

April 2014

# WINDSOCK

Vol. 26, No.8

## *A Canadian airman's story*

Weldon Moffatt looks back on his wartime days in aviation.

After he finished a presentation on his wartime RCAF career to our March 13 chapter meeting, Weldon Moffatt faced a question: why hadn't he talked about the dangerous bomber operations on which he flew?

Smiling, he replied with a question of his own: "Does the blacksmith worry about being kicked by the horse?"

This we interpreted as meaning that you take the dangerous and unpleasant stuff in stride while you do your job. As he'd said earlier in the evening, "We weren't scared — we were so damned busy that we couldn't be scared."

Those who looked through the papers Weldon brought with him will find a detailed list of the 27 operations on which he flew while serving with as a (wireless) radio operator with the RCAF's 427 Squadron.

His lot was to literally keep his head down at his station



**Weldon Moffatt**

inside Halifax and Lancaster heavy bombers and do his work.

"I had two contacts to make at regular intervals," he explained. "I'd send these weather reports to group," he said, referring to 6 Group, the all-Canadian bomber group within

Bomber Command.

"I had to contact Bomber Command at 40 minutes after the hour. I had to log the readings from the electrical panel ... it would have to be logged every 15 minutes."

He also had to monitor "Fishpond", code name for a radar system linked to the aircraft's H2S ground-mapping radar. Fishpond gave a radar picture of any other aircraft flying in the hemisphere below the aircraft that was carrying it, thus allowing nightfighters to be detected.

"All I saw on the things was a white blip. ... you'd watch what it's doing and that would tell you (if it was hostile".

"Things have changed a lot."

If "window" (aluminum foil) was to be dropped by the bomber (on the navigator's

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## NEXT MEETING

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2014

*“Supper With The Snowbirds”, a joint supper with 600 Wing of the Air Force Association and the RCAF’s Snowbirds*

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m.  
 Supper at 6:30 p.m.  
**Royal United Services Institute**  
 1660 Elphinstone St.

May 2014	Tentative: Terry Lyons on flying the CF-100 Canuck and tending the BOMARC missile
June 2014	CAHS national convention, Travelodge hotel, Regina
September 2014	TBA

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

Gary Williams (President).....g.m.williams@sasktel.net / 543-8123  
 Zoltan Bodas (Vice-President and Membership) zbodas@sasktel.net / 924-2046  
 Will Chabun (Newsletter editor)..... atlargewc@yahoo.ca / 533-6103  
 Grant Wilson (Treasurer) grant.wilson@sasktel.sk.ca / 584-5243  
 Gordon Stopanski (Secretary) gstopanski@highways.gov.sk.ca / 545-5005  
 Ross Herrington (Member at Large) rherrington@sasktel.net 789-1875  
 Dennis Casper (Member at Large) dennis.casper@sasktel.net / 586-5502  
 Tim Cheesman (Member at Large) tcheesman@accesscomm.ca / 584-7336

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**AVGAS is provided to convey chapter and other CAHS news, aviation news, as well as short items of aviation-related information members would like to share with the chapter**

■ Here’s a list of the speakers and tours planned for June CAHS national convention here in Regina:

### Thursday, June 5

Bus tour to 15 Wing Moose Jaw/Western Development Museum

### Friday, June 6

Rachel Lea Heide (British Commonwealth Air Training Plan Aerodromes Across the Prairies); John Higenbottam (Relief Landing Fields of the BCATP); Deana Driver: (The Walter Williams Story); Joel From (In Plain Site: A Biography of the RAF Airbase at Caron, SK); Bill Zuk (The inside story of a feature film on the BCATP)

### Saturday, June 7

Bill Cameron (A Prairie Boy’s War — From air cadets to a 38-year career in aviation)); Russell Isinger: The Avro Arrow: Why Dief made the correct decision; Linda Kort (A Year in Burma); John Chalmers (Who's in Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame -- with a focus on Saskatchewan); Richard Mayne (Keep them flying: The RCAF and the C-119 Flying Boxcar)

Evening banquet speaker: Todd Lemieux, chairman, Vintage Wings Canada

### Sunday, June 8

Optional visit to the annual open house of the Regina Flying Club

■ It's time for our chapter's annual “Supper with The Snowbirds!” event — which this year is also “Royal Canadian Air Cadet Night”.

It takes place on our regular meeting night,

MOFFATT *Continued from Page 1*

instructions) to deceive German radar installations), "I'd do it — and when the pilot had to take a pee, I had to take the soup can to him!"

All of which is why he didn't see much from his post deep within the aircraft fuselage. "There were only a couple of times when I put my head up in the astrodome to see what was going on — the fire at Magdeburg, I looked out on that."

That was one of the 27 operations he flew with 427 Squadron before the war ended. His period on operations began Dec. 26, 1944 and ended the next May. He noted that his third "op", around New Year's Day 1945, was a daylight raid, reflecting Bomber Command's confidence in its ability to operate once more in daylight against the Luftwaffe.

"Most of the German pilots, they were never 'screened', as ours were. Our fighter pilots would get so many hours, and then they'd be screened and they'd go to a training base. Then, after six months, they'd come back ... they (Luftwaffe pilots) were there for the duration. The only way they could get out would be to be promoted."

Weldon trained, successively on Wellingtons, and Halifaxes (24 OTU). Most of his operations were flown on the latter. April 1945 saw 427 Squadron and many other Canadian units in

6 Group, switch to the Lancaster.

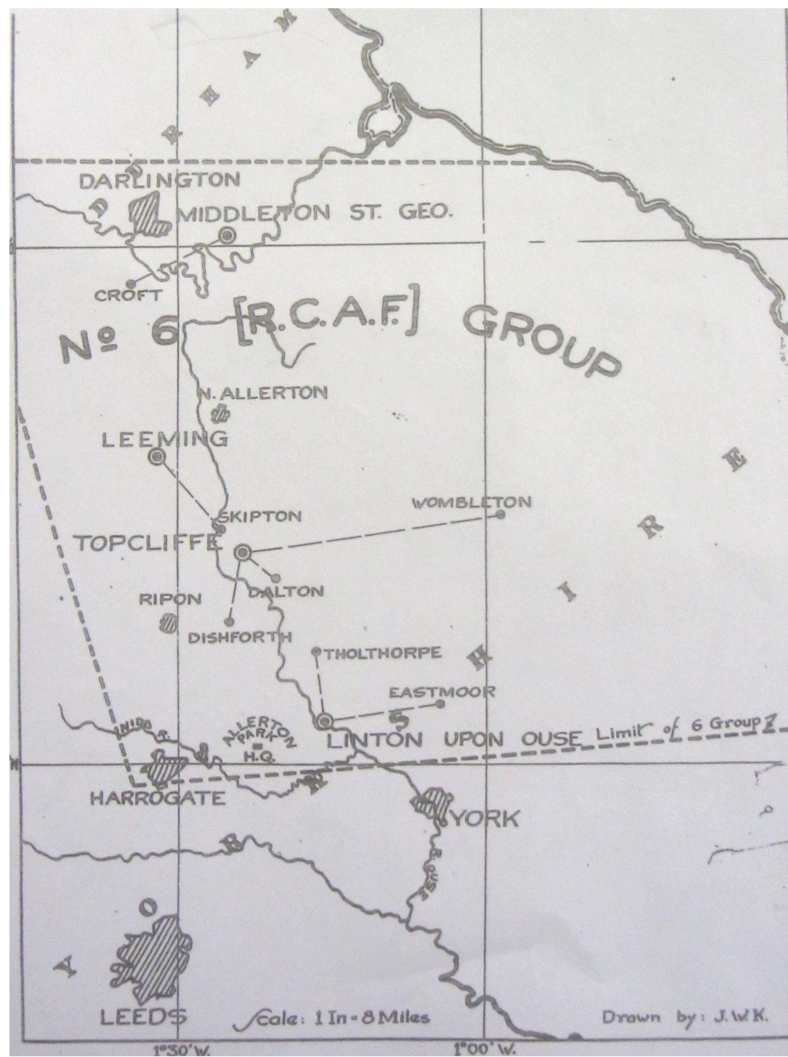
Whatever the latter's merits, Weldon said crews liked the Halifax for the size and location of its emergency exits. "It was a lot easier to get out of a Halifax. Lancasters had a main spar that went through the fuselage — and with your flying gear on, it was very difficult to get over the spar. Another thing was that the Halifaxes had a rest bunk in them!"

Overseas, wartime airmen lived in small groups in Nissen Huts (similar to what North Americans call Quonset Huts). The one in which Weldon lived as prone to leaking, he recalls.

For operations, each squadron generally put

up about 20 aircraft and crews. The mix of bomb types aboard an aircraft varied with the results that senior officers and planners wanted to achieve on a raid: high — explosive or incendiaries, for example.

Off-duty, airmen made their way to the Yorkshire towns surrounding their bases. A notable attraction in the city of York was Betty's Bar — which Weldon stated he never patronized, though he knew a lot about its practice of letting patrons scratch their names or initials onto large mirrors that now sit in its lower level, where they



**Map of RCAF bomber stations in Yorkshire during the last half of the Second World War. (Via Weldon Moffatt.)**

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can be inspected. "If you found a place where you enjoy it, you keep going back. You don't explore any further, I guess."

Headquarters of 6 Group was at a requisitioned English country house called Allerton Hall (nick-named "Castle Dismal"), where the commanding officer in 1944-45 was Saskatchewan-raised Air Vice-Marshall C.M. "Black Mike" McEwen, an ace (with 28 victories) from the First World War. A photo of administrative staff from this headquarters prompted Weldon to quip: "I'd never have believed that it took so many people to run 6 Group headquarters!"

The European war's end in May 1945 saw the RCAF offer a quick trip home, plus 30 days leave, to personnel who volunteered to fight in the Pacific against Japan. Weldon signed up but, after leave, found himself posted to RCAF Station Dartmouth, where there was little to do and he was made, against his wishes, manager of the station bowling alley.

One maddening incident came after he took over and was accosted by a returned serviceman who screamed, "You were managing this bowling alley while I was in France!" — and didn't wait to hear Weldon's story of his 27 ops over enemy territory.

He left this job by volunteering to help ferry RCAF Lancasters to a storage facility in Alberta. Weather forced stops in Montreal (Weldon still remembers the airmen's temporary home, the Venus Grille) and RCAF Station Gimli, Manitoba, where 50 bored members of the RCAF's Women's Division (WDs) were billeted, waiting for reassignment or discharge. "It was



**F/S Moffatt (right) with his crew (Photo: Weldon Moffatt)**

three days before we could leave."

Postwar, Weldon worked as an accountant. He retired early to travel — including a number of trips to squadron reunions and to his old 427 Squadron base at Leeming in Yorkshire, which remains an active RAF base.

This station has an interesting link to Canada: Weldon attended the 2009 ceremony in which two new accommodation blocks there were named for two wartime commanding officers of 427 Squadron, Group Captain R.S. "Bob" Turnbull and Wing Commander V.F. Ganderton. Turnbull (who hailed from Govan, northwest of Regina) rose from sergeant pilot to wing commander in only 11 months. That was a powerful statement about not only the rate of casualties in 1941-42, but Turnbull's leadership qualities.

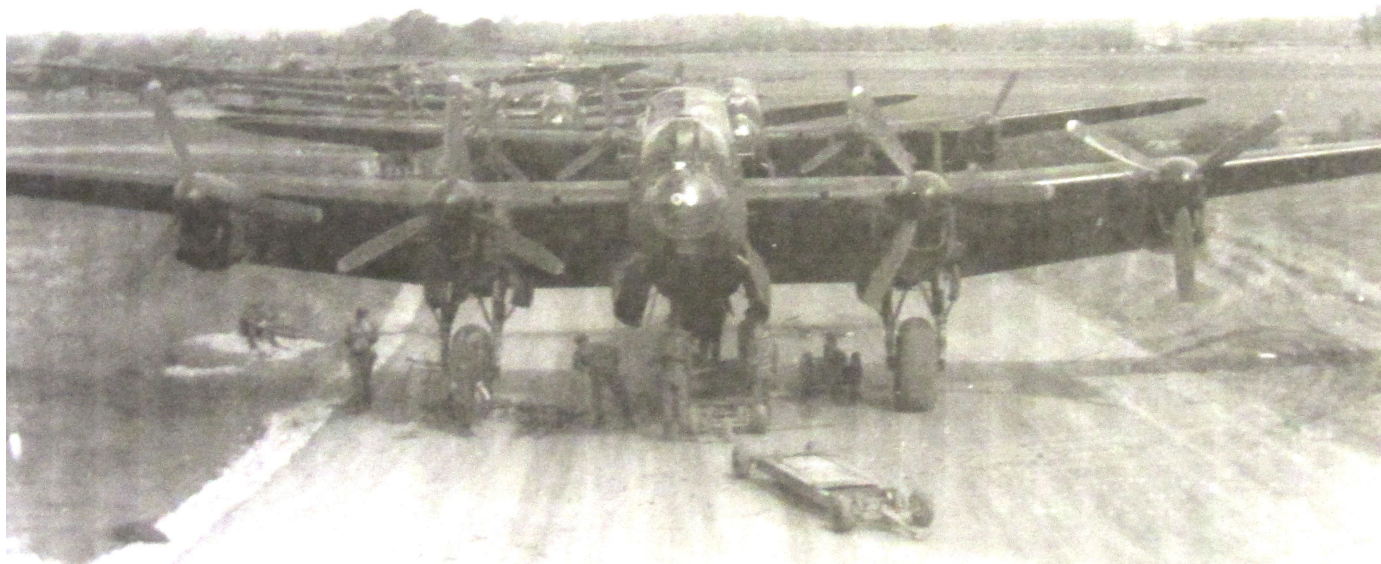
The website of the Bomber Command Museum of Canada at Nanton says Turnbull ended the war as a group captain and a 6 Group station commander. Postwar, he commanded RCAF Station Saskatoon, among other bases.

Turnbull was the CO in 1943 when 427 Squadron, whose motif was "Lion", received a lion statue from filmmaking giant MGM, which used the same animal as its corporate symbol.

This statue remains with 427 Squadron, now at CFB Petawawa, Ont., flying Griffon helicopters. Squadron alumni also got commemorative coins that supposedly give holders free admission to any MGM-owned theatre. Only a few years ago,

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**A long line of Lancasters waits for a new bombload at Leeming in 1945. As Weldon explained, RCAF brass sometimes changed its mind on the precise bombload it wanted aboard aircraft — and in this case, idled about 40 of them while armourers pored over the aircraft and switched bombs. (Photo via Weldon Moffatt)**

Weldon got to test this: he presented his coin at the MGM Empire theatre in London's Leicester Square, where a clerk scrutinized it, then called a manager. "We were put in a box seats!" he recalled.

Historical point: Of those fallen RCAF personnel whose remains could be recovered in Britain, most are buried in the cemetery at

Harrowgate. "It's quite an experience go there and see all the rose. You'll see seven markers —

all from the same crew."

We cannot sign off without noting that in 1947

Weldon received the Distinguished Flying Medal from the lieutenant governor of Saskatchewan, Reginald Parker.

The citation said: "Flight Sergeant Moffatt has completed 27 operations and 171 hours operational time on his first tour, completely on heavily defended German strategic and mining targets.

His work has been outstanding as a wireless

**Postings**

- 1 March 1943, Recruiting Centre, Regina, SK
- 2 March 1943, No. 2 Manning Depot, Brandon, MB
- 18 April 1943, No. 3 Wireless School, Winnipeg, MB
- 11 February 1944, No 2 Bombing and Gunnery School, Mossbank, SK
- 11 April 1944, No. 1 Y Depot, Lachine, PQ
- 28 April 1944, No. 3PRC Halifax, NS (disembark Ile deFrance 7/5/1944)
- 8 May 1944, No. 3 Personnel Reception Centre, Innsworth, Gloucestershire
- 22 May 1944, No. 7(O) Advanced Flying Unit, Bishops Court, Northern Ireland
- 4 July 1944, No. 3 Personnel Reception Centre, Innsworth, Gloucestershire
- 11 July 1944, No. 24 Operational Training Unit, Honeybourne, Gloucestershire
- 17 October 1944, No. 1666 Heavy Conversion Unit, Wombledon, Yorkshire
- 7 December 1944, No. 427 (RCAF) Squadron, Leeming, North Yorkshire
- 12 June 1945, No. 1 Squadron 662 Wing, Dartmouth, NS
- 5 November 1945, No. 10 Reception Centre, Moncton, NB
- 9 November 1945, discharged

**Crew members:**

Pilot	J5819	S/L	Collins, Clarence C. "Red"
Navigator	J40092	F/O	Hoare, C. G. T. "Colin"
Bomb/Aimer	J40078	F/O	Read, Harold M. "Harry"
WOP/AG	R203649	Sgt	Moffatt, R. W. "Weldy"
MU/AG	R278018	Sgt	Thornton, H. W. "Harry"
REAR/AG	R252549	Sgt	Shreve, W. L. "Bill"
F/ENG	1880260	Sgt.	Taylor, G. "Gil"

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Thursday, 10 April, at The Royal United Services Institute. Cocktails and schmoozing begin at 5:30 p.m. Supper (a turkey buffet) is at 6:30 p.m.

Cost: \$25 per person (pay at the door. Please confirm your attendance quickly to 600 Wing's Marion Chase at (306) 584-8477 or marionchase@accesscomm.ca

Here's a special idea from 600 Wing: Sponsor and host an air cadet for \$25. Alternately, you can sponsor and host a Snowbird for \$25. Sponsors sit at the same table with their guests.

If you wish to sponsor, contact 600 Wing president Sherry Burgess at (306) 535 4597 or b.sherry@sasktel.net.

■ Further to last month's item on the 2014 schedules of the Snowbirds air demonstration team and the RCAF's CF-18 demonstration team, here are their complete listings:

### Snowbirds

#### May 2014

Date	Location
17-18 May	Cape Girardeau, MO, USA
24-25 May	Colombia, MO, USA
31 May – 1 June	Fort McMurray, AB

#### June 2014

4 June	Portage La Prairie, MB
14-15 June	London, ON
18 June	La Baie, QC
21-22 June	Stephenville, NL
24 June	St-Georges de Beauce, QC
28-29 June	Waterloo, ON

#### July 2014

1 July	Ottawa, ON
4 July	Moose Jaw, SK
12 July	Yellowknife, NT
13 July	Peace River, AB
19 July	Cold Lake, AB
26-27 July	Whitecourt, AB
30 July	Kelowna, BC

#### August 2014

2-3 August	Camrose, AB
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6 August	Whiterock, BC
9-10 August	Abbotsford, BC
16-17 August	Bromont, QC
20 August	Greenwood, NS
23-24 August	Moncton, NB
27 August	Brantford, ON
30 August – 1 September	Toronto, ON

#### September 2014

2 September	Whitby, ON
3 September	Stratford, ON
6 September	Quebec City, QC
10 September	Port Stanley, ON
20-21 September	Hillsboro, OR, USA
27-28 September	Redding, CA, USA

#### October 2014

3 October	Moose Jaw, SK (Year-end Show)
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### CF-18 demo team

#### May 2014

17-18 May	Redlands, CA, USA
31 May – 1 June	Fort McMurray, AB

#### June 2014

4 June	North Bay, ON
14-15 June	London, ON
18 June	La Baie, QC
21-22 June	Stephenville, NL
24 June	St-Georges de Beauce, QC
28-29 June	Waterloo, ON

#### July 2014

1 July	Ottawa, ON
12 July	Yellowknife, NT
13 July	Peace River, AB
19-20 July	Cold Lake, AB
26-27 July	Whitecourt, AB

#### August 2014

8-10 August	Abbotsford, BC
16-17 August	Bromont, QC
20 August	Greenwood, NS
23-24 August	Moncton, NB



(AVGAS Continued from Page 6)

26 August – 9 September Payerne, Switzerland

### September 2014

10-15 September Kleine Brogel, Belgium

27-28 September Redding, CA, USA

■ Calgary CAHSer Stéphane Guevremont writes: “On 15 October 2008, Richard de Boer gathered us in a conference room at the Calgary International Airport and we all created an organization which helped save two precious Second World War combat aircraft in Calgary. We have almost reached our goal and we need your help to secure this deal permanently.

“If everyone can donate \$100 or more to our cause, we will have fulfilled our official City of Calgary financial requirements before the deadline of August 2014 and, thus, the rare wooden de Havilland Mosquito bomber and Canadian-built Hawker Hurricane fighter will be preserved forever in Alberta.

“Please consider donating online in just a few minutes through ATB Financial, which will add 15% of your donation to our cause, and make our dream come true!

“The results will be quite amazing: your \$100 donation will become \$15 through ATB Financial, and the City of Calgary will match this amount 1 to 1, so the CMS will receive \$230 in your name. But this is not over yet: you, the donor, will receive a tax receipt of 50% of your donation so, \$50 will get back to your pockets while we get \$ 230 in total. In the end, everybody wins!

“Use <https://www.atbcares.com/causes/124-813195658RR0001>

“You can also send cheques or money orders directly to our organization at <http://www.calgarymosquitosociety.com/donation.htm> or to The Calgary Mosquito Society, c/o Richard de Boer, President; #1021, 3235 - 56th Street N.E., Calgary, AB, T1Y 2X7.”

■ A recent note from CAHS Edmonton member John Chalmers informs us the annual induction dinner of Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame will be held in Calgary May 29, with Chris Hadfield as

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## Canadian Aviation Moments

**Question:** What was the reaction of Lieutenant-Colonel Sam Hughes, Canada's minister of militia at the outbreak of the First World War, to a proposal from the pioneer airman, engineer and inventor J.A.D. McCurdy for creating a Canadian air force?

**Answer:** “... in Canada, the minister of militia, Lieutenant-Colonel Sam Hughes, ruled the army without regard for existing channels of communication, opinions of his fellow cabinet ministers, or even those of the prime minister.

“At the outbreak of the war, Hughes met with the pioneer airman, engineer, and inventor, J.A.D. McCurdy. The aviator laid out a proposal to create a Canadian air force.

“Never one to understate his views, the minister decisively dismissed the supplicant. “My boy, the aeroplane is the invention of the Devil and will never play any part in such a serious business as the defence of the nation.”

**Source:** *Dancing in the Sky*, Page 16

**Question:** To what were RAF Bomber Command's activities limited during the first six months of the Second World War?

**Answer:** “British bombing policy was deliberately non-provocative for the first six months of the Second World War.

“Bomber Command's activities were limited to strategic reconnaissance, propaganda leaflet raids, and the destruction of enemy shipping in their home ports and at sea.

“Crews were repeatedly cautioned that the greatest care was to be taken not to injure enemy civilians, and that, for the present, there were no alternative bombing targets to the German High Seas Fleet”

**Source:** *No Prouder Place*, Page 24

**QUESTION:** What part did K.C. Irving of New Brunswick Irving Oil Fame play in the building of the Mosquito fighter aircraft during World War II?

(CANADIAN AVIATION MOMENTS Continued on Page 8)

(AVGAS Continued from Page 7)

guest presenter and speaker.

This black-tie gala dinner and induction is an annual event honouring outstanding individuals in Canadian aviation. It is the major fund-raiser for the Hall of Fame, and a charitable receipt is given for half the cost of the ticket. Anyone wishing to attend can purchase tickets by visiting the Hall's website at [www.cahf.ca](http://www.cahf.ca) and then clicking on "Click Here for Information" to place an order for tickets.

West Jet has again offered a 15% discount off regular prices. Only two tickets can be booked at a time but one can go back to the well as many times as one wishes until 250 round trip seats are booked under this offer. The promotion code is "HOF 15." Bookings can be made until May 14th or until the maximum seats have been allocated. A block reservation has been made for the Marriott Courtyard Calgary Airport at 1-877-515-4094, on or before April 29 to make room. It is just minutes away from the WestJet campus, where the induction ceremonies will be held. It will be served by a WestJet crew bus throughout the evening.

Being inducted are:

■ **Clive J. Beddoe**, a co-founder of WestJet, then chairman of its board

■ **Lorna V. deBlicquy**, who earned her private pilot licence before her 17th birthday and at 16 was the youngest person in Canada to make a parachute jump at that time. She eventually held licences for gliders, helicopters and multiengine aircraft, and was a flying instructor, bush pilot and DoT inspector — a role model for women in aviation.

■ **Robert P. Engle**, who in 1961 founded Northwest Territorial Airways and later was founding chairman of the Northern Air Transport Association, and;

■ **Frederick Moore**, who served in the 1950s as a test pilot in the RCAF and was instrumental in developing flight simulators for the F-86, CF-100 and CF-104. In 1963 he joined Northwest Industries in Edmonton, then in 1970 Okanagan Helicopters. He retired in 1991 as chairman of CHC's board of directors.

- by **Will Chabun**

CANADIAN AVIATION MOMENTS Continued from Page 7

**ANSWER:** "In 1938, K.C. Irving purchased Canada Veneers, a Saint John company in the wood products field. Among other government contracts, it manufactured fuselages for Mosquito fighter aircraft during World War II.

"Canada Veneers thrived on wartime sales to become the world's largest supplier of aircraft veneers. K.C. Irving went on to become one of the wealthiest entrepreneurs in Canadian history."

**SOURCE:** <http://bit.ly/1gxVhuG>

## QUESTIONS FOR NEXT MONTH

**Question:** What "first" of World War II did a tiny force of 10 Squadron Whitleys accomplish on the night of September 3/4 1939? Two Canadians (Robert Stevenson of Victoria, BC, and John Sproule of Brandon) MB, were part of this mission.

**Source:** *No Prouder Place*, Page 26

**QUESTION:** What was the original home base of the Golden Hawks when the team was formed in 1959 — and why was the team formed?

**SOURCE:** <http://bit.ly/1go7FMV>

**Question:** Which of the new RAF four-engine bomber types introduced near the beginning of WWII was disappointing — and why?

**Source:** *No Prouder Place*, Page 41.

-by **Dennis Casper**

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operator and his co-operation, and devotion to duty has contributed in large measure to the success of the many operations he has completed.

"His operational dash and cheerful confidence has instilled a high standard in his crew."

- **By Will Chabun**