

# FLY NORTH

Volume 13, Number 3:  
July - September, 2021

50<sup>th</sup> Issue

## NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

*Preserving and celebrating the diverse history of aviation in the northwest, through the collection and preservation of artifacts and stories of the persons and events that made this region unique in aviation history*

### NOAHC News -----

#### 50<sup>th</sup> Issue of Fly North.

This issue is the 50<sup>th</sup> NOAHC Newsletter since it first appeared in March 2009.

The following appeared in the first issue:-

“Our aim is to provide information on the activities of the Centre. It is expected that each issue will contain reports on current events, including information on meetings and material acquisitions, as well as interviews with aviators and others involved in aviation in the northwest whose stories will become part of the Centre’s Archive. In addition, there will be short articles on various aspects of the aviation history of northwestern Ontario, book reviews and letters from our readers”.

For the most part, *Fly North* has been true to that mandate and plans to continue doing so in the future.

The editor wishes to acknowledge and thank members and others for donations such as pictures, articles and other contributions to various issues over the years. That is the type of help that every newsletter editor likes to receive.

#### *New book by Robert Grant – African Skies*

Accomplished author of many books and articles on Canadian aviation (and also a member of NOAHC), Robert Grant has written a new book on his experiences in Africa. It includes not only accounts of his aviation activities, which were often hazardous, but also his encounters with the horrors of overcrowded refugee camps and the perils of everyday life in that part of the world. Copies of *African Skies* are available at the Centre.

He also authored an article on the prototype Noorduyn Norseman, in the March 2021 issue of the aviation magazine *FlyPast*.

#### *DC-3 model*

Local model builder John Kuemmel with the support of Steve Melnick of Lakehead Models has completed a model of a DC-3 in the livery of Superior Airways. It is a magnificent addition to NOAHC’s model collection. The next issue of *FlyNorth* will have pictures of the model

#### *Memberships – Jim Milne*

Since NOAHC was founded, Jim Milne has dealt with the organization’s memberships, recording names, addresses and e-mails, while keeping tabs on annual dues and maintaining accurate membership lists. It is these lists that are used to send out the newsletters every quarter.

After more than a dozen years Jim has passed the membership duties to Archie Gribben.

NOAHC sends its thanks to Jim for his dedicated work on memberships over the years, and recognizes the significant contribution that this has made to the success of the organization.

#### *Donation of Picture by ReconAir*



Warren Green (r) presents NOAHC VP George Holborn (l) with a picture donated by Roy and Debbie Leuenberger of Recon Air. It shows a line-up of DHC 3 Otters waiting at Recon Air for conversion to Turbo Otters. The company is a world leader in this conversion process.

(See *FlyNorth* 13/2 for more on Recon Air)

#### *The Ballad of William McRae*

Dave Hadfield, retired Air Canada Captain, pilot for Vintage Wings of Canada and brother of the astronaut Chris Hadfield has written and performed a ballad as a tribute to Bill McRae whose autobiography was published by NOAHC last year. Well worth watching on the web at:-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CiObdhnPnWQ>

### Inside this issue:

2. David Cowan
3. Recent Donations
4. Previous Issues



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## ***Remembering the Marathon Paper Company and Pays Plat Outfitters***

Following the publication of the article on “Pays Plat Outfitters” in the January-March issue of *Fly North*, NOAHC received an e-mail from David Cowan, who was born in Port Arthur in 1939 and grew up in various logging camps in the Thunder Bay area. Between 1946 and 1950 David lived at Stevens, Ontario where his father, Sol Cowan was Fire Superintendent for the Marathon Paper Company’s timber limits, which extended over an area of approximately 2,400 square miles from Marathon on Lake Superior to the CNR rail line to the north and incorporated the watersheds of the Big Pic and Little Pic Rivers. Sol Cowan had direct access to the Company’s flying assets, most of which were supplied through Colin MacMillan of Pays Plat Outfitters.

David had his first flight in 1945 at the age of six, when the family of four flew to Geraldton in the company Fox Moth so that his pregnant mother could visit the doctor. It was not the ideal introduction to flying. The flight was rough, the pilot got lost in a snowstorm and his mother was sick into his father’s bush hat, the only substitute for a sick bag that was available. That did not put David off flying and he often went along with his father and other company employees when their work took them to different areas in the timber limits.

Between 1953 and 1957 he worked summer jobs on Marathon logging operations, before going on to become a Mechanical Engineer. His career as an engineer took him to northern Labrador, back to Terrace Bay and then to Montreal as a consulting engineer to the pulp and paper industry.

David started flying recreationally in 1960, training in an Aeronca Champ, on skis, wheels and floats at the Thunder Bay Flying Club with instructors Jim McLaren and Emerson Bates and mechanic Ron Kyle. Over the years he owned a J-3 Cub and an Aeronca Sedan and despite his bumpy start as a 6-year old, he eventually accumulated more than 16,500 flying hours in his flying career.



*The Cowan family at Ramsey Lake in 1945. Sol lying on the dock, Anna with back to camera, Michael standing and David poking in the water with a stick. The plane is the Fox Moth in which David had his first flight. It was lost in a crash at Cirrus Lake in July 1947*



*Sol Cowan (r) with Louis Kaboosa, his helper for most of his tenure with the Marathon Corporation*



*The Beaver being loaded with fire-fighting equipment at Caramat Camp 51 (from the Marathon Courier 1954)*



*The Marathon Corporation DH-2 Beaver pictured in the July/August 1954 issue of “Maralog”, the company newsletter. Oscar Sideen, well known as a pilot in the north-west is at the bow of the floats, with Benny Esquiman in the foreground. As a child and teenager, David Cowan had several flights in this plane and when he moved to the Seattle area in 1999 he found that it was still around, sitting near the shore of Lake Sammamish in Washington State.*

*All pictures courtesy of David Cowan*

**Our corporate supporters...**

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**SUPERIOR SHORES GAMING ASSOCIATION**

NOAHC's monthly bingos will resume shortly at the Superior Shores Gaming Association on Memorial Avenue. The returns from these events make an important contribution to the Centre's revenue.



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**Recent Donations to the Centre**



Commercially produced metal model of a Laird LC-200. The full-size aircraft was used by Canadian Airways in an Instrument Course set up in 1936 to improve the instrument flying qualifications of their pilots. The model was donated by Ray Buffington



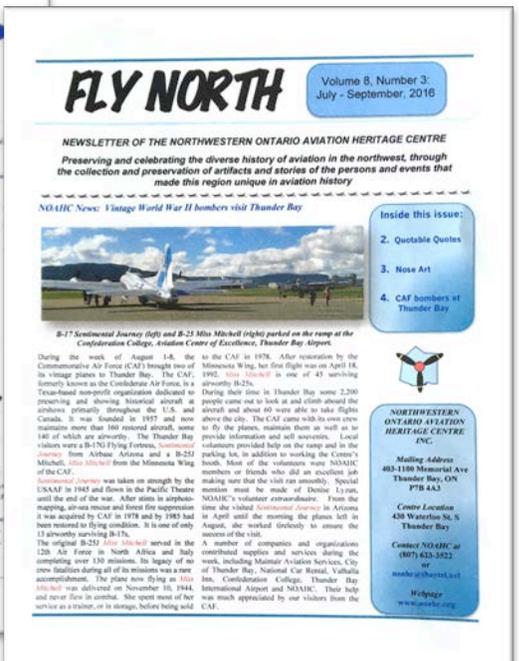
NOAHC now has on display two marker cones on loan from the Duke Hunt Museum, thanks to Jean Mayo. The cones were used as runway markers at Bishopsfield in the 1930s when the landing strip was used by the Fort William Aero Club and by Can-Car



Volume 1, Number 1  
January-March 2009



Volume 1, Number 3  
July-December 2009



Volume 8, Number 3  
July-September 2016



Finding Can-Car built aircraft  
Volume 12, Number 1  
January-March 2020



Remembering early aviators  
Volume 8, Number 4  
October-December 2016



Advertising NOAHC merchandise  
Volume 9, Number 4  
October-December 2017

The complete series of Fly North can be found on the NOAHC webpage at [www.noahc.org](http://www.noahc.org)