

FLY NORTH

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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 -----

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Red Lake Norseman Festival

George Holborn, NOAHC Vice-President, attended this year's Norseman Festival. He reports that it was another resounding success for the communities of the Red Lake area (Red Lake, Balmertown, Cochenour, and Madsen). Its rich aviation history is celebrated every year and draws attendees from near and far.

Visiting the NOAHC booth were aviation enthusiasts from Wisconsin and Minnesota as well as throughout Northwestern Ontario. They scooped up all of the Norseman T-shirts in addition to some of the other merchandise we had to offer. Many visitors were again curious about the Centre and hoped to drop in the next time they were in Thunder Bay.



The NOAHC booth at Red Lake, shared with the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association.

Gordon Stinson 1922-2018

On July 5, 2019, family and friends of John Gordon Stinson, attended a Celebration of his Life at St. Paul's United Church, in Thunder Bay. NOAHC was represented by members of the Board.

Gord grew up in Port Arthur, Ontario and at the age of 19 enlisted in the RCAF.

Following his training he was posted to 434 Squadron, RCAF - known as the Bluenose Squadron. He flew 39 missions as pilot of Halifax bombers during his wartime service, was wounded and awarded the DFC. He was the last survivor of four RCAF veterans honoured by NOAHC on Remembrance Day 2013. (see *FlyNorth* vol5/no4) His account of his time in the RCAF was recorded on DVD by NOAHC and can be viewed on request at the Centre.

NOAHC extends its condolences to Gordon's family.



NOAHC Intern: Jonathan Sheppard

In September 2018, NOAHC hired Jonathan Sheppard, a recent MA History graduate from Lakehead University. During the past year he has made a significant contribution to the Centre, through such activities as research into local aviation history, contributions to the newsletter and a public presentation on Can-Car. Using his electronic and computer skills he enhanced the hands-on, visual aspects of several of our exhibits and his ability to get the best out of the flight simulator was much appreciated by many visitors to the Centre.

Unfortunately, our funding has run out and Jonathan is moving on. NOAHC thanks him for his work over the past year and wishes him all the best in his future endeavours.

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Buffalo Airways visits the Centre



'Buffalo Joe' (l) and Mikey McBryan (r)



Liz Wieben and Joe McBryan talk about bush flying in Northern Ontario



Mikey McBryan flies a DC-3/C-47 on the NOAHC flight simulator

Perhaps best known for the reality television series, *Ice Pilots NWT*, Buffalo Airways has provided air service to the north since 1970 in the form of passenger and cargo flights as well as water bombing services and flight training, using more than 40 aircraft. Many of the planes were of the 'vintage' variety and included DC-3s, Douglas C-54 Skymasters, a C-47 Skytrain and a C-46 Curtiss Commando, which despite their age provided sterling service. The DC-3 that was on display at the airport was acquired by Mikey McBryan in late 2018 after it had lain derelict at St. Hubert Airport in Quebec for 27 years. Mikey named the project 'Plane Savers' and the restoration eventually involved more than 60 volunteers, who worked with such dedication and intensity that C-FDTD was returned to airworthiness in less than six months. One of the volunteers was Jay Caldwell of Thunder Bay Aviation, who had a major role in bringing the plane to Thunder Bay.

Buffalo
AIRWAYS

Your passage to the north

Dual-Control Hurricane

The Hawker Hurricane was designed, built and flown as a single-seat fighter. This meant that pilots new to the type soloed on the basis of past experience on single-engined planes, a reading of the Pilots' Notes and probably a talk through from an experienced Hurricane pilot. This was adequate in most cases and no attempt seems to have been made to add dual control Hurricanes to the production line. However, during WWII field conversions were made to create two seat versions for training and other purposes. The Soviet Air Force transformed several, at least one of which was originally built by Can-Car. This was a Mk XI, BW948, one of a batch of 150 built in 1941-42, which were shipped to Britain and then on to Russia. As well as being used for pilot training BW948 saw service as an artillery spotter. Three other Hurricanes were converted by the US Army Air Force in the Mediterranean Theatre, flying out of Sardinia as target tugs and liaison aircraft. Post-war, two more two-seaters were converted by Hawker for the Iranian Air Force.

An interesting addition to this story is to be found in the August 2019 of *Aeroplane*, which includes an article entitled, '*Hurricane made for two*'. It describes the conversion of a restored Hurricane from the traditional one-seat aircraft into a two-seater. What makes the story interesting to local aviation enthusiasts is the fact that this is also a product of the local Can-Car plant, having come off the production line in 1942. It was restored in 2009 as a Hurribomber by Hawker Restorations (see *FlyNorth* vol11/no3) and the same company is now well into the process of turning it into a dual control version. This involves more than just adding a second cockpit and another set of controls; such issues as the centre of gravity of the aircraft, the location of the new control runs, relocation of the battery to allow space for the passenger seat and general concerns about changes in aerodynamics as a result of the conversion had to be addressed. These have been dealt with to the satisfaction of the Civil Aviation Authority and it is expected that the plane will take to the air again in 2020. Once completed it will be offered for sale at close to CAN \$4 million. Thus, more than 75 years since the last Hurricane was built at Can-Car, the company and its aircraft continue to make news.



The Hurribomber prior to conversion

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SUPERIOR SHORES
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NOAHC continues to host a monthly bingo 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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Trans-Canada Airlines DC-3 (CF-TER) flying over the Kam River and the Great Lakes Paper Mill in the late 1940s

CF-TER/C-FDTD – part of the Lakehead's aviation history

In 1931, a Transcontinental and Western Airlines (TWA) Fokker F.10 crashed in Kansas, claiming the lives of all eight aboard. An investigation concluded that the wooden wings had failed, and the fleet was grounded. Confidence in wooden aircraft declined rapidly and airlines began to look for all-metal replacements. The most successful of these was the DC-3, a robust, modern, all-metal twin engine plane with variable pitch propellers, flaps, retractable landing gear, and excess horsepower to carry the plane over the Rocky Mountains on one engine. The design proved wildly popular, and almost a thousand were sold to airlines. Over ten thousand C-47s, its military equivalent, were built by the US aircraft industry during WWII. CF-TER was built as a C-47 in 1944 and went on to serve on D-Day with the RAF, dropping paratroops over Normandy. After the war, many of the surplus C-47s were purchased by air carriers, to be converted into DC-3 passenger planes. Trans-Canada Airlines acquired CF-TER, and in 1947 it made the first regularly scheduled passenger flight out of the Lakehead. It subsequently served with the Canadian Department of Transport, with a new civil registration C-FDTD, before being laid up at St Hubert in Quebec until 2018 when it was bought by Mikey McBryan of Buffalo Airways. By mid- 2019, it had been restored to flying condition and it made its first post-restoration flight on June 6, appropriately the 75th anniversary of D-Day. Following that it spent several weeks parked on the Thunder Bay Aviation apron before leaving for the EAA show at Oshkosh on July 23.

C-FDTD Returns to the Lakehead



C-FDTD basking in the late day sun on the Thunder Bay Aviation ramp



The cockpit of C-FDTD with its 1930s technology



Waiting to get on-board

We at NOAHC would like to thank all of our volunteers who contributed their own time to make our DC-3 open house a huge success. We would also like to thank all the individuals who came out to the airport and waited their turn to tour the inside of DTD, it is heartening to know that there are so many at the Lakehead who show an interest in our work. Lastly, we would like to thank our membership, whose financial contributions allow us to organize these sorts of events.



C-FDTD: Starboard side



RCAF style roundel and invasion stripes on the rear fuselage, to commemorate C-FDTD's participation on D-Day



Our president, Liz Wieben, feeling at home in the right-hand seat

***Photo-essay compiled
by Jonathan Sheppard***