

Bon jour....Good afternoon Dan and Rob Middlemiss, Rob's wife Terry and their sons Kirk and Trent, Michaela Jakobi. Their extended family, Members of Parliament - both federal and provincial - mayors, and senior politicians, Major General Foster, Major General Coates, Major General Tremblay, General Thompson, General Meloche, Commanding Officers, Senior Disciplinarians, everyone from 427 Squadron, friends and fellow Canadians.

We are here today to celebrate the incredible life of a great patriot and a true Canadian hero.... Honourary Colonel Robert George Middlemiss, DFC, CD, SSM.

I have been given the incredible honour of sharing in Bob's life with you today. My objective is to highlight a number of significant events that molded the man that helped shape our country and ultimately influenced all our lives.

To quote Winston Churchill "what is the use of living, if not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who live in it after we are gone?" By that measurement, life in our country is better today because of Bob's service to Canada. His commitment to our country has enshrined our right to enjoy the freedom of being Canadian.

There are many words that describe Bob Middlemiss; heroic, gallant, proud, considerate, patriotic and humble.....all evoke images of this amazing man.

Bob joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in the fall of 1940, was trained in Canada on Harvard's and Tiger Moths before arriving in England to begin flying on the legendary Spitfire in the spring of 1941.

The squadron's mission was to aid in the Defense of Britain..... like many of his generation; Bob represented the hope for millions of people around the world. Bob would always say he was just an ordinary guy; I would say he was an ordinary guy who did extraordinary things.

Throughout history, the world has seen during its darkest hours the humanity of man rise to the challenge – Bob embodied this spirit. In the spring of 1942 Bob was assigned to a covert operation dubbed 'Operation Style' that had him sail from England to Gibraltar and then board the HMS Eagle, a British aircraft carrier with the mission of deploying Spitfires to the island of Malta to aid in this tiny nation's defense.

The Spitfire was never designed to fly off an aircraft carrier. So using Middlemiss tenacity, Bob with a 500 foot runway on the HMS Eagle and a piece of wood jammed in his wings to give him maximum lift took off on a 750 mile journey to find the 15 x 9 mile island of Malta.

During Bob's time on Malta, the Allied Forces were subjected to a minimum of 8 Axis air raids a day. Bob was flying 7 days a week in multiple sorties sometimes outnumbered 25 to 1.

Despite the stacked odds, Bob kept his wonderful sense of humor and believed in the camaraderie of his battle buddies; there were many times that their spirit alone kept the island nation from falling. During his time stationed at Malta, Bob formed some incredible friendships, including the bond he found with Canadian ace Buzz Berling. Buzz was credited for over 33 enemy kills and formed a friendship with Bob that was to last until Buzz's untimely death after the war. Bob stood up for

Buzz as the best man at his wedding, and Buzz attended Bob's wedding to Hazel.

It was during Bob's time in Malta that he had an experience in which he needed to utilize his tenacity and ingenuity as a means of survival. I will now use Bob's words to describe this fateful day to you:

I spotted a 109 directly on his tail (referring to wingman Langlois); I swooped, got him in range and shot him down. I realized that the No 2 of the 109 that I had just hit would probably now be lining up on my tail. Thinking fast, I broke hard left and was leaning forward in the cockpit looking over my shoulder, when there was a loud bang. My Spitfire had been hit and all hell broke out. My right hand fell off the control column, there was smoke in the cockpit and the aircraft was spinning down, hard and fast. The 109 pilot's bullets had hit the right side of my aircraft. Shrapnel and bits of cannon shell had hit me in the right side of my back and right arm but I really did not know the extent of my injuries. The warmth of the blood oozing out was a sharp contrast to the cold air at 25000 feet. I knew I had to bail out of what would otherwise be my metal coffin. After releasing my seat harness, oxygen and radio cords, I tried to exit the spinning Spitfire. The centrifugal force in the spin kept me from leaving. I finally sat back in the cockpit, stopped the spin then rolled the aircraft on its back and fell out into space.

It was a few hours later that Bob was picked up out of the Mediterranean by one of our Allied Rescue boats.

The next day when Bob was in the Malta Hospital recovering from his wounds his friend Buzz Berling showed up with the partial tail of an Italian Macchie that he had shot down earlier that morning – retribution for Bob having been shot down the previous day. It was a sign of true respect by Buzz and an example of the camaraderie that existed between these two great fighter pilots.

During his tour with 249 Squadron on Malta Bob shot down and destroyed three enemy aircraft and damaged two others. Bob was decorated for his war effort with the Distinguished Flying Cross; the citation read as follows:

``This officer completed two tours of operational duty and has completed sorties from Malta and the United Kingdom. He has destroyed three enemy aircraft and damaged others. His standard of leadership as a section leader and flight commander has always been high and he has invariably shown outstanding courage``

Bob's service in Malta highlighted many strong character traits that had developed in him; courage, commitment, gallantry, leadership, friendship and a sense of humor, but none greater than his belief in his Country and for what WE as Canadians stand for.

It was this belief in Country that contributed to Bob staying in the Royal Canadian Air force after the end of WWII. Thus began a post war career that thrust Bob into the middle of the Cold War. These were very volatile times in global history. It was a time where the end of the world clock was set at two minutes to midnight, and the threat of nuclear war was very real.

It was during this time of adversity that Bob rose to command the Number One Overseas Ferry unit, based at St. Hubert. It was in this role

that Bob lead Operation Leap Frog from September 1953 to August 1956 where the unit delivered over 650 Sabre F86 Aircraft to the NATO squadrons located in Europe. In the context of the Cold War these efforts were potentially vital on a strategic level for our nation.

Post Operation Leap Frog, Bob played a significant role in Aircraft selection for the RCAF. During this time Bob accomplished many significant firsts for him as a Canadian Fighter Pilot. Bob broke the sound barrier while diving his Sabre Jet out of 45000 feet in 1951. He was one of the first Canadian's to test fly the Lockheed Starfighter 104, he was the first to break Mach II and the first to take a Starfighter 104 above 60,000 feet. Bob worked on Cockpit standardization for the Avro Aero Project, a leading edge aircraft built with Canadian ingenuity. Bob was truly an aviation pioneer.

Throughout Bob's career his aviation skills were second to none. It was these skills, along with his leadership, his political acumen and his integrity that made him an incredible asset for the Canadian government. Bob's tireless work on behalf of the RCAF was recognized for the rest of his life. Bob retired from active Military Service in 1969.

Bob's many recognitions for his service include:

Distinguished Flying Cross
1939-1945 Star Aircrew Europe Star
Africa Star Defence Medal
Canadian Volunteer Medal War medal 1939 1945
Special Service medal with NATO Bar
Canadian Centennial Medal (1967)
Canadian Forces Decoration and Clasp
Malta George Cross Fiftieth Anniversary Medal

Civilian life was very different for Bob. After a brief role in Human Relations for the Ontario government, a term as VP Administration and Chairman of the Industrial Training Branch at George Brown College. Bob had a successful career in the private sector, making mining and real estate investments. Bob joined his daughter Dale in Barrie in 1979. After many moves in his lifetime it would be here in Barrie that Bob would spend the last 33 years of his life. Bob spent much of this time helping build our community. He was present for every Remembrance Day Ceremony and active at all military parades within the City or on Base. A great Barrie moment in Bob's life was honour of being the final Torch Bearer as the Olympic Torch lit the cauldron at Barrie City Hall in 2009. Bob utilized the Middlemiss Corner, located here at 16 Wing, as a platform to share his stories with school children. He saw himself as a conduit of our history and was always seeking to educate so that all could learn from our past and to pique the interest of individuals who wanted to learn more. Bob had a sense of responsibility to ensure no one ever forgot the service given by so many to our country.

In October 2003, Bob was appointed Honorary Colonel of the 427 Squadron, a tactical helicopter Squadron. In 2010 he was given an unprecedented extension to remain as Honorary Colonel of 427 Squadron in their new role as a Special Operations Aviation Squadron. Bob was an incredible representative of the Lions and always displayed his leadership and dignity when representing them.....A true Gentleman of the Air Force.

Bob was everyone's hero, everyone's champion; he could be your biggest fan and your conscience. He challenged people to be better and he encouraged people to grow. He lived each day with honor and

integrity guiding his way and he never once stopped believing that Peace, Freedom and the betterment of mankind was worth fighting for. He carried his pride openly on his sleeve.... he was always willing to give a piece of himself to those who needed it.

Bob was the kind of man everyone would be fortunate to have as a father, a grandfather and as a battle buddy. He was from a forgotten era where chivalry, charisma and complements were common. He was Humphrey Bogart, Carey Grant and Errol Flynn all rolled into one.

Honorary Colonel Robert George Middlemiss.....

Served his Country

Gave to his Community

Loved his Family

WE WILL NEVER FORGET.....