



FERTE MANUS CERTAS

ROAR



427 Squadron Association

427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron

CO - L/Col Christopher Bray

427 SOAS Community,



Once again 427 SOAS continues to expand its presence around the globe. Summer 2025 saw the unit deploy to Australia for a large multi national exercise,

EXERCISE TALISMAN SABRE where we sent a rotary wing detachment and HQ element generation with our partners and allies. In preparation for this, 427's world class maintenance and logistical support generated 12 x CH146 Griffons to support various lines of task around the country and globe. Considering the scale of this, we are looking forward to publishing a photo of this 12-ship to commemorate this achievement.

The CE145C VIGELANCE continues to progress towards FOC . Over the Summer, the aircraft conducted its first transatlantic flight to the UK to develop this long-lost experience for 427 aircrew. Having the ability to self deploy organic ISR is a significant achievement and necessary requirement for the CAF.

HCol Leanne Ing

Fellow Lions



I share this message on the heels of another sombre Remembrance Day service in Cobden, Ontario, where 427 Squadron members joined

veterans, schoolchildren, and community members to honour those who served and sacrificed. It was noted that 427's affiliation with the Cobden Legion dates back well over 50 years, and the squadron's ongoing presence at the service provides a powerful reminder of the contributions being made today by members around the world.

It will come as no surprise that the squadron remains busy supporting a wide range of exercises and critical tasks. A key event this summer was the Change of Appointment for the SCWO. After a long and storied career in the CAF, outgoing CWO Jamie Lewis handed the reins to incoming CWO Adam Frey. I offer my sincere thanks to CWO Lewis for his dedicated service,

.Next Tactical Aviation Capability Set (nTACS) continues to progress. This project seeks to replace the CH146 with a set of capabilities and fleets to meet Canadian Army and CANSOFCOM requirements. 427 SOAS has received priority in the initial phasing of this project. We look forward to announcing the platform that will replace our CH146, but rest assured it will increase our range, payload, and provide agile deployability.

Lastly, we are happy to announce that The Gathering of the Lions will take place this coming April in conjunction with the RCAF Ball in Petawawa. Details will be made available shortly.

Sincerely,

The 427 SOAS Command Team

Ferte Manus Certas



during which he consistently prioritized the well-being of squadron members, and I look forward to working with CWO Frey in the months ahead.

As new members join the squadron, opportunities to build connection and institutional understanding remain critical. In October, 427 held its most recent Indoc Day, during which new members participated in an orientation program that included a live demonstration of key squadron skills in the training area, meeting the leadership team, touring squadron lines, and receiving briefings on key operational elements. It was encouraging to welcome so many motivated individuals ready to contribute to the next chapter of the squadron's story. October also included the squadron's annual Family Day, where family members visited the squadron, participated in brief flights, and met other families.

The next several weeks will bring a range of holiday social events—an important opportunity for Lions to gather, celebrate, and strengthen the bonds that are so essential to mission success. Looking ahead, the Spring will bring the next Gathering of the Lions and the RCAF Ball.

As part of the Honorary Colonel cadre, I have the opportunity to participate in a number of professional development activities led by the RCAF. These events often include briefings by key leaders on topics relevant to HCol responsibilities. One of these recent sessions featured LGen Jamie Speiser-Blanchet, who shared her perspectives on the priorities and challenges facing the RCAF. With the current focus on Canada's defence strategy, the next decade will see the RCAF undergo a significant institutional transformation. 427 will be at the vanguard of this evolution as the Next Tactical Aviation Capability Set (nTACS) program brings new platforms and capabilities.

As always, it is a privilege to serve as 427's Honorary Colonel. I look forward to connecting with many of you at upcoming events and supporting the squadron in the exciting year ahead.



BIO OF 427 SCWO - Chief Warrant Officer Adam D. Frey, CD



Hailing from Fort Saskatchewan, AB. Chief Warrant Officer Adam Frey enrolled in the Canadian Armed Forces Army Reserve in 1999, where he served part-time for seven years as a Mobile Support Equipment Operator with 15 Service Battalion, as well as a rotation in Bosnia-Herzegovina with OP PALLADIUM in 2003, attached to 2 PPCLI out of Winnipeg, MB. During this time, he completed his college diploma in Bilingual Business Administration and worked various jobs including ice delivery, car sales, warehouse foreman (his first time in a leadership role) and as an STS-04 civilian DND worker at 7 CFSD.

In 2006 he transferred to the Regular Force as an RCAF Traffic Technician. Since joining the Regular Force, CWO Frey has completed postings in Cold Lake under WLOG 2007-2010, Chilliwack as part of ASU Chilliwack and then 39 Svc Bn Det Chilliwack upon the ASU closure 2010-2014 (where he discovered his love of the outdoors), Valcartier as part of 5 Svc Bn 2014-2018, Borden twice as part of the Canadian Forces Logistics Training Centre 2018-2019 and 2022-2024, Petawawa as a part of CSOR 2019-2022 and Ottawa under CJOC HQ and then CANSOFCOM HQ in 2024-2025.

His tours since joining the Reg F include Camp Mirage as 2IC of 2 MAMS in 2009 supporting the Tactical Airlift Unit for TF Afghanistan; and as Task Force Movements Officer for the OP REASSURANCE LTF, based out of Poland at the time, and led by 3 R22eR in 2015-2016, returning briefly again later in 2016 supporting 1 PPCLI. He has completed various shorter work trips in such places as Guam supporting 443 Sqn, four times in Inuvik, Hawaii supporting EX RIMPAC 08, two Maple Resolve's in Wainwright and Cold Lake, two Maple Flag's in Cold Lake, as well as various locations all over Europe and North America.

On 5 August 2025, CWO Frey was appointed SCWO of 427 SOAS in Petawawa, ON. He is father to a remarkable daughter, Elizabeth Ossowska, who is living in Edmonton, AB; as well as an avid whitewater kayaker, mountain biker, backcountry skier and general nomadic adventurer.

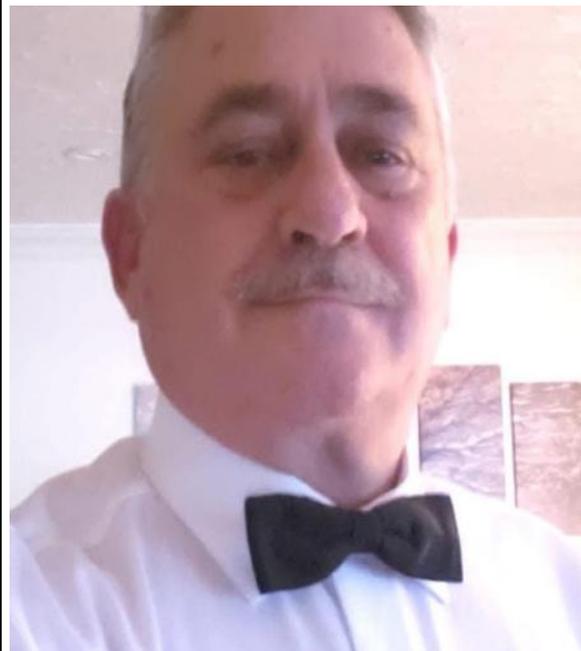
Stories/Biographies/Books Wanted

We need your input. Consider sending your stories, biographies, books or photos. As little or as much as you want. All posted mailed material will be returned to the sender. Email—macway01@gmail.com and if necessary request a snail mail address

Everyone has a story.

We Will Remember Them

At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them - Laurence Binyon



Facebook Quote from Ken Sorfleet:

With great regrets, I must inform you of the untimely passing of one of our own. Yves Grenier has left us for his final flight. Yves served at the Big 2, 433ETAC on CF-5s, Kiowas in the hey days of 444 in LaA hr, on Twin Hueys in 427 and , IIRC, a tour in Somalia, 403, and DCO and DCO and CO at 408.

End Quote:

Yve's time in Somalia with 427 Det is referred to earlier on the facebook site for 14 May 23 including his photo of two Twin Hueys spanning the equator, one north and one south while he led a det near Kismayo. A pilot's pilot, and great team player, Yves will be sorely missed but happily remembered, We join in sending our condolences to Teresa Jaskulska, families and friends.

Don Martinusen

August 30, 1935 - March 12, 2025



It is with great sorrow we announce the passing of Don Martinusen on March 12, 2025. He was born in Calgary on August 30, 1935. Don was a proud Canadian and Albertan. He was raised in the small farming community of Airdrie AB. He spoke fondly of his time growing up there and would share stories of the kinship of the farming community. Don met the first love of his life Donna at a local sock hop in the late 50's. They married and had 4 boys, he was a proud father to sons David (Syri), Ian (Dana) Jim, and Bill as well as proud grandfather to Jenna, Adam and Claire. Don joined the RCAF in the late 50's and served his country in Germany with 427 Squadron. While in the Airforce he developed many strong friendships that lasted his lifetime. After completing his military service he went on to fly commercially for Air Canada.

Complete obituary— [Here](#)



Col. (R) Walter Norman Pirie CD SSM October 12, 2025

We are deeply saddened to announce the passing of RCAF Col (retired) Walter Norman Pirie, age 83, on October 12th, 2025. Walt will be missed by his family and his many friends, both old and new.

Walt was born in Halifax, NS, November 3, 1941. He grew up next to the forests surrounding northeast Halifax and spent a great deal of his youth in the woods, becoming the youngest Queen Scout in Canada.

After graduating high school, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force at age 17. He flew F86 Sabres with 427 Sqn at the Zweibrücken NATO Air Base in West Germany (1961–63) and with 441 Sqn at RCAF Station Marville in France until Sep 1963.

Walt moved back to Canada as a flight instructor at Centralia, ON and Portage La Prairie, MB (1963–69), followed by 3 years as a Canadian Forces

Recruiting Officer in Halifax, NS and training in CFB Cold Lake.

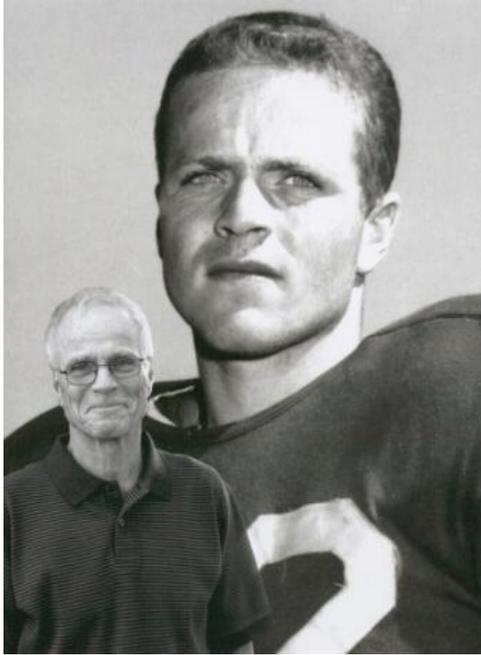
He returned to Germany as a CF104 Starfighter pilot with 439 Sqn at CFB Baden Soellingen (1973–75) and a Staff Officer at 1 CAG Headquarters in Lahr, Germany, (1975–77) where he was a member of Canada's winning team flying the CF104 as part of 4ATAF's team at the 1976 Allied Tactical Air Meet.

Walt returned to Canada as a CF104 Instructor with 417 Sqn in Cold Lake, AB, (1977–80). He then graduated from the Canadian Forces Staff College in Toronto, ON (1980–81).

He returned to Germany, as Deputy Operations Officer and Flight Safety Officer at CFB Baden Soellingen, Germany (1981–86) and continued to fly the CF104. He joined the 4th Allied Tactical Air Force headquarters, Heidelberg, Germany until his return to the National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) in Ottawa in 1986.

Walt was Head of the Canada / United States Section of the Directorate of Military Plans Coordination (1986–89). He completed his military duty as a Career Manager for Lieutenant Colonel Pilots, Navigators, Air Traffic Controllers, Air Weapons Controllers, & Aerospace Engineers (1990–93). —**Continued next page.**

Due to space ROAR constraints , the full obituary, a report on the funeral ceremony and photos are [available on the website here](#) .



Ted Hessel

January 14, 1934 - June 16, 2025

With
heavy

hearts, we share the news of the passing of Ted Hessel on June 16, at the age of 91. A beloved husband, brother, father, grandfather and friend, Ted was a man whose life was defined by service—to his family, his community, his country, and his alma mater. Ted began his life of service as a pilot with 427 Squadron flying F-86 fighters in the Royal Canadian Air Force, serving overseas in Europe before returning to Canada, where he turned his passion for leadership and learning toward a career in education. As a teacher and later a vice-principal, he shaped the lives of countless students with his belief in the potential of every child. Following his "retirement", Ted turned his sights

towards Western Athletics. A former Mustang athlete and lifelong Western sports enthusiast, Ted truly bled purple. He donated countless hours of his time and energy curating the JP Metras Sports Museum, preserving the rich history of athletics at Western. His tireless dedication helped honor and cement the legacy of countless Mustang athletes and coaches. Above all, Ted was devoted to his family. Those surviving him include his wife, Libby and his son Jeff (Amelia). The complete obituary is included on the website and includes also Ted's photo album which he took while in in Zweibrücken. Ted was also a proud member of the 427 Squadron Association.

Walt Pirie Continued: Walt transferred to the Air Force Primary Reserves and served as Air Command's Deputy Chief of Staff Personnel Liaison at NDHQ (1993–96) and as Air Command's Director of Personnel during the transition of the Air Command from Winnipeg to Ottawa (1996–97).

Col Walt Pirie retired from the Canadian Air Force with 38 years of service in November 1997. After retirement, Walt was contracted by the Canadian Air force to serve as the Air Force representative to the Canadian Forces Y2K Operational Readiness Program as the Canadian lead for Canada / United States bilateral readiness (1998–2000). He served as Special Advisor to the Chief of the Air Staff / Commander of AIR Command (2001–04), where he was responsible, among other things, for the coordination of the Air Force Honourary Colonel Program.

Walt was a member of the Executive of the 427 Squadron Association from 2013 and was also proud to be the Chairman of the Sabre Pilots Association of the Air Division Squadrons (SPAADS) from 2009 until his death. He was honoured to participate in many reunions, events and ceremonies commemorating the RCAF and celebrating his colleagues.

Walt appreciated the opportunities the RCAF gave him and his family. "I was part of the RCAF's Golden Age when we flew leading-edge fighter jets and defending against a global nuclear war was a priority."



John Rupert Trevor
6 August 1936 to 31 October 2025

With heartfelt sadness, we announce the passing of John Trevor at Chinook Park Care Centre in Calgary on October 31, 2025 at the age of 89 years.

John will be lovingly remembered by his children; Louise Trevor (Trevor) of Calgary, Michael Trevor (Elizabeth) of Calgary and John Trevor (Anne Marie) of Burlington, ON; two grandchildren Andrea Trevor and Kayla Trevor; his sister Eleanor Heintzman (Bernie); and his nephews: John Heintzman (Heather), Michael Heintzman (Angela), and Paul Trevor (Hilary). John is also survived by his sister-in-law Jane Trevor of Peterborough (wife of David Owen Trevor deceased). He was predeceased by his brother Hugh Trevor, his mother Dorothy May Trevor, his father Stanley Gordon

Trevor, and his brother David Owen Trevor.

John found his passion in flying when he joined the RCAF. During his nine years of duty, three years were spent stationed in Zweibrücken, Germany with the 427 Lion Squadron on Sabre jets. Upon returning to Canada he was stationed in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

In 1965 he joined Air Canada in Winnipeg and spent 31 years flying jets out of Winnipeg, Montréal and then Toronto. He had an impeccable career, which he loved very much. During these years, John spent 21 years volunteering for the Pilot's Union, with 17 of those years as the Union's administrator of the pilot's Air Canada Group Disability Insurance plan

John travelled extensively but had a fondness for Hawaii, and later in life, India. He also had a lifetime of volunteering for his church in different roles that included People's Warden, the Vestry, Board of Directors, and lastly management at Chambers Presbyterian Church in Calgary. John was a generous man with a great sense of humor and he loved a good glass of beer.

Thank you to the staff and nurses at Chinook Park Care Centre in Calgary.





Laying of the Wreath by the CO and SCWO



Squadron "Hats Off" in respect

November 11, 2025

427 SOAS on Parade

Remembrance Day—Cobden, ON

Helicopter Era



Kiowa Era

C&L?

or

“Wainbows and Ninja Terdles”

Lieutenant-Colonel (retired) Brian Houlgate (2025)

Living beside us in 1991 was a tough little guy always trying to keep up with his older siblings and neighbours. As he was about to start a new phase in his life, the first day of kindergarten, Catherine told him she liked his colourful book bag. Some of his friends were sporting brand new packs featuring the latest cartoon action figures. Stoically the little guy replied, “They got Ninja terdles, but I got wainbows.”

Sometimes we all get “wainbows.”

A decade earlier, I started a new phase as a Kiowa pilot. After experience-building, exams and flight tests, I upgraded from a Category III wingman to “Cat II” section lead on February 26, 1981. The next week we flew to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, on a unit exchange, where our Kiowas partnered with the 229th Attack Helicopter Battalion. We paired with American Kiowas as scouts, to lead their heavier AH-1 Cobra gunships to attack positions and locate targets for their anti-tank missiles. Now, on March 21, we were supporting the expansive 101st Airborne Division field exercise throughout the Fort Campbell training area. Tasks were handed out to our Kiowa sections, such as to spot for artillery or join attack /scout teams, but I was tasked to lead a C&L mission – Command and Liaison – “wainbows.”

Command and Liaison wasn't about commanding. It was about supporting communications by transporting commanders or their staff; radio-relay; or delivering printed orders and plans, rolls of map overlays, and time-sensitive packages of codes all around the "battlespace." If it sounds to you like being a taxi, Uber, or delivery driver, that's exactly what it was.

Reconnaissance, artillery and attack helicopter scout missions involved Nap of the Earth (NOE) tactics and contact with the "enemy," but C&L was all rear-area, out-of-contact work so *not* at the top of our fun-and-excitement list.

This C&L mission on March 21, 1981, was my first as a "lead." It was couched as a "spot recce," but that's just taking someone to see a spot themselves. The CO of an air assault infantry battalion wanted to check a site for an upcoming operation and was bringing his Sergeant Major or another officer from his battalion, I forget which. The CO would be in my back seat, while his colleague rode with my wingman, a more junior Cat III pilot, Lieutenant Murray Morrison. My observer was the very experienced and skilled Master-Bombardier Donny Pearse. Donny became an artillery air observer so far back we used to say he started on balloons!

The spot this CO wanted to see was forward in his brigade sector but still not in a contact zone. It was in lightly undulating terrain, cloaked in deciduous woods with many gaps and clearings along the way. After we got briefed at their battalion Command Post (CP), Murray and I advanced to our target, hugging the contours to make best use of cover. We found observation positions and popped up occasionally for the passengers to get a better view. As far as we could see, this treed area, tinted with the pale green buds of spring, was clear of any threats to us from the ground.

And then things changed. On our left, half a kilometre north of Murray's position, a mob of twelve or more Blackhawk assault helicopters marked with Opposing Force symbols burst over the trees heading into our rear area! We had to assume we were spotted but also had to report and respond to this event. We spun left and followed the formation while standing back and trying to conceal our movements. Donny studied the map and identified a couple of probable landing zones (LZ) along their track, while the commander in my back seat called on his battalion frequency to report the incursion.

We found the LZ just as troops were disembarking into their initial assault positions, so Donny flipped to the artillery frequency to call for a "fire mission." Then we were jumped. Two A-10 "Wart Hog" attack jets appeared over the trees. Coming from the bad guys' side, they were an escort for the air assault force to provide firepower when needed and to keep helicopters – big and small – from interrupting their party. They saw us and were coming for us. *Fight's on!*

So, what's the plan? You've seen adventure movies where the heroes run away from an attacking aircraft, bullets kicking up dust beside them until they dive behind some rock or flimsy log for "cover." *Hmmm. Let's do some math here.* Even old fighter planes in the movies would have been flying at, let's say 200 to 215 knots, or a nice, round 400 kilometres per hour. These A-10s would be chasing us at around 300 knots. *Now let's think about the bullets.* The old aerial machine guns fired up to 13-millimetre diameter bullets with a muzzle velocity of at

least 850 metres per second. The powerful cannon on the A-10 fires weighty 30-millimetre rounds at a muzzle velocity of over 1,000 metres per second. So, I ask these heroes, *how fast do you think you can run?* You don't need a computer, a slide rule or a seventh grader to figure out you can't outrun the airplane or its bullets! In fact, by running away all you do is prolong the time you are in their target area...well, not if you are physically running on your feet; your speed would be irrelevant, but at maybe 100 knots in a helicopter, if you try to run away you just give the bad guy a bit more time to get a great shot at you.

Nope, the thing to do is to face them. By staying low and charging toward the attacker you force them to depress their nose to keep you in their sights – the closer you get, the harder for them to do that. Also, you offset to one side of their flight path so they must turn toward you; then as they do, dive off to the other side to make them reverse their turn. It helps to be climbing as you race toward them so you can dive away more sharply and with more speed.

These tactics work well against most jet fighters. They can't out-turn a helicopter. If I had a missile, I could fling it at them from a hover and just pivot around to keep them in my sights. That assumes I saw them first. Other jets are designed for higher speed and haven't the manoeuvrability or endurance to outlast helicopters in this game if we stay low. Their air-to-air missiles have many limitations when fired toward the ground, so they normally need to line up on us for a gun shot. Using these tactics, if we see them early enough it should be very difficult for them to engage. Of course, that all assumes that we've been trained and know what we're doing.

I had been briefed on this in past and had done a couple of defensive moves against a CF-5 fighter, but this was my first practice in earnest against A-10s. I was doing ok – not well, but ok. This was all new to Murray, so I was trying to coach him on one radio channel, while Donny was trying to press on with his artillery mission on a second, and the battalion commander was trying to update his CP on a third, while fighting the urge to throw up. The back seat of a Kiowa was not a comfortable perch during turbulence or manoeuvring, and I was diving toward the trees, yanking up to face the attacker, then reversing my turn with a snap, diving downward again and then jerking back to follow the A-10 in his turns.

The A-10 is not like other aircraft. With its long straight wings, it is designed for tremendous low-level manoeuvrability but is not as fast as other fighters. It has a lot more fuel or "play time," so it can stay in the fight longer and fight closer to the ground than the other zoomies. It has an amazing gun system, so large that the aircraft was designed and built around it. This GAU-8 has seven rotating barrels firing its huge 30-millimetre projectiles at a rate of 3,900 rounds per minute. When an A-10 is supporting you and you hear it overhead firing its cannon, the sound is unmistakable – a low, throaty roar of awesome power. This gun is used to bust tanks and other armoured vehicles, and the A-10 carries 1,100 rounds of that cannon ammunition. Each round is full of kinetic and explosive energy – getting hit by them would absolutely shred my Kiowa.

You've heard of "dogfighting," where fighters turn and twist trying to get on each other's tail to fire their guns. This term goes back to the dawn of aerial combat in the First World War. The term "catfight" was chosen to describe helicopter air-to-air fights. Whereas a

dogfight might break up with one or both participants trying to run away when low on ammunition or fuel, the helicopter can't run away. It has to stand its ground and face its adversary instead of trying to chase its opponent's tail. Picture a cat rearing up on its hind legs, hissing and howling, eye-to-eye, thrashing and slashing away with its front claws.

Our problem was we didn't have any claws, just hissing, whining, and poking with soft little paws. All we could do was try to prevent getting shot long enough until either the opponent tired – not happening with these A-10s – or until we lure them toward our own ground-based air defence systems. If we stayed low to the folds of the terrain and trees, the attacker would have to manoeuvre above us, and even the A-10 doesn't like to hang around in missile zones. On this exercise, we didn't seem to have that layer of protection, at least not at that moment.

I held my own for a while, but I lacked proper training and experience. Then his wingman joined the fight, so I had two of them turning against me and I didn't last long after that. Finally, one got nose-on to me and flashed his landing light to indicate I was in his gunsight, and it was *done*. I flashed back at him to acknowledge my defeat and wagged my "wings." We all "knocked it off" and that ended our mission.

We discovered much later that our Soviet opponents weren't quite as formidable as we had thought. Although they also had a powerful attack aircraft created to mimic the A-10, their pilots did not have the same training and were not allowed freedom to employ flexible tactics like our A-10 opponents. Good news! The A-10s were really on our side!

Over the years, I worked with A-10 pilots a lot – not just nose-to-nose in the air or by controlling their attacks over the radio, but in person during training sessions and mission debriefs. Along the way I discussed this event and bemoaned our lack of defensive weapons. The US Army and Marines eventually armed some of their helicopters with air-to-air missiles, for both self-defence and a possible task to provide air defence to a ground force. We weren't going to get missiles like that for our Kiowas, but we did seriously investigate replacing a couple of the basic rockets in our six-rocket launcher with new, Canadian CRV-7 hyper-velocity rockets of the same size. Equipped with warheads containing five tungsten-steel anti-armour darts, we would launch a "wall in space" in front of our attacker, sort of like firing a big lethal shotgun.

We never did get those rockets either, but one A-10 pilot said that even firing our existing "dumb" rockets would totally change his perspective: "Hey, if I see some smoking tube blast off from your helicopter toward my face, I will immediately assume it's a missile, and my instant reaction will be to go defensive and break away from you." This was very good advice on tactics; we should probably have always been armed with our rocket pods. As a rule, they were only put on when practicing Forward Air Control of bombing missions on a live-fire range. I hope we would have been more aggressive and flexible if we had taken the Kiowa to war. Another benefit to having the rocket tubes on the Kiowa was it made the rear seats inaccessible, meaning we couldn't do C&L taxi missions! In the end, we didn't "survive" the fight that day, but we learned a lot. "Command and Liaison" just didn't seem an honest representation of the mission, so my simple logbook entry says, "Rear Area Security/Spot Recce, 1 Pax [passenger], 2.6 hours."

It turned out I got "Ninja terdles" after all!



Gagetown, New Brunswick.

April 21, 1981.

(Rhe Probert photo)

An A-10 Warthog during my Forward Air Controller (FAC) course – one month after the engagement in Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The GAU-8 cannon can be seen at the front, sort of like a tongue sticking out at you.

(Rhe Probert was an Airborne Regiment coursemate of mine on the FAC course and is a continuing friend and colleague)



Sussex, New Brunswick,

June 4, 1981

(Brian Houlgate photo)

I was section lead and detachment commander for a reconnaissance exercise during RV81. On the right is my observer, Master-Bombardier Donny Pearse. In the middle is my wingman, Lieutenant Murray Morrison, and on the left his observer, Master-Corporal John Cucinelli. John and I went through the Kiowa OTU together. When we got to 427 Squadron in April 1980 Donny, the veteran, had a big role in “shaking the new guy out” of us. I don’t remember who had been Murray’s observer in Fort Campbell in March.

Note the Special Service Force (SSF) crest on the side of the Kiowa.



Meaford, Ontario,

October 29, 1980

(Brian Houlgate photo)

Me (on the right) with my section lead, Steve Purton



The Royal Aviation Museum of Western Canada

The Lockheed F-104 Starfighter is a single-engine, supersonic interceptor developed by Lockheed for the United States Air Force and subsequently produced under licence by U.S. allies worldwide for military purposes.

The Canadair CF-104 Starfighter (CL-90) was a modified version of the Lockheed F-104, built under licence in Canada by Canadair Ltd. at Cartierville, Quebec.

On July 2, 1959, after the cancellation of the Avro Arrow program, the CF-104 was selected by the Royal Canadian Air Force to replace the Sabre Mk.6 for use with its Air Division in Europe. Canadair produced 200 CF-104 Starfighter aircraft for the RCAF to employ within a Nuclear-Strike and Reconnaissance capacity, as Canada's contribution to international peace-keeping efforts.

The CF-104 Starfighter served NATO for 25 years during the Cold War Era and is one of the most iconic Canadian-manufactured military aircraft. Its Orenda J79-OEL-7 engine was capable of 15,800 pounds of thrust with the afterburner. It was an aircraft built for a nuclear strike, as it could slice through low-level turbulence. The CF-104 Starfighter still is the fastest RCAF aircraft of all time, setting many world altitude and speed records. It is one of the few aircraft in history to have held three world records simultaneously for speed, time to climb, and altitude.

Those who flew the CF-104 Starfighter loved the aircraft, often referring to it as either the "Silver Sliver" or, more commonly, "The Zipper." In addition, there was an RCAF demonstration team for many years that called themselves the "Deadeye Zips." In 1986 the RCAF replaced the CF-104 in the European theatre with the CF-18 Hornet.

The Canadair CF-104 Starfighter 12703 (703) featured within the museum's Military Skies



exhibit has a remarkable history. On August 14, 1961, it was the first Starfighter to take flight in Canadian airspace. After this historic flight, in 1962, 703 entered into service with the RCAF, flying missions between Quebec and Cold Lake, AB, until 1963. In January 1964, the RCAF stationed 703 in a NATO support role in Marville, France.

After nearly a decade in service, in 1972, following cutbacks to Canada's European peace-keeping commitments, the RCAF sold 22 CF-104 aircraft, including 703, to the Royal Danish Air Force (RDAF) who gave it the new serial number R-704 (since they already had an R-703 in service). For the next 12 years, 703 continued to serve with the RDAF in cold war defence before being withdrawn from service in 1984.

The aircraft's story doesn't end there. In 2011, Stephen Pajot, Curator and Operations Manager of the Canadian Starfighter Museum, purchased Starfighter 703. Mr. Pajot's passion for the CF-104 began in his childhood. His father was in the RCAF. He recalls watching the powerful CF-104 Starfighters shoot down the runways during takeoffs at 4 Wing Baden-Soellingen, Germany, and Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake, Alberta. For Mr. Pajot, a retired Air Canada mechanic and honorary member of 417 Tactical Fighter/Operational Training Squadron based in Cold Lake, Alberta, losing a Canadian historical artefact like CF-104 Starfighter 703 to a scrap heap was an unacceptable option.

Mr. Pajot and his restoration team, composed of Eric Groth, and Al Holmberg, spent seven years meticulously restoring 703 to how it looked in 1966. Members of the Canadian Starfighter Association were major donors and supporters of the restoration of 703.

For the next three years, 703 was the star attraction at Mr. Pajot's Canadian Starfighter Museum at St. Andrews Airport in St. Andrews, Manitoba. In 2021, Mr. Pajot made the difficult decision to close the Canadian Starfighter Museum. Determined to find the Starfighter a new home, he secured a loan agreement with RAMWC for the aircraft to become the showpiece of the museum's Military Skies exhibit for many years to come.

Currently, only ten other CF-104 Starfighters are on display across Canada. Starfighter 703 is the only Starfighter on indoor display in Manitoba. Starfighter 703 is sponsored by Mr. Jim McManes in honour of the memory of his father Frank McManes.

Inspired to serve his country, in 1941, Frank McManes enlisted in the RCAF and became a flight instructor on the Harvard aircraft a Typhoon combat pilot. During his service, Frank was stationed in many places across Canada and Europe. He retired from the RCAF at the end of as a Flight Lieutenant with a Distinguished Flying Cross.

The Starfighter exhibit will feature a plaque with Frank's fascinating life story.

SPECIFICATIONS

A102

Engine:

The Orenda Engines-built J79-OEL-7 rated at 10,000 lbs. static thrust dry and 15,800 lbs. s.t. with afterburner.

Internal Fuel 5,750 lbs – Total with tip and pylon tanks 10,495 lbs.

Performance:

Maximum speed (dash): 1550 mph (Mach 2.35) at 40,000 feet,
915 mph (Mach 1.2) at sea level.

Climb to 30,000 feet in 1.5 minutes.

Service Ceiling 58,000 feet

Zoom Climb capability 90,000 feet plus! (A USAF F104C reached 103,395 feet in December 1959)

Weights:

13,909 pounds empty,

21,005 pounds loaded (clean),

28,891 pounds maximum takeoff.

Dimensions:

Wingspan 21 feet 11 inches

Length 54 feet 9 inches (58 feet 3 inches with pitot head}

Height 13 feet 6 inches

Wing area 196.1 square feet

Source: <http://canadianstarfighterassociation.org>



427 F-86 (CL-13) ERA



Back in the Day

In 1957, the Korean War had been over for three years, but the Cold War was heating up fast. Canada once again had its volunteer forces at the front lines. A lot of young Canadians were part of that effort. At the time, sixteen F-86 Sabre squadrons were stationed across Europe—Marville and Grostenguin in France, Zweibrücken and Baden-Solingen in Germany. By 1958, the Sabre force was cut to eight and CF-100s replaced an F-86 squadron at each base.

It was, in many ways, an ideal period. Canadians were respected by our allies and even by our former enemies. We excelled at the annual Allied Tactical Guynemer trophy shoot, and our American colleagues at regional USAF had nicknamed the hundred-mile-wide corridor from Paris to Munich “Sabre Alley.” Still, we all knew the CF-104 was coming, and the beloved Sabre would eventually be retired to the junkyard.

By 1959, life in Europe was good for Canadians—though not so much for the Germans, who were still rebuilding their shattered economy fourteen years after their war. For a lot of us, nineteen-year-old Canadian pilots, life felt extraordinary. Imagine being allowed to fly a frontline fighter and push it to the limits: high speed low-level flying, 2 plane, 4 plane, battle formations, live firing exercises in Rabat or Sardinia, and air fighting practice. Deployments of the squadron to other NATO members Bases two or three times per year added to one’s motivation to be and do the best they could. It was exhilarating, almost intoxicating.

We often joked that we should have been paying for the privilege instead of being paid. Of course, that attitude might have changed quickly if someone had actually started shooting at us.

Day to day, our lives revolved around training. We ran border exercises, sharpened our air combat skills against other squadrons, and even against anyone who strayed too close. Our cine gun cameras had some excellent videos. Off duty, we honed our skills at ping pong in the squadron or practiced crud skills in the Mess. Once a month, we pulled “Zulu”—a twenty-four-hour alert. The Sabres covered daylight, the CF-100s took the night. Four aircraft sat outside the hangar, already hooked up to ground starters, parachutes laid out on the wings. When Yellowjack radar scrambled us,, we had to be airborne in two minutes flat. Another four Sabres on squadron alert had a five minute airborne target . If the balloon ever went up, the whole squadron would launch.

For we single men, home was a ten-by-twelve-foot cubicle with a door for privacy. The Mess was our living room, where a pint of beer cost five cents, a Coke ten cents, and fabulous meals were served. We were lucky to have Herr Nussbaum, our Batman, who kept the barracks and the “Lions Den” tidy. No one knew what he had done during the war, but he had adopted us—a rotating band of young, loud Canadians—and cared for us like a mother. He scolded when necessary, advised although we didn’t ask, and wisely turned a blind eye when the situation called for it.

The RCAF hiring process at the time was built on a theory: offer short-term commissions to kids straight out of high school, train them as pilots, and when their commission ended, send them back to civilian life—ready to be recalled and quickly retrained if war broke out. One of the reasons we had so many nineteen and twenty year old pilots. Those who were “older” and showed career potential, or who already held university degrees, were offered permanent commissions and could plan a future in the military. But when the RCAF began extending those short-term commissions, the writing was on the wall. We didn’t see it then, and so it came as a shock in 1964 when the announcement was made that the RCAF would merge into the Canadian Armed Forces and 500 pilots and navigators were suddenly deemed surplus.

Luckily, the airlines were hiring. Canadian-trained pilots were in demand across Canada, the U.S., Australia, Ireland—you name it. At Air Canada, the hiring process was incredibly simple for ex-RCAF pilots. You picked up the phone, in whatever country you were in, called the Flight Operations Director in Montreal (everybody had his phone number), and the conversation lasted less than a minute. “How many hours do you have?” he’d ask. If you had over 2,000, you were told to get a Transport Canada medical, and you were hired. If you were overseas, tickets to Montreal would be waiting at your point of entry. In the years that followed, ex-RCAF pilots filled the ranks of Canadian airlines.

Looking back, it was a remarkable time. We were given the right tools, the right training, and the support of the people back home. For a young Canadian being part of #1 Air Division during the Cold War years was an unforgettable experience.

HEAVY BOMBER ERA



1942-1946

It is appropriate on this date to focus and remember those who had lost their lives while serving and I was recently contacted by a couple who had been researching a missing airman. I will replicate their cover letter here and follow up in the coming months, by posting on the website, with the results of their multi years search which comprise almost forty pages of information, photos and historical research.

George Arklay Ritchie was George Duncan's best friend and both were in the RAF Volunteer Reserve when war broke out.. In early 1942 they were called up and posted to RAF Scampton with George Ritchie posted away in early 1943.

When George Duncan passed away in 2002 it was without knowing what had happened to his best friend and therefore George Duncan's daughter Ruth Bethia and myself started a search. We could only find one G.A. Ritchie, Sergeant Flight Engineer, 968282 but he was listed as being with the RCAF 427 Lion Squadron based at Leeming which did not add up as we thought he was at Scampton. But we kept on looking.

We found his grave in Choloy-Menilot on Friday 9th September 2005 and finally were able to identify him as RAF. We were at the Belgian Grand Prix and decided to drive to Choloy to see if we could identify him. We did ! He was in collective grave 1.J.2 with four other crew members of Halifax III B ZL-Zebra. But we did not know who he was and so we so searched for a photograph.

We visited him many times as we passed by over the years and laid flowers to remember him. On the last visits on June 10th and 15th 2025 we laid photographs of Dundee and Broughty Ferry where both George Ritchie and George Duncan were from.

On 11th September, the day of the Belgian Grand Prix in 2025 we were still searching records and what did we come across ? A passing out photo of B flight, No.3 Squadron, No21 L.T.W. dated August 1943. And there on the 3rd row, 5th from the right was George Arklay Ritchie !

George Ritchie had applied for Flight Engineer Training and was posted to Torquay in Devon in May 1943 and upon passing out was posted to RCAF 427 Lion Squadron at RAF Leeming. It being wartime George Duncan did not know this.

Sadly on a raid on Frankfurt on March 18/19, 1944 ZL-Zebra was shot down and George Ritchie lost his life. On the same raid 427 Squadron also lost ZL- G George and the pilot, Flying Officer Thomas Wilson Cooper J/23519 of Ontario lost his life holding the plane steady until all of the rest of the crew got out. So we also tracked him down and he is in Rhienberg Cemetery near Kamp Lintfort in Germany in grave 8.D.16, so we visited him and laid flowers on two occasions in 2025. Z Zebra had been shot down near Trier and G George near Hillesheim and the crew remains were relocated after the war. So, for us, the circle is complete as we now know who George Arklay Ritchie was and we were able to also remember Thomas Wilson Cooper and their ultimate sacrifices. We will continue to visit and remember them.

They should never be forgotten,
Ruth Bethia Duncan & Leslie Johnstone
September 1st, 2025

Playing Firemen

A fireman was working on the engine outside the station, when he notices a little girl nearby in a little red wagon with little ladders hung off the sides and a garden hose tightly coiled in the middle.

The girl was wearing a fireman's helmet. The wagon was being pulled by her dog and her cat.

The fireman walked over to take a closer look and said, "That sure is a nice fire engine"

The little girl replied, "Thanks."

The fireman looked a little closer. The girl had tied the wagon to her dog's collar and to the cat's testicles.

The fireman said, "Little partner, I don't want to tell you how to run your rig, but if you tie the rope around your cat's collar, I think you could go faster."

The little girl paused for a moment then replied, " You're probably right, but then I wouldn't have a siren."