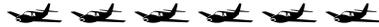




Fly North

Volume 6, Number 1:
January-March, 2014



NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO AVIATION HERITAGE CENTRE

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 - Postscript

Bomber Command Clasp

At the Veterans' Appreciation Day held by NOAHC in November 2013, two of the veterans, Gord Stinson and Bill Turner were wearing a small clasp in the shape of a four-engined bomber reminiscent of a wartime Lancaster or Halifax. This RCAF Bomber Command Clasp, attached to their Canadian Volunteer Service Medal, represents a rather belated recognition of the service they provided as members of Bomber Command during World War II. Other groups had been awarded clasps or bars to their medals for service in specific branches of the military or for participation in specific events. There was a clasp for fighter pilots who took part in the Battle of Britain, a clasp for Canadians who fought at Dieppe, one for those who survived the battle for Hong Kong and the Atlantic Star for those who served during the Battle of the Atlantic, but nothing for those who had flown with Bomber Command. Bomber Command had casualty levels unmatched by any other branch of the military, with a death rate of 44.5%. Of the 125,000 aircrew who served during the war, almost 56,000 were killed and



The RCAF Bomber Command Clasp can be seen attached to the ribbon of Bill Turner's Canadian Volunteer Service Medal

an additional 18,000 wounded or taken prisoner. More than 10,000 of those lost in action were Canadians. Despite the undoubted courage and determination required to fly through the cold and dark, night after night, being shot at from the ground and from the air, the survivors left the service with no recognition of what they had been through or for what they had contributed to the war effort.

Only now, some 70 years later has that situation been rectified. Why did it take so long? In short it can be blamed on politics. Questions of the effectiveness of bombing techniques and the level of civilian casualties were raised - the results of the Luftwaffe bombing of Rotterdam, Warsaw, London, Coventry and Clydebank apparently forgotten. By the end of the war, also, it was becoming clear that the U.S.S.R. was about to replace Germany as the new enemy. That being so, politicians perhaps considered it inappropriate to honour a group which had been so involved in the defeat of this new-found friend. In the political twists and turns by which former allies became enemies, and former enemies friends, the contribution of the airmen of Bomber Command to the Allied victory was lost in the shuffle. Whatever the real reason for the lack of recognition, the result was a sad disservice to a group of young men who came forward when they were needed and courageously did what was asked of them. With the award of the Bomber Command Clasp, if somewhat belatedly, that disservice has at last been put right.

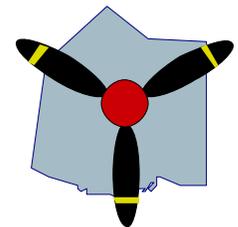
Harvey Friesen: With the death of Harvey Friesen at age 65, Northwestern Ontario has lost one of its most successful airline operators. Starting with two floatplanes, along with his brother Cliff he built Bearskin Airlines into the largest scheduled operator in the region with 16 Fairchild Metroliners and 300 employees. Last summer the company celebrated its 50 anniversary, a significant milestone in the regional airline business. NOAHC extends its condolences to the Friesen family and to Bearskin.

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Kapuskasing Airport

The following article was written by Julie Latimer, curator at the Ron Morel Memorial Museum in Kapuskasing and originally published in November 2012

Mayor Spacek recently brought the September issue of Air Canada's *enRoute* magazine to my attention because the airline is celebrating 75 years in the air and Kapuskasing is mentioned a few times in the issue in connection with Trans-Canada Air Lines (TCA). Kapuskasing became the hub for TCA on December 1, 1938 and continued to be so until 1957.

So, with this in mind, I thought I'd write an article about our airport and its place in local and aviation history. In the museum's research file, besides a timeline of facts relating to our airport, I found copies of letters between various federal departments including that of Agriculture, of National Defence Civil Aviation Branch and of Transport, and some from our own Smith Ballantyne, Superintendent of our Experimental Farm.

The original agreement for the development of our airport dates to August 15, 1933 and was signed between the Departments of Agriculture and that of National Defence, whereby Defence was granted unrestricted use of lots 28 and 29, Concessions 13 and 14 in the Township of O'Brien. One year later, this agreement was changed to give National Defence unrestricted use of lot 27 south of the railroad tracks.

In letters dated 1934, Smith Ballantyne expresses his frustration that the grazing land for the farm's cattle was being taken away from the Experimental Station for the airport. Superintendent Ballantyne states that these lots were "cleared by us years ago at quite a sacrifice as we simply did not have the money to do it, but I did some

each year and eventually got it cleaned up".

Smith was not being difficult on purpose; he understood the government's need to build an airport and runways, but his chief concern was the experimental farm. He also understood the need to fence the airfield "in order to keep the livestock off the runways...it would be a serious matter if stock were on the runways when planes will be landing".

After having written the above from my research, I received an email from Lloyd Leonard, a Kapster, with articles he found in the New York Times online archive. One was titled "More Fields For Canada: 21,000 Relief Workers Build Airports to Rush Mails Between Coasts" by James Montagnes. In the article, Kapuskasing is mentioned, along with Cobalt and Nakina, as being in "Northern Ontario, the most dangerous section of the route".

Originally published on August 4, 1935, the article says that the Canadian Government "is rushing to complete her transcontinental airway so that by the Summer of 1936 European mail" can reach each coast in as little as three and a half days.

As part of the Dominion's unemployment relief program, single unemployed men are clearing bush to create 114 emergency landing fields across Canada with about 25-miles between them. The men are housed in camps and receive regulation army rations. This project lasted from 1933 to 1936.

Other notable events include: runways paved in 1937; designated for military use on December 23, 1939; Kap Flying Club starts in 1976; 860-feet added in 1980; and in 1984, the present terminal was built. Our airport deserves our appreciation because of its rich history.



A Trans Canada Airlines DC-3 at Kapuskasing Airport, probably in the late 1940s. Kapuskasing was on the TCA northern transcontinental route which staged through North Bay, Armstrong and Sioux Lookout in Northern Ontario. The route was over some of the most forbidding country in Central Canada and was eventually superseded by the Great Lakes route between Sault Ste Marie and Fort William

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Building the Bakeng Deuce: Aviation began with aviators building their own machines. With advances in technology and the growing complexity of aircraft, as a result of industrial and military requirements, that became less and less common. Today there are few aviators who build from scratch, but there is an important sector of the aviation industry that provides kits from which small planes can be built. Since the mid-1950s the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) has encouraged the construction of these home-builts - as they are called - often through EAA Chapters established across North America. One of these Chapters was located at the Kapuskasing Flying Club, which in the 1970s took on a project to build a Bakeng Deuce. A parasol wing monoplane, the Deuce was designed by a former Boeing engineer, Jerry Bakeng and marketed for homebuilding. It won the Outstanding New Design Trophy at the 1971 EAA Fly-in at Oshkosh, Wisconsin and was still in production in 2011. The aircraft was configured as a two seater - one pilot, one passenger - with two open cockpits and a fixed tail wheel. The fuselage was constructed of welded steel tubes with the forward part skinned in metal and the rear in fabric. The wings had wooden ribs and spars, fabric covered and removable for transport or storage. Its Lycoming O-290 engine gave it a cruising speed of 180 km/h.

Unfortunately the Flying Club folded (*it has since reformed*) before the plane was complete, but four of the members, Robert (Bob) Laberge, Julien Proulx, Phil Gerard and Gaston Labelle, continued with the project. Most of the building took place in Julien Proulx's garage at the Kapuskasing Experimental Farm where Julien was a vet. Gaston welded the steel tubing for the fuselage, Phil worked on the woodwork for the wings and Bob on the fabric covering for the wings and fuselage. After almost a decade in the making the Deuce was finally assembled at Kapuskasing Airport in 1982 and registered as C-GPLL. It seems that Bob Laberge, manager of the airport at the time, was the only one of the four to fly the plane. Gaston Labelle had received his license on the Cessna 150 with its tricycle landing gear and never felt comfortable with the idea of flying a 'taildragger'.

C-GPLL is still on the Canadian Civil Aviation Register, now in Quebec and one of five Canadian examples of the type. It can be seen in the heading photograph in the Wikipedia entry for the 'Bakeng Deuce'. Now in a new paint scheme, it is as elegant as ever and a fitting tribute to the workmanship of the four men from Kapuskasing who originally built it more than three decades ago.

(With many thanks to Diane Labelle, daughter of Gaston, who provided the information and pictures for this piece)

The Bakeng Duece - a Kapuskasing home-built

C-GPLL prior to the addition of its fabric covering on the wing and the fabric and metal skinning on the fuselage. The wooden ribs and spars that make up the wing and the welded steel tubes of the fuselage can be clearly seen.



Following its construction C-GPLL is test run before receiving its final paint job

The completed Bakeng Duece in flight over Kapuskasing in 1985, piloted by Bob Laberge, one of the builders