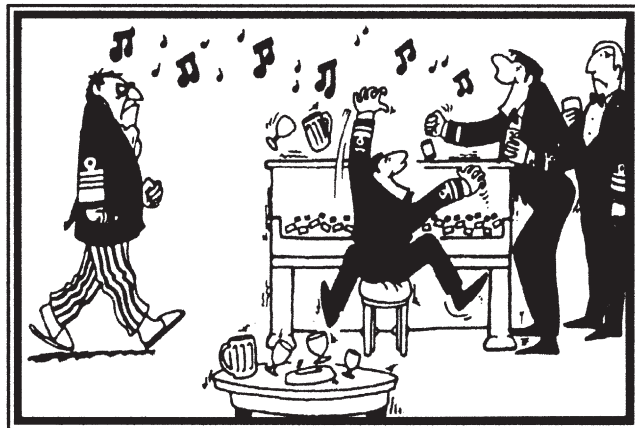
Their blood ran cold with horror  
As they gazed on the awful scene,  
Their faces paled with anguish  
And their gills turned faintly green.

For seldom has anyone suffered  
As they did that horrible night,  
Seldom before have humans  
Beheld such a ghastly sight.

There on the ground before them,  
The shattered remnants lay,  
And a steady stream of crimson  
Seeped into the thirsty clay.

And they stood in breathless silence,  
As men who were stricken dumb,  
For they'd just seen the duty Petty Officer  
Break a jug of pusser rum.

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**GOOD NIGHT, SWEETHEART**

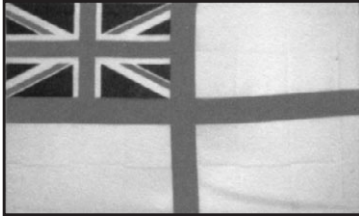
*Good night, sweetheart, till we meet tomorrow.  
Good night, sweetheart, sleep will banish sorrow.  
Tears and parting may make us forlorn,  
But with the dawn, a new day is born.*

*So I'll say good night, sweetheart, though I'm not beside you,  
Good night, sweetheart, still my love will guide you,  
Dreams enfold you, in each one I'll hold you.  
Good night, sweetheart, good night.*

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## A TALL TALE

By Bill McDermott

In 1965 I was the Technical Officer at the Naval Supply Depot in LaSalle, Quebec, and on 15 February assigned the task of supervising the depot's switchover from the familiar white ensign to the brand new maple leaf flag. My CO, being much more experienced in these matters, said I should draw all the now obsolete white ensigns from stock because "I was going to get phone calls". Within hours, various friendly senior officers called and started the conversation with "Hi Bill" followed by "Would I have an white ensign they could have?" The speed with which I confirmed the availability, seemed to encourage most to add, "did I have one with some significance?". Being an honest type, I noted that I had the last white ensign that was flown in the depot - maybe they heard 'Montreal'. Had they listened, they may have caught the emphasis placed on the 'I' in the previous sentence. I never said the one 'they' were getting was other than a brand new ensign; even though each was shipped with suitable wrinkles to suggest previous use. It has always surprised me that none of these SNO's appeared to have ever compared the background of their trophy and discover they all had the last white ensign to fly in the depot or Montreal. I still have my trophy and the bosuns call.

\*\*\*\*\*



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## Fairey Firefly PP462

Colonel (Retired) Ernest Cable OMM, CD  
Shearwater Aviation Museum Historian

The Fairey Firefly on display at the Shearwater Aviation Museum is one of 236 Fighter-Reconnaissance Mark 1 (FR 1) versions built for the British Fleet Air Arm. On 1 July 1945, in a bi-lateral undertaking to establish a Canadian Naval Air Arm the Royal Navy (RN) reformed No. 825 Squadron at Royal Naval Air Station Rattray in Scotland and agreed to man the squadron with Canadians. To train the Canadians 825 Squadron was initially equipped with 12 Fairey Barracuda II's. In November 1945, the Barracudas were replaced with 12 Firefly FR 1's that were permanently given to Canada as part of Britain's war claim settlement. Firefly PP462 was one of the 12 replacement aircraft assigned to 825 Squadron. The squadron was officially transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) on 24 January 1946 in consonance with the commissioning of Canada's first aircraft carrier, *HMCS Warrior*. In March, 825 Squadron embarked in *Warrior* on her maiden voyage to Halifax where PP462 was among the first cadre of Canadian Fireflies to disembark and land on Canadian soil for the first time at RCAF Station Dartmouth on 31 March 1946.

PP462 was among the first of 29 Firefly FR 1's progressively taken on strength by the RCN between June 1946 and April 1947. As with all the other aircraft received from the RN, PP462 was painted in the Royal Navy "Extra Dark Sea Gray and Dark Slate Gray" camouflage. The Firefly FR 1 was the RCN's first strike-reconnaissance fighter and formed the backbone of Canadian naval aviation during its formative years. In addition to its large chin radiator the other feature, which distinguished the FR 1 from later versions of the Firefly was a canister, housing the radar antenna, suspended under the radiator. An Observer (navigator) in the rear cockpit operated the radar to detect ships and submarines.

In 1946, the RCN and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) agreed that all naval aircraft would be registered on the RCAF inventory. A RCAF letter (MCHQ 31-5-1, 15 May 1946) stated, "This airframe was received from the Admiralty (HMCS Warrior) and brought on charge on initial entry" provided the authority to register PP462 on RCAF inventory. The first line entry in PP462's log on 1 June 1946 shows it as being, "Stored in Reserve Eastern Air Command (EAC) Halifax" (It was the custom for all new aircraft received by the RCAF to be placed in storage before being assigned to a squadron). Although it is certain that 825 Squadron used PP462 for training from its

arrival in March, it wasn't until 7 October 1946 that EAC paper work officially authorized PP462 to be transferred from storage to 825 Squadron. After an intensive training program both ashore and on *Warrior*, PP462 embarked on *Warrior* on 7 November 1946 as one of 825 Squadron's aircraft for the winter cruise to the West Coast (Nov 46 – Mar 47). On 19 May 1947, PP462 was transferred 826 Squadron. Ten days later Lt. S.E. Soward scraped PP462's wingtip while landing at Quebec in a cross wind. In April 1947, PP462 was sent to Canadian Car and Foundry where it was painted in the new RCN colour scheme consisting of dark gray upper surfaces and light gray lower surfaces. On 12 July 1947, PP462 was included in the en mass transfer of all naval aircraft from the RCAF to the RCN's inventory. PP462 was assigned to "Storage and Repair" from October 1948 until November 1949 when it was transferred back to 826 Squadron. PP462 had been embarked on *HMCS Magnificent* with 826 Squadron only three days when, on 19 November 1949, LCdr. T.J. Roberts caught No. 3 wire on landing but couldn't prevent PP462 from veering to starboard and striking the ship's crane aft of the island. PP462 returned to operation with 826 Squadron in February 1950. PP462 was placed in "Storage and Repair" from April 1950 until March 1954 when it was one of nine RCN Firefly FR 1's sold to the government of Ethiopia.

The former RCN Fireflies were flown by the Ethiopian air force for an unknown period and were eventually disposed of in the desert when they were surplus to their needs. PP462 languished in the desert until 1993 when its return journey to Shearwater began. In 1993, the Canadian Air Attaché to Egypt, while on a visit to Ethiopia, noticed five Fairey Firefly aircraft languishing in the desert. The Attaché observed that the aircraft were extremely well preserved in the dry desert climate and that each of the aircraft bore RCN data plates. Further investigation revealed that these aircraft were indeed ex-RCN Fireflies that had been sold to the Ethiopian air force. Through diplomatic agreement the Ethiopian government donated to Canada the two best-preserved Fireflies, which were airlifted by Canadian Forces C-130 Hercules to Shearwater and Ottawa. Firefly PP462 was given to the Shearwater Aviation Museum since Shearwater was the Firefly's main base of operations and the Shearwater Aviation Museum has earned an excellent reputation for preserving Canada's maritime military aviation heritage. The second Firefly was given to the Canadian Aviation Museum in Ottawa.

Since Firefly PP462's arrival at Shearwater a small, dedicated group of volunteers has slowly been restoring the aircraft to flying condition with some technical assistance donated by local aviation industries.

Although the team has spent thousands of man-hours on work that was within their capability, the team periodically has to seek professional assistance for work that is beyond their expertise or in order to comply with federal airworthiness regulations. For example, only a company in Germany had the capability to refurbish and balance the wooden propeller and a company in Texas had the sole experience to repair the Rolls Royce Griffon V-12 engine block. Although some companies are willing to perform their work for free, the museum is required to pay transportation and material costs.

Although the Shearwater Aviation Museum was awarded a \$38,052 grant by the Millennium Bureau of Canada in 2000, the museum also depends on personal and corporate donations to help defray costs. When fully restored Firefly PP462 will be one of only two Firefly FR-1's in the world capable of flying and provide a tangible example of the Firefly's unique role in Canada's proud maritime aviation heritage. The Shearwater Aviation Museum Foundation, the local population and the Canadian Forces support this project, as the Firefly and the distinctive roar of its Rolls Royce Griffon engine were not only a fond community memory but also an integral part of their history.

The photograph of Firefly PP462 on the back cover was taken in March 2006. Although PP462 is only partially reassembled it has come a long way since it was off-loaded from a Hercules 13 years ago. The restoration of the fuselage is almost ready to accept the engine and propeller, both of which are just about ready for mounting. Hopefully, our aircraft will soon start to look like a Firefly again. As you can well imagine our restoration workers have spent thousands of hours of their own time readying PP462 to fly again. We owe the following volunteers special gratitude for their dedication, perseverance and ingenuity in solving technical problems for which there was no precedent:

- Bud Ayer
  - John Webber
  - Mick Stephenson
  - Wayne Pettipas
  - Ernie Smith
  - Don Logan
- \*\*\*\*\*