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NEWSLETTER

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March 2009

**Honourary Colonel - W/C (R) R.G. Middlemiss      427 Squadron. Commanding Officer - L/Col K.G. Whale**  
**Association Chair – W/C(R) R.G. Middlemiss**

### Message from the Honourary Colonel

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Family Day this year was held on October 18, a glorious day and a fun day for families and friends to see and handle the many pieces of equipment that their loved ones work with in the Squadron. Highlight of the day of course was the opportunity to fly in the Griffon Helicopter. This event is always well organized and once again ran very smoothly. A close runner up to the helicopter ride was climbing up the fire ladder and being swung around 360 degrees in the bucket for a great view of the area. To top it off we were served hot dogs, hamburgers and a beverage of our choice.

The Gathering of the Lions was held on October 25 in the Squadron hangar. Those that attended were treated to a live band – a tad too loud and with too few danceable tunes for many.

1 Wing CTS was held November 18 to 20th with a Mess Dinner on the evening of the 19th. It was opportunity to meet the new Wing Commander of 1 Wing, Colonel Christopher Coates and a chance to be brought up to speed on the activities and planned activities of the Wing. It was also a time to bid farewell to some of the members of the Wing who had been posted away or had joined the ranks of the retired.

**Treasurer & Membership**

Sask Wilford  
wilsas@sympatico.ca

**Newsletter**

Wayne MacLellan  
macway01@bigfoot.com

Vern White  
vernwhite@sympatico.ca

**Regional Reps.**

**UK** – Len Pratt – WW11

**Maritimes**

Wayne MacLellan - NATO

**Quebec**

Jim Moffat – WW11

**S. Ontario**

Roy Inkster – WW11

**N. Ontario**

Bob Middlemiss - WW11

**Ottawa**

Allan Todd – WW11

**Manitoba**

Ian Thomson – WW 11

**Saskatchewan**

Weldon Moffatt – WW11  
rweldon.moffatt@sasktel.net

**Alberta**

Jim Gillespie - NATO

**B.C.**

Rev Derek Salter - WW11

**USA**

Doug Nicholson - NATO

**Petawawa**

613 -687- 5511

**427 Squadron Adjutant**

Capt. J.L. Ivey – ext 7817  
ivey.jl@forces.gc.ca

**427 Squadron Historian**

Capt. Michael Dias – ext 7609  
[dias.mkf@forces.gc.ca](mailto:dias.mkf@forces.gc.ca)

**427 Squadron CWO**

CWO J. Burns – ext 7969  
Burns.j@forces.gc.ca

**427 Hon/Col EA**

Capt. M.R. Booth – ext 7765  
booth.mr@forces.gc.ca

The Remembrance Day parade was held in Barrie, on November 11th. The parade was made up of Veterans, a contingent of RCMP, Service members of Base Borden and Cadets from the three services. The Wing Commander 16 Wing, Borden and I took the salute.

The Squadron's Christmas dinner was held on November 29 and as usual went over very well.

In November or early December the owner of the "Windsor Spitfire" hockey team of The Ontario Hockey League contacted 16 Wing and inquired if there was a WWII Spitfire pilot available to drop the puck to open the Windsor Financial Credit Union complex. I was asked and gladly accepted the invitation. I along with a colour party from 16 Wing proceeded to Windsor on December 11th and that evening before a packed house of supporters, including many local dignitaries who were introduced to the crowd, the Mayor of Windsor and I dropped the puck to open this lovely complex that seats 6,500 spectators.



I received a wartime diary, medals and photos of Sergeant Harry Richard Smith, a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner. He flew from RAF Stn. Leeming which was the 427 Squadron home during WWII. These items of memorabilia were given to me by Mr. Sonny Allison, a distant relative of Sergeant Smith. The diary covers the daily activities of the crew from June 28 to August 23, 1943, their aircraft Halifax letter "H", and the diary signed by all members of the crew. The aircraft was shot down on August 24, 1943. Sergeant Smith is buried in Rheinberg War Cemetery, Germany. When Sonny Allison visited me and presented the above mentioned material, we called England and I had a good chat with John Faull and other family members and assured them that the memorabilia would be placed in the

Squadron Archives.

One other activity took place at Trenton on January 30. It was the Annual Luncheon of the demise of the RCAF. Some 150 Veterans attended this year.

Personnel from Royal Air Force Station Leeming and 1 Wing have been working to re-establish the historic links between our organizations. The decision was made to name two new accommodation blocks after two wartime Commanding Officers of 427 Squadron, Group Captain Turnbull and Wing Commander Ganderton. The blocks were opened by HRH, The Duchess of Cornwall on February 19, 2009. 427 SOAS planned to send the CO, L/Col Whale, (cancelled at the last minute due to a family medical emergency) SCWO Burns, M/Cpl Wallace (Lion of the year), Flight Sergeant Weldon Moffatt DFM, a wartime Wireless Operator/Air Gunner and myself to attend to the dedication ceremonies. We were joined by Colonel Neill, Canadian Defence Liaison Staff, London, England. The last page of ROAR has some photos from that event. The web site contains all the pictures from our visit courtesy of the photography section, RAF Leeming.

The afternoon concluded with a reception in the officers' mess during which The Duchess enjoyed conversations with RAF Leeming Service personnel and civilian staff, and their families. In addition, the group from Canada and myself laid a wreath on behalf of 427 SOAS at the Cenotaph in the cemetery of Dishforth. Many of the Canadian airmen buried there were stationed at Dishforth, one of the aerodromes used by No 6 (RCAF) Bomber Group. We also visited various sections and units on the station. Weldon Moffatt and myself visited the Cathedral in Rippon and SCWO Burns and M/Cpl Wallace were treated to a flight in one of the RAF Hawk aircraft.

On February 23, 2009 at Base Borden I took part in cutting the cake in celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Flight.

I continue to carry out talks to the BASE Course at Borden, and to high school students who visit the new Borden Military Museum. I am also very active in various other Air Force oriented groups and meetings.

On April 1st, the RCAF 85th Anniversary, I will be attending an All Ranks' Mess Dinner at Base Borden. On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, I will be the guest of honour at a Mess Dinner (Mixed) at 403 (Helicopter) Operational Training Squadron, Gagetown.

And lastly, we must thank Reg Smith for his stewardship as Association Chairman these past three years. Reg has had a difficult time, health-wise, and has still maintained his activities as Chairman. I am presently filling the position for the next year, prior to a new Chair being elected.

Looking forward to a busy Summer and Fall.

Bob Middlemiss



**FERTE MANUS CERTAS**

### **427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron**

LIONS,

You will not be surprised to hear that the high pace of operations continues within the Lion Squadron. Since the last issue of ROAR we prepared a helicopter detachment in record time for a short notice, Haiti humanitarian relief mission (Although we were stood down at the last minute, Lions were ready to go.)

We have conducted multiple deployed training exercises in preparation for the Vancouver 2010 Olympics, and we have continued to build an international operations element. In addition, we have sent Lions to augment the conventional aviation and CANSOFCOM deployments in Afghanistan, and, of course, we continue to upgrade the keen young aviators, technicians, and supporters that we received last summer.

We continue to transform into a fully operational special operations aviation squadron with initiatives such as a new digitally optimized operations centre and flight planning room, upgrades to training and infrastructure, and personnel professional development.

On top of all this ongoing effort, we are about to take possession of the Interoperable Griffon Reconnaissance Escort Surveillance System (INGRESS) which includes a 3rd generation electro-optic/infra-red sensor that will give us the ability to detect and identify vehicles and personnel movement at great distances. Suffice it to say that the proud tradition of the Lion Squadron continues as we take the best the Air Force has to offer and integrate aerospace effects into Canadian Special Operations Forces.

**LCOL K.G.Whale**  
CANSOFCOM | CANFOSCAN  
*Viam Invenimus (We will find a way)*

### **Membership/Finance** **Spring 2009**

This will once again be a combined Membership/Finance report in narrative format.

**The Sabre Challenge** worked.

If you recall, in the last issue of ROAR the Sabre lads guaranteed a donation of \$500.00 for 2008 and if any other group exceeded that

amount we would match or beat it. Well it worked, you all did your bit and we were able to pay our bills, thank you. Totals by Era:

**WWII** - \$376.44. No “New” members last year but great donations. Well done.

**Sabre** - \$610.00. Three new members and great support from a few stalwarts.

**F-104** - \$454.00. Two new members, also great support from a few loyal Lions.

**Heli** - \$300.00. Three new members and great support from serving Lions.

Total revenue for 2008 was \$1740.44 which was outstanding, and when we deduct the expenses totalling \$1247.22 (ROAR \$636.71+\$555.39+\$55.12 supplies) we are left with a comfortable \$493.22 net.

As a result of your generous donations, the frugality of our Editor and the tight fisted (read stingy) management of the Treasurer, we have a bank balance of \$4410.83. Well done all.

The budget for 2009 will be similar to '08 with the exception of some additional expenses for the website which you must all agree will be well spent dollars.

We are still trying to recruit “New Members” from the Huey and Kiowa era. Please help us if you can, in the meantime keep those cards and letters coming (full of money).

P.S. – We are still looking for volunteers for the executive committee. Help!!!

TTFN ..... Sask Wilford

### **PLEASE JOIN THE 427 LION SQUADRON** **ASSOCIATION**

427 Squadron has a proud history and thus the main objective of the Association is to ensure that the achievements, traditions and memories of our famous squadron are maintained and perpetuated. The Association

embraces not only the World War II and Post War Lions but all currently active Lions now serving on the Squadron and former Lions still serving elsewhere in the CAF.

We publish a newsletter titled “ROAR” and we have regional representatives all across Canada and in the US and UK. We welcome suggestions from all sectors on how to make the

Association more meaningful for the members. We invite you to get on board and help make us even better.

To receive your 427 Lion Squadron Association Membership card, make a donation or a bequest, please cut out, complete and mail the form which follows.

Name..... Spouse/Partner.....  
 Address..... ZIP/PC.....  
 Tel ..( )..... Fax..... e-mail.....  
 Service years on 427 (from-to)..... Bases..... Rank ..... Trade .....  
 Membership: Life Member ( ) \$50.00 Annual Renewal Member ( ) \$10.00 per year.  
 I wish to make a Donation to the Association of \$.....  
 I plan to include a bequest to the Association in my will yes ( ).  
 Please make cheques payable to – 427 Lion Squadron Association

Mail this form and cheque to: A.W. “Sask” Wilford  
 427 Lion Squadron Association  
 9129 Side Road 17  
 RR #2, Hillsburgh, ON, N0B 1Z0

**Biography**

Lieutenant – General(R) D.(Don)M. McNaughton,  
 CMM, CD

Don joined the RCAF in 1952 at age 18 and received his pilot wings in 1953. By the end of that year he was instructing NATO student pilots. He remained in the instructional field until 1958 when he was posted to the F-86 Sabre Operational Training Unit and subsequently to Air Division’s #1 (F) Wing at Marville, France to serve with 439 Squadron. In 1963, he was returned to Canada and sent to a Flying Training School at Gimli, Manitoba as Chief Standards Officer and then as the Officer Commanding of the new Tutor Squadron when that aircraft was introduced in 1965.

In 1966, having enjoyed 14 years in the cockpit, he was posted to the Canadian Army Staff College in Kingston. After his graduation

and then two years on the staff of Mobile Command Headquarters, he returned to the College to be a member of the Directing Staff for three years.

L/Gen McNaughton took the Kiowa course at Portage and the Huey course at Gagetown in 1972 before going to the UK to attend the RAF Air Warfare College for six months. He came back to Canada in the summer of 1973 and took command of 427 Squadron. These were the early days for the Tactical Helicopter Squadrons. Aircrew and groundcrew were a mix of ex Army, Navy and Air Force with an aircraft complement of six Hueys and eight Kiowas.

He was promoted to Colonel rank after one year in command and served in a series of positions: Mobile Command again, Deputy Commander of 10 Tactical Air Group, Deputy Commander of the Canadian United Nations Contingent in the Middle East and Base Commander of CFB Winnipeg. In 1978, he was

Director General in the Air Branch in NDHQ and served there until 1981 when he became the Commander of 10 Tactical Air Group in Montreal. At that time, we had two CF-5 Squadrons, two Chinook Squadrons, and all the tactical Helicopter Squadrons. Again, after one year in command, Don was posted to Air Command to be Deputy Commander, in which position he served for three years before becoming the Commander of Air Command for one year. Then he was off to Colorado Springs to be the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of NORAD for three years, retiring in 1989 after 38 years of service and 20 family moves. He and his wife settled on a 200 acre hobby farm near Perth.

In retirement, he has been active in volunteer activities and has been requested to participate in various DND and Government studies. He was a member of a Government Task Force on military museums, and was Honorary President of the RCAF Association and the first Honorary Colonel of 427 Squadron. L/Gen McNaughton has had a most exciting and enjoyable career in the Canadian Armed Forces which included flying, challenging positions and the opportunity to meet a tremendously talented group of people.

## **Special Operations Aviation in Canada** **Historical Timeline**

**427 Squadron Background 1942-1997** - 427 (Lion) Squadron was formed overseas on November 7th, 1942, as the eighth of fifteen Royal Canadian Air Force Bomber Squadrons. It flew Wellington aircraft out of Croft, Yorkshire, then Halifaxes and Lancasters out of Leeming from May 3rd, 1943. Its first CO was Group Captain Dudley Burnside, DSO, OBE, DFC & Bar. Initially part of 4 Group, the Squadron was transferred to 6th Bomber RCAF Group where it remained until the end of the war. On May 31st,

1946, the Squadron was disbanded. On August 1st, 1962, the Lions were reactivated as a Fighter Squadron flying F-86 Sabres at St-Hubert, Quebec, before moving to Germany. 427's Fighter era saw them serve initially in the UK then in Germany, France, Morocco and Sardina, before becoming the first Canadian Squadron to be equipped with the CF-104 Starfighter. The Squadron was again disbanded on July 1, 1970. The Lions returned on January 1, 1971, as a Tactical Helicopter Squadron based at Petawawa, Ontario. Originally equipped with the L-19 Bird Dog, they soon received the CH-136 Kiowa light observation helicopter, as well as the CH-135 Twin Huey utility helicopter.

### ***Special Operations Aviation (SOA) Era...***

**Summer 1990** – A sub unit of 450 Squadron (Ottawa) was formed to provide dedicated aviation support to RCMP SERT (Special Emergency Response Team). This sub-unit was known as the SERT Assault Helicopter Flight. It consisted of three CH135, thirteen pilots, and six flight engineers.

**April 1993** – The SERT role was transferred to JTF2. 450 Squadron was reorganized with the retirement of Chinooks to 6 CH135 Twin Hueys while retaining the army support role. 450 Squadron attempted to “re-role”, going from a sub-unit size to a full size SAH (Special Aviation Helicopter) Squadron. Experience levels dropped as personnel were posted out and replaced with new members.

**August 1994** - 450 Squadron moved from 7 Wing Ottawa to CFB Montreal. Response time increased; experience continued to be posted out; training costs increased, and the physical separation from DHTC (Dwyer Hill Training Centre) negatively affected the SAH capability. The DHTC ALO (Air Liason Officer) position was established and an initiative began for a 450

Squadron sub-unit to be co-located once again with DHTC.

**April 1996** – An effort to stabilize and regain experience depth was initiated by posting experienced JASF (JTF2 Aviation Support Flight) Huey pilots back into 450 Squadron. Formalization of a JAS aircrew training course began. Longer tours of a minimum of 4 yrs were imposed, and a transition of personnel from 450 Squadron to a specialized flight formation at 427 Squadron in Petawawa was initiated.

**Summer 1996** – 427 Squadron assumed the responsibility of support to JTF2 with the creation of a SOA (Special Operations Aviation) Flight (B Flight).

**December 1996** – 427 Squadron transition to the CH146 commenced.

**April 1997** – DHTC began intensive training on Griffons. By July, 80% of the first wave was trained. The second wave of training began in August in anticipation of the first tasking that would use the Griffon.

**July 1997** – 427 Squadron retired the Twin Huey in July 1997, while receiving the last of the BELL CH-146 Griffon fleet.

**November 1997** – B Flight was deployed in support of the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) summit in Vancouver.

**December 1997** – C2 (Command and Control) relationships were re-evaluated between OC B Flight, the CO JTF2, and upwards to DCDS (Deputy Commander Defense Staff).

**September 1999** – B Flight was deployed to Gagetown in support of the Francophone Summit held in Moncton.

**June 2002** – B Flight was deployed to Alberta for OP (Operation) Grizzly during the G-8 Summit.

**October 2005** – At a 19 October 2005 Armed Forces Council, as part of the overall Canadian Forces Transformation initiative, the CDS (Chief of the Defence Staff) directed that 427 Squadron

be transferred to CANSOFCOM (Canadian Special Operations Forces Command) for OPCOM (Operational Control) with the Air Force retaining oversight of key processes required for the safe and effective generation of this specialized capability.

**February 2006** – 01 February 2006, 427 Squadron transferred OPCOM (Operational Command) to CANSOFCOM.

**April 2006** – B Flight received the CDS commendation for exemplary skill and outstanding aviation support to the increased tempo of JTF-2 operations and training.

**July 2007** – 427 nomenclature was formally changed to 427 SOAS (427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron).

**March 2008** – 427 SOAS expanded upon the B Flight expertise to form a more robust high readiness detachment-sized element as the integrated aviation component of the Immediate Response Task Force. The generation of an OOA (Out of Area) capability was also initiated.

*Ed. Note: A DND Recruitment Brochure further explains the role of the CANSOFCOM force and 427s part in it. The brochure cannot be accommodated here but it is available on the web site under NEWS.*



### **Basic Flying Rule #1**

Try to stay in the middle of the air. Do not go near the edges of it. The edges of the air can be recognized by the appearance of the ground, buildings, sea and trees. It is much more difficult to fly there.

# WE SHALL REMEMBER

**Captain R.(Ron, Pete, Stewie)G. Stewart – d: January 9, 2009**



Ron had a long satisfying career in aviation, beginning in 1956 with the RCAF. He completed an operational tour on his beloved Canadair F-86 Sabre on 427 Squadron, based at Zweibrücken, Germany.

After he left the RCAF in 1965, he gained employment with Air Canada in 1965, retiring as a Boeing 747-400 Captain in 1997. In his retirement, he took up the game of golf but, according to Ron, achieved no great success as a golfer. However, he enjoyed the game immensely, made possible by his close group of “golf buddies”.

*ED Note: Ron was a Squadron Flight Leader of a section of four Sabres. Twice a year in Sardinia, where we practiced live gunnery, it was necessary for each pilot to “qualify” by achieving at least 20% hits on the flag. One of Ron’s section was having problems achieving that magic 20%. Ron solved the problem. He and two others in his own section had already qualified so with a judicious bribe to the Armourers, he had them load all four aircraft with the same colour bullet load. No one could explain how the pilot having difficulty qualifying had suddenly achieved a 60% score....: I will always be grateful to Ron for that assistance.*

**Paul Walter Benson– d: November 24, 2008**

Service as a Wireless Air Gunner with 427 Squadron. Shot down in early 1944 and was a POW for the remainder of the war.

**F/O Wilfred E. Gillette – d: January 25, 2008**

Service as a Wireless Air Gunner with 425 (Alouette) Squadron, post-war he served with 427 Squadron.

**Vernon M. White – d: December 29, 2008**

Vern was a long time supporter of the Air Crew Association and 427 Squadron Association. He was Editor and co-editor of this Newsletter for several years and served as the Association’s wartime Historian. He served with 427 Squadron until he was shot down during a raid on Wuppertal in the Ruhr valley. It was the night of June 24/25, 1943 and he became a POW until the end of the war. After the war he became a long time employee of Bell Canada.

Vern was a very modest man and it was not until after he died that it was revealed to the Association by his wife, Enid, that he had a book written of his wartime experiences.



Although it was compiled and published by his niece for his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, the story was told by Vern, a natural storyteller. Among the many interesting facts about Vern's wartime career was that he was the owner of two Caterpillar pins.



Vern in early days.



Holding parts of his aircraft

*Ed. Note: Excerpts of Vern's book will be in future issues of ROAR and the book will eventually be transcribed to the 427 Squadron Association web site. On a different subject, I received this letter from Vern some months ago:*

Hi Wayne

Thanks for the schematics showing the routing and features of Harry of Great Escape fame. They are the best and most complete I have seen.

Harry, plus two other tunnels, Tom and Dick were under construction at North Compound Stalag Luft 3 (Sagan) from April 43 to March 44. I was a POW part of that time in another Stalag Luft 3 compound nearby:

Centre Compound ( about 200 yards west of (North Compound) July 43 to January 44 and then,

Belaria Compound ( about 3 miles east of North Compound from January 1944 until January 1945).

From February 1944, other POW camps in the latter stages of the war.

Canadian Wally Floody, George Harsh( an American in the RCAF), Fanshawe and a few other Brits were moved from North Compound to Belaria and I got to know them well.. They were ringleaders in the Great Escape project. In other words, this was about 6 weeks before the breakout. Whether the Germans suspected something — who knows? At any rate they were not in North Compound in March 1944 when the Escape took place. It was only after the war that Wally Floody and the others revealed their major involvement in what later became known as the Great Escape. Of course the rest is history and there have been several books, movies and documentaries produced in subsequent years. George Harsh, a convicted murderer, had a colourful background having served for 12 years on a Georgia Chain Gang prior to enlistment in the RCAF.

I attended Wally Floody's funeral in 1989. George Harsh passed away in the 1970's.

Vern White

To check out the schematics of H for Harry go to: [www.kerman94.com/tunnelharry.html](http://www.kerman94.com/tunnelharry.html)

B/A - F/O P. Lotz  
WO/AG - P/O F.J. Mechan  
MU/AG - F/L J.J. MacNeil  
F/O - L. W. Webb

## A WW II STORY

*Several months ago while reading INTERCOM, the Air Crew Association newsletter, I noted a letter to the editor (Winter 2007, page 76) from Frank Dennis in which he offered an article to INTERCOM that he had titled "Flying with the Canadians". I thought it might be of interest and decided to solicit a copy for us. This is part 2 of Frank's article; part 1 was in the last ROAR. The full article has been published on the Web site. Tracking Mr. Dennis was not easy but Vern White as usual got me on the right track with some information that allowed me to contact F/O Dennis. Both Vern's comments and Frank's articles are of interest and I've included both below.*

### ***Vern's comments:***

*By a stroke of good luck I am able to provide info on Frank Dennis. I have a few WW II 427 Squadron Battle Orders on file and there is one dated June 9, 1945 (well after VE-Day). At the time, 427 Squadron had 37 crews on the battle order. Do I ever wish we had those kinds of reserves in 1942! In May and June 1945 I believe they were flying military personnel back from Europe. At any rate, one of the 37 crews on the battle order had a flight engineer shown as P/O F. Dennis (no first name) and it was an all officer crew as mentioned in his letter. There are no service numbers shown so I don't know who was RAF. Most, but not all, flight engineers were Brits so it is quite likely that this P/O Dennis was RAF. The other crew members were:*

*Pilot - F/L W.H. Schmitt  
Nav - F/L G.S. Dunbar*

## Flying with the Canadians

### Part 2 (continued)

By F/O (R) Frank Dennis

A few days later after a little local flying...

### **To be continued.....**

*Part 1 of Frank Dennis's article appeared in the ROAR Vol. 2, No. 4. It is published complete on the web site.*

A few days later after a little local flying and while taxiing back to dispersals, Indian said "I think I'll practice some circuits and bumps" which I thought rather strange. He was the last pilot I thought would need such practice. On every landing he "greased it" beautifully and the way he taxied an aircraft further revealed his skill. Most pilots would use brakes to a greater or lesser extent when taxiing. Indian only used them to stop, rolling around the perimeter track at about 25 knots with an occasional blip on the throttles to negotiate bends; he was very self confident!

As we continued taxiing to our dispersal, we had to stop for a bowser. At this time the rest of the crew got out which rather puzzled me. As we continued taxiing Indian said "When I was flying at Croft I could take off in a Wimpy and turn inside the perimeter track at the end of the runway. I want to see if I can do the same with a Lanc." Not possible, I thought and wasn't too keen on the idea but Indian was adamant and determined to try saying "10 degrees of flap will do and get those wheels up the moment we've lifted off."

Off we went. Max revs and boost and near the end of the main runway Indian whipped it round in a near vertical bank at no great speed causing the old Lanc to vibrate badly with the port wingtip not so far off the deck. I thought we were "going in." He didn't manage to turn inside the perimeter track but

did turn inside the A1 which ran alongside at that point. Immediately, the Control Tower came over the R/T and said, "Hello, N-Nan, advise you save aerobatics until you get some altitude." Indian didn't like being told what to do and swore back at them over the R/T. With WAAFs in the Control Tower, I thought this was rather unwise, but Indian said, "I know what we'll do Shorty, let's nip over to Wombleton and have a bit of fun there." I didn't find this last remark very reassuring but off we went anyway, skimming just above the North York moors to Wombleton where the Halifaxes of the HCU were to be found. A few Halifaxes were in the circuit when we arrived and they found themselves being chased by a Lancaster being flown as a Spitfire! When Indian tired of this he proceeded to perform his vertical banks around the Control Tower until a rather elderly officer appeared on the outside veranda shaking his fist at us. I pointed him out to Indian who said, "Christ, I don't know him, we'd better be off, Frank," and so we did, back across the moors, very low with sheep running in all directions.

Of course, the news of our activities at the HCU had preceded us at Leeming with the Squadron Commander waiting for us. In his office he opened by saying, "I blame you Dennis for this mess." Quite taken aback, I replied by saying "Well Sir I wasn't actually flying the aircraft." "No," said the CO, "but if you had left the aircraft when the rest of the crew did, Indian couldn't have flown it either, could he?"

All I could reply was "At that point I didn't know what he was going to get up to." That wasn't accepted either. "You should have known something untoward was afoot," he said. "Anyway, you've broken so many rules, the obvious answer is to send you both to the Aircrew Disciplinary Center at Sheffield and we'll attend to the details of that tomorrow."

I certainly didn't relish a spell at Sheffield having heard what a harsh regime existed there. But I must admit we did things we ought not to have done, like flying a Lanc with just two crew, when Group rules were a minimum of four, pilot, flight engineer, navigator and wireless operator, using bad language

over the R/T, deliberately flying dangerously low, etc., etc. Although truthfully I thought it was all rather enjoyable! Fortunately, the following day, ops were on and maximum effort required, so we were told much to my relief "to put up a good show and we'll forget about Sheffield." The op was a daylight trip to Bremen. Briefly reflecting on the previous days events, I realized the rest of the crew, having already flown a tour with Indian, knew that he was up to some sort of mischief from the remarks he made about circuits and bumps. Also knowing that his HCU was at Wombleton, he obviously must have had a Flight Engineer there. I was told later that his F/E had refused to fly with him anymore. I wonder why?

Our next and last op on April 25 was on Wangerooze, Frisian Islands. Take-off at 15.05. Medium flak but with a sizable bomber force converging on a small target, the risk of slipstream problems was also sizable. I saw four Halifaxes go down and only two chutes open. So sad, such casualties on the last op of the war for 6 Group. We almost joined them when a Lanc flashed by diving vertically very close to our starboard wing, no doubt toppled in a slipstream. Pulling out of that with a full bomb load would have resulted in an enormous loss of height.

I continued to fly with Schmitt's crew until early June on various activities including flying back sick POWs from Europe as well as picking up full bomb loads from the various bases in 6 Group and dumping them in allocated areas of the North Sea and Irish Sea because they were too dangerous to be transported by road or rail. 427 Squadron at Leeming were given this duty because the other Squadrons were returned to Canada soon after VE Day whereas 427 would stay until November. One of the bomb dumps we cleared was at Croft where I met Indian's ground crew from his first tour. Their version of Indian's activities was not always compatible with what is mentioned about Indian in Kevin Wilson's book "Bomber Boys", but I won't elaborate on that !

I kept in touch with Stu Dunbar, the Navigator, who wrote to say that Indian was taken on by Trans Canada Airlines but didn't last very long. He was

told they wanted pilots who flew by the Rule Book, not by the seat of their pants. The last Stu heard of him he had gone back to “bush flying” in Northern British Columbia where he came from. I have no doubt he would be very good at that! The chapter closed in November 1945 when 427 went back to Canada with newly trained Canadian Flight Engineers.

For nearly eighteen months I had the honour of being among a great bunch of chaps, both in the air and on the ground. Unfortunately, many friends and colleagues paid the ultimate price for taking part in such a dangerous activity and I am always conscious of the fact I was very lucky to be one of those who survived.

F/O Frank Dennis DFM, Flight Engineer

## **Biography**

### **Weldon Moffatt, WAG (R) R203649**

Weldon was born and grew up in Regina. His interest as a boy was in building model airplanes and flying them in the local Armoury on Saturday mornings. He joined the Air Force in 1942 and was trained as a Wireless Operator & Air Gunner. He trained at No.3 WS (graduated 22 February 1944) and No.2 BGS (graduated 20 April 1944). He joined 427 Squadron in December 1944 and flew with the C.C. (Red) Collins crew until May 1945 when the crew volunteered for the Pacific Theatre. Weldon was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal. The citation reads. “...completed numerous operations against the enemy in the course of which [he has] invariably displayed the utmost fortitude, courage and devotion to duty. Flight Sergeant Moffatt completed twenty-seven operations and one hundred and seventy-one hours operational time on his first tour, completely on heavily defended German strategic and mining targets. His work has been outstanding as a wireless operator, and his co-operation, coolness and devotion to duty has contributed in a large measure to the success of the many sorties he has completed. His operational dash and cheerful confidence has instilled a high standard in his crew.”

After the cessation of hostilities, Weldon managed a Canadian Forces bowling alley at Eastern Passage, N.S. This did not appeal to him as an Air Force career and he requested discharge.

He went back to school to complete his education and then worked as a Branch Accountant for Westinghouse in Regina. He continued his studies in Accounting at night school and due to his success was hired first by Dowell and then later by Imperial Oil at various centres in Western Canada.

While working at Dowell he began a stock portfolio as a savings plan. Although this consisted of junior oil companies, later it was diversified and allowed him to retire early in 1976.

Today, Weldon finds himself busier than ever. After retiring, he started associating with Air Force veterans and aviation interested individuals. This has included many visits to reunions and to Pettawawa. He joined the Air Force Association of Canada and is now President of its Prairie Group.

In 1976, he began studying electronics and integrated circuits. As a result he was able to build himself a home computer before they were available in retail stores.

*Ed note: Weldon in addition to his other duties and hobbies is the Association's Saskatchewan Regional Director.*

## **DIFFERENCES**

### **Between A Radial Engine And A Jet Engine**

Round engines are commonly known as Radial engines. The piston Jugs are placed in a circle. Hence "Round" engines. Turbine engines are known as Jet engines. We gotta get rid of those turbines; they're ruining aviation and our hearing.

A turbine is too simple minded; it has no mystery. The air travels through it in a straight line and doesn't pick up any of the pungent fragrance of engine oil or pilot sweat. Anybody can start a turbine. You just need to move a switch from

"OFF" to "START" and then remember to move it back to "ON" after a while. My PC is harder to start.

Cranking a round engine requires skill, finesse and style. You have to seduce it into starting. It's like waking up a mistress. On some planes, the pilots aren't even allowed to do it. Turbines start by whining for a while, then give a lady-like poof and start whining a little louder.

Round engines give a satisfying rattle-rattle, click-click, BANG, more rattles, another BANG, a big macho FART or two, more clicks, a lot more smoke and finally a serious low pitched roar. We like that. It's a GUY thing.

When you start a round engine, your mind is engaged and you can concentrate on the flight ahead. Starting turbine is like flicking on a ceiling fan, useful, but hardly exciting.

When you have started his round engine successfully your Crew Chief looks up at you like he'd let you kiss his girl, too! Turbines don't break or catch fire often enough, which leads to aircrew boredom, complacency and inattention. A round engine at speed looks and sounds like it's going to blow any minute. This helps concentrate the mind.

Turbines don't have enough control levers or gauges to keep a pilot's attention. There's nothing to fiddle with during long flights. Turbines smell like a Boy Scout camp full of Coleman Lamps. Round engines smell like God intended machines to smell.

Anonymous

### **Presentation of Memorial Cross in Memory of Capt Colin Sonoski**

A presentation of the Memorial (Silver) Cross was made to Sharon Singleton, widow of Capt Colin Sonoski, and to Jenna and Liam Sonoski, Colin's children. There also was a presentation of the Memorial Bar and Scroll to Colin's father, Frank Sonoski. Capt Sonoski and Capt Juli-Ann (Jules) MacKenzie lost their lives and Sgt Mario Michaud

and Cpl Dave Pawulski were seriously injured on the 18th July 2002 in the tragic crash of a Griffon helicopter while on a search and rescue mission, north of Goose Bay, Labrador. The presentation ceremony took place at Branch 136 of the Royal Canadian Legion, Milton ON, 1330 hrs, 7 March 2009. A presentation for Captain MacKenzie will take place later this month.

Many of Colin's friends and former squadron associates attended the ceremony, (approx. 85). Among them were Major Mike Day, Captain Mike Csisztu and Mr. Sask Wilford from the Association. Sharon, his widow expressed her appreciation to everyone in a gracious and moving speech. We have pictures and they will be posted on the web site.

### **Hello Lions**

In January, I attended Ron Stewart's "last flight," after his lengthy fight with leukemia, then skin cancer. His younger son, Pete, a professional photographer had assembled montages of Ron's journey through life, and had photographed and enlarged a number of pages from Ron's log book.

The celebration of life was held at Niagara on the Lake Golf Club. It was packed with upwards of 200 friends, relatives, golf buddies, pilots and seven Lions comprising, Bob Hyndman (CF-104,) Garth Mawhinney, Larry Hill, Neil Lakins, Beth and Wayne MacLellan and myself.

A couple of amusing anecdotes were told, but the best was from Ron's own hand. Ken Bell read an article from the local newspaper which had originally been published after Ron retired from Air Canada in 1997. The text is shown below.

A good man gone, but not forgotten.

Roar, Dick Dunn

## **Maiden flight on two wings and a prayer**

**Ron Stewart**

Shortly after arriving on station at Chatham, N.B., in the spring of 1958, as a student fighter pilot in the RCAF, I was indoctrinated into the world of jet fighter aircraft by the senior pilots of the Sabre fighters, the proven combat aircraft of the Korean conflict.

What impressed me most was the implied statement of one ace that during his first flight, a real fighter pilot would deviate slightly from lesson 'plan 1' and climb up and punch it through the 'mach', or sound barrier. These were still the early days of jet flying and being 'swept-back and supersonic' was the first priority of almost every young aspiring fighter pilot. So, when the day of my first flight arrived, I was determined that I too would be a real fighter pilot.

After getting airborne and keeping the aircraft more or less right side up, I went into a peak climb for maximum height which, turned out to be 35,000 feet, being the limit of my tired old steed. I then performed my next 'should have known-better' trick ... a roll over into a full-throttle vertical dive, which scared me to the point that should have restored some self-preserving common sense, but didn't.

My attention was riveted on the mach meter as it approached the magic number 1 and then began to back off as we screamed down into denser air. Never having flown anything that didn't have a built-in speed restriction, I wouldn't have believed that one could travel close to seven miles in such a short time! As the landscape was rapidly filling the windscreen, I had only one option and that was yank the stick back as fast and as far as it would go.

The following sequence of events are somewhat hazy as my g-suit, my body and then the airframe were subjected to forces far in excess of any design limitations. When consciousness returned I was overjoyed to realize that by the grace of God, the transition from a suicidal dive to

horizontal flight had been accomplished. I didn't know and didn't want to know how close I had come to making contact with Mother Earth.

This miraculous recovery did not come without a price. During the extreme severity of this reckless maneuver, the elevators, undercarriage D-doors and, other assorted bits and pieces parted company with the aircraft! The right main gear-up lock snapped, allowing that gear to fall down, which no doubt acted as a speed brake of sorts. I had not deployed the regular-speed brakes, but then, one can't think of everything. Thankfully though, the important parts such as the wings remained in place, although subsequent inspection showed they were not the same shape as when I took off. The rest of that first and memorable flight ended with me in one piece, although the final approach and landing must have been a sight to behold.

My sturdy old Sabre deserved a somewhat more honourable end to her career than the one she met while in my care ... as a pile of scrap metal in Chatham's infield. At least one of us was able to walk away from the scene. A Canadair engineer later told me that the main gear-up locks were designed to withstand a G force in excess of 16.

Recently, when I told my six-foot teen-age son about this experience I pointed out that when I climbed into that Sabre that day, I too was close to six feet tall, and have been only five-foot-nine ever since.

*During the cold war period, Canada maintained 12 combat-ready squadrons in Europe and lost more than 100 flight-crew members of the RCAF in accidents. They are all buried in the Canadian Military Cemetery at Cheloy, France. After Europe, Ron had a long career as a commercial pilot and retired from Air Canada as a senior 747 Captain.. He submitted this story as one of a series of wartime experiences, as a prelude to the 70th anniversary of our General Nelles Branch 124 of the Royal Canadian Legion. Any service veteran interested in having one of his or her wartime experiences published, please contact Bill Newell, who is editing the series, at 905-892-9337 or wknewell@cogeco.ca.*

## Lost Trails

*The names below are only some of the Association members whom we are no longer able to contact. If you know of an updated address, even Email, for anyone on the list please notify Sask (wilsas@sympatico.ca) or myself (macway01@bigfoot.com). Also check out the complete list on the web site in News-Lost Trails. Thanks to all who have previously helped to reduce the list.*

MR.	G.R.	Gordon	Brown	WW II
Mr.	J.C.R.	Jack	Brown	WW II
Cpl.	G.	Gerry	Browne	Helicopter
MR.	J.C.	James	Cameron	WW II
Mr.	J.W.		Cook	WW II
Mr.	K.N..	Keith	Craig	WW II
MR.	E.A.	Edwin	Flemington	Sabre
MR.	K.W.	Ken	Goodall	Sabre
L/Col.	D.	Daniel	Guertin	Helicopter
MR.	B.E.	Billy	Lossing	WW II
MR.	D.E.	Donald	MacDonald	WW II
MR.	W.B.	Bruce	Mason	WW II
MR.	D.A.	Donald	McCann	WW II
MR.	G.W.	George	McIntyre	WW II
MR.	G.A.	Gervais(Red)	McKeown	WW II
Mr.	P.	Pat	Mitchell	WW II
MR.	E.M.	Ed	Radford	WW II
MR.	J.H..	James"Dusty"	Rhodes	WW II
MR.	M.	Mike	Russnak	WW II
Maj.	N.L.	Norman	Saulnier	Helicopter
Mr.	F.V.	Vern	Spruit	WW11
Mr.	H.	Harold	Widdess	WW II
Mr.	G.	Gordon	Williamson	WW II
Mr.	E.J.	Ernest	Wood	WW11

Ed note: We recently received this email from Mr. Laurie Cormier's son... for your information.

I am writing on behalf of my father, J. Laurie Cormier, who served with the 427 Lion Squadron during WWII at Leeming and was a POW from December 1943 until the end of the war. I ask that you remove my father's name from the ROAR mailing list. My father has been in a special care home for the last two years, here in Moncton. He has Alzheimer's disease and he does not read anymore. At 87, his physical health is fairly good, but his mind is definitely not that of the sharp man he once was.

The Dieppe Veterans Association dedicated a park in the town of Dieppe, N.B. in his name. They erected a beautiful granite monument in the center of the park, with inscriptions about Laurie being a member of 427 Squadron and a POW. They also engraved a picture of a Halifax bomber in the stone monument. The park sits across the street from the Moncton Airport Control Tower.

*Ed.note; Sgt. Cormier's aircraft "K" was one of two that went missing on the 20/21<sup>st</sup> December raid on Frankfurt. Fortunately all of his crew members were able to bail out but unfortunately were captured and imprisoned. The other aircraft, "C", and crew were not found.*

## KEEPER OF THE LION

The "Keeper of the Lion" is traditionally the youngest officer at 427 Squadron. The Lion itself is a bronze statue that was presented to the Squadron in 1943 by the president of the famous movie production company, Metro Goldwyn-Mayer, a company with close ties to the Lion Squadron. Legend has it that the Lion went missing for almost twenty years after the War before it was found being used as a door-stop by Wing Commander Davie Ross. Since that time, the Keeper of the Lion has had the duty of never letting the Lion get out of sight. Lately, the Lion spends most of its time in the Petawawa Base Museum, coming out for official Squadron functions such as the Gathering of the Lions and the Change of Command ceremony in 2008. According to Orders, the Keeper of the Lion has the following responsibilities:

- 1) Ensure the safety of the Lion. The danger does not come from other Lions, but from outsiders;
- 2) Bring the Lion to any official function and when requested by the CO;
- 3) Retrieve the Lion from the museum and return it to the museum following the function;
- 4) Ensure with museum personnel that only you and the CO can pick up the Lion and
- 5) Be aware of the museum opening and closing hours.

Thanks to Captain Matt Snider

## WW II Era Quiz Answers

How many runways and what were their designators at Leeming in 1944?

For bonus points, how long were they?

	<u>1940-41</u>	After late 1941
Runways:	17-35 @ 1750 yards	1950 yards
	04-22 @ 1200 yards	1650 yards
	13-31 @ 1100 yards	1400 yards

*Unfortunately no one got all the correct answers so I will keep the 18 year old single malt prize. Ed.*

## Smile

A golfing buddy recently recommended a book to me. He thought it might assist me with my golf game. After memorizing the best suggestions, I thought it might be worthwhile to share them with you. There is no charge for this valuable information. These are the Chapters I found most beneficial.

How to Line Up Your Fourth Putt.

How to hit a Nike from the rough when you hit a Titleist from the tee.

How to avoid the water when you lie eight in the bunker.

Using your shadow on the greens to maximize earnings.

How to rationalize a 7 hour round.

How to find that ball that everyone else saw go into the water.

Why your wife no longer cares that you birdied the 4<sup>th</sup>.

How to let a foursome play through your twosome without being embarrassed.

How to relax when you're hitting five off the tee.

When to suggest swing corrections to your opponent.

My apologies to non golfers. Talk to a golfing buddy to understand the wisdom documented here.



# LEEMING DEDICATION Photos

February 19, 2009

