

# FLY NORTH

Volume 13, Number 4:  
October-December, 2021

## 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 -----

#### Reopening

The Northwestern Ontario Aviation Heritage Centre, is pleased to announce that we are now open to the public from 1-4 p.m. every Wednesday and Sunday afternoon beginning November 3.

Come and see our growing collection of aviation memorabilia; displays which celebrate our local aviation history; fly an aircraft over Thunder Bay on our flight simulator; or purchase aviation themed merchandise. Check out page 4 to see the range of merchandise we have available.

There is no cost to visit, but donations are always welcomed.

**All current Covid protocols apply including proof of vaccination.**

#### Bingo

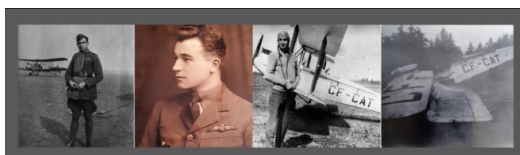
This note from Larry Bryan, NOAHC Bingo Coordinator describes the current situation with our bingo events.

"Just a note to let you know that this November we will resume work in person at the Superior Shores Gaming Hall on Memorial Avenue. However, we won't be doing the type of work we usually do for the foreseeable future. Instead, one volunteer per two-hour shift will be sitting at the main entrance to the hall acting as a screener. As screeners, we will welcome guests, ask them to read and answer questions regarding exposure to COVID, ask for vaccine certificates and identification etc."

The returns from bingo events at Superior Shores make an important contribution to the Centre's income. Anyone interested in becoming involved in this activity should contact Larry Bryan via [noahc@tbaytel.net](mailto:noahc@tbaytel.net)



### Zoom Presentation:



#### Pioneer Aviator James A. Dickie

On November 9, members of NOAHC were invited by the Thunder Bay District Branch of Ontario Ancestors to participate in a zoom meeting on the life of James Dickie presented by his grand-daughter Cathleen Gibson. Cathleen has spent the last several years gathering a phenomenal amount of material from genealogical records, family memorabilia, military documents and newspaper clippings to put together her grandfather's story.



Cathleen  
Gibson

He learned to fly during the First World War at a time when aviation was still in its infancy and airplanes were dangerous to fly. Casualties were particularly high during training and to combat that the air force created a group of instructors specially trained to improve the skills of trainee pilots. James Dickie was one of that elite group. He also served in the Night Training Squadrons that contributed to Britain's aerial home defence.

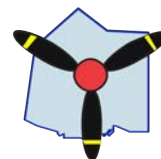
After returning to Canada, James settled in Fort William where he was a founding member and chief instructor at the Fort William Aero Club. He taught many young local club members to fly, only to lose his life in a tragic training accident.

Cathleen has provided copies of her research material to the Centre, some of which is incorporated in a display commemorating James Dickie's role in improving pilot training during World War I and his involvement with the Fort William Aero Club.

NOAHC extends its thanks to Cathleen Gibson and Ontario Ancestors for providing this contribution to the story of the strong aviation tradition that is part of the history of the Lakehead.

### Inside this issue:

2. Book Review, President's Report
3. DC-3 Model
4. Gift Shop



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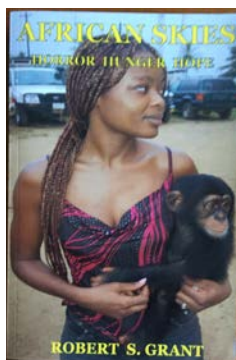
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### Book Review:

#### GRANT, R.S. (2021) *African Skies – Horror, Hunger, Hope*

404 pages, 70 photographs, Glossary, Bibliography, Index of Names



Anyone familiar with Robert Grant's previous books and articles might be expecting *African Skies* to be a book about aviation in Africa. It is that, but much more. As the sub-title - **Horror, Hunger, Hope** suggests, it also addresses many of the social, cultural and economic problems that plague the continent and its people.

Grant's interest in Africa began as a 7-year old in elementary school, when he read about the historic meeting between Livingston and Stanley, but it was not

until many years later in 1999 that he visited the continent. The last visit he describes in his book took place in 2015, but in these 16 years, having worked in 9 different countries, his vision of Africa was radically changed by the human tragedy, in the form of starvation, corruption, slavery and genocide, that he witnessed.

Compared to the conditions in the relatively safe airspace of North America, in which Robert Grant normally flew, the flying that he did in Africa might be described at best as being challenging and at worst as being extremely hazardous. Weather events such as severe storms of thunder and lightning with the windshear, downdrafts and tropical downpours that accompanied them in Cameroon and Sudan were matched by the fierce sandstorms that he experienced in Algeria. Weather forecasting was generally minimal; radar was often unavailable and air traffic control limited in many areas, which meant that the first indication of bad weather came from a gradually darkening sky and a blinding rainstorm. On the ground, airstrips could be flooded or covered by drifting sand, but even where the landing areas were in good shape, planes could face random gunfire during landing and takeoff. On the ground, the pilot accommodation was usually very basic and had to be checked regularly for biting and stinging insects and snakes.

With his many flying hours and piloting a Twin Otter, an aircraft ideally suited for the conditions, Grant could cope with the flying conditions, but he found it much more difficult to accept the horrible reality that was life for the people who lived in the places he worked. Bribery and corruption were rife, from the heads of government down to the military, politicians and police. Food from international aid agencies was regularly diverted from those it was intended to help, forcing children to scabble among garbage for food and adults to collect the leavings from the tables at expatriate dining rooms. Young girls were forced into prostitution to survive; slavery was still practiced in some places and there were even tales of cannibalism.

As a tell-all, no-holds-barred account of the author's time in Africa, this is a book well worth reading. It is an eye-opener for those of us enjoying a comfortable Canadian existence. His comparison of what we have and what is available to the people in the countries he worked in is sobering to say the least. One recommendation – when you read the book have a good atlas handy to identify the location of places of which we in Canada generally have little knowledge.

*NOAHC has a few copies of African Skies for sale at the Centre, but it is readily available on Amazon at a cost of \$25.00*

### President's AGM Report

*(Because of space requirements this report has been slightly abridged)*

As President, I am very grateful for the support of the Board of Directors, volunteers, and members throughout 2020. It was a challenging year when the Covid 19 pandemic took over our lives. We were operating at the height of our activity level until we held the March Board of Directors Meeting, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020. I can still remember the turmoil of that meeting when we made the decision to cancel our participation in the Historical Film Festival and very shortly thereafter to close our centre. It was stunning to each of us sitting at that table.

We had been off to a roaring start with a very successful presentation about the bush flying operations of Superior Airways in the '40s through to the '70s, hosted by the Lakehead Social History group. The activities planned had included participating in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Thunder Bay Historical Film Festival taking place at the Community Auditorium. Then everything changed. The focus became financial survival. Bingo revenue ceased. Income from our presentation donations ceased. Retail sales ceased. Our treasurer David Sutton worked with our landlord Michael Larizza who cooperated with us to see that we were able to receive the rent reduction using the Federal government Rent Relief program for about 8 months. Later in the year Bingo opened the slot machines and revenue trickled in from that source. Larry Bryan and Denise Lyzun kept Superior Shores, who run the Bingos satisfied with reports of what we were doing to ensure we got a share of that smaller Bingo revenue

We did get our first book "**They Also Served**", the story of Bill McRae edited by David Kemp, published, and it made excellent sales through personal delivery and mail.

During 2020, Marathon Museum closed its doors and transferred to us their rights to the publication of the journal of Colin MacMillan, a Lands and Forest pilot based at their Pays Plat base and who later flew for Marathon Pulp and Paper. The Marathon Museum, led by Stan Johnson passed along to us \$1500.00 that they had raised to publish the book. David Kemp edited the journal, which is now being printed. This book is called "**From Cape Breton to Northwestern Ontario**" and we will have it for sale in early December.

David Kemp maintained an uninterrupted publication of four Newsletters a year throughout the pandemic, which along with other back issues of the newsletter can be found on the Centre's website at [www.noahc.org](http://www.noahc.org). A regular copy of the newsletter is one of the benefits of belonging to the Centre. If a membership is allowed to lapse, copies of Fly North will no longer be sent out.

Our exhibits crew of Denise Lyzun, Mary Alice Isaac and George Holborn continued work on our exhibits adding both to the existing exhibits and creating new ones.

Archie Gribben, our historian, keeps an impressive set of stats detailing our activities each year. Certainly 2020 was a startling contrast to previous years.

VISITORS: 27 Total visitors to date: 5,050

VOLUNTEER HOURS: 770 Total Volunteer hours: 12,500

As President, I want to say with gratitude, I appreciate the support that I had for the difficult year of 2020 when we were all struggling with our personal lives and the fear of the first pandemic for our generation.

*Elizabeth Wieben,*

*President, Northwestern Ontario Aviation Heritage Centre*

## Our corporate supporters...

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**SUPERIOR SHORES GAMING ASSOCIATION**



NOAHC is once again hosting 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.

**Jay Caldwell**  
Manager, Maintenance & Manufacturing

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### DC-3 model

This model of a DC-3 in the livery of Superior Airways is now on display at the Centre. Built by local model builder John Kuemmel, it is a magnificent addition to NOAHC's model collection.



## *A selection of the products available at the Centre*



**Mugs**  
**\$15.00**

NOAHC has recently brought in a variety of new products that are now on sale at the Centre. These may be purchased during regular opening times on Wednesday and Sunday. In December, the Centre will also have extended hours when purchases can be made. Times will be announced to members shortly



**Caps**  
**\$15.00**

**Caps \$20.00**

Sweat shirts \$25.00

Fleeces \$39.00

Hoodies \$39.00

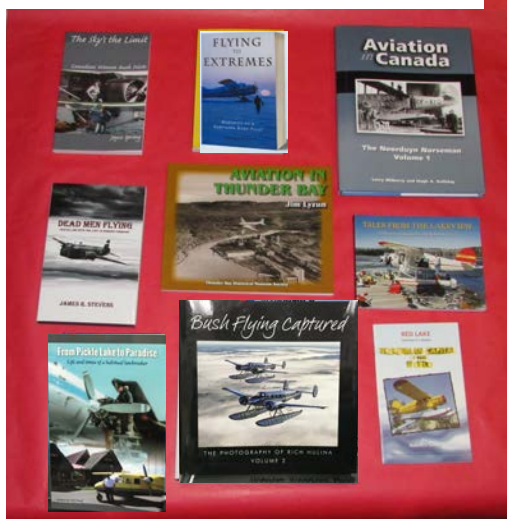
Various  
sizes

**T-shirts**  
**\$23.00**



**Jigsaw  
Puzzles**  
**\$5.00**

Wide selection of  
sizes and designs



**Books: \$10.00 - \$65.00**



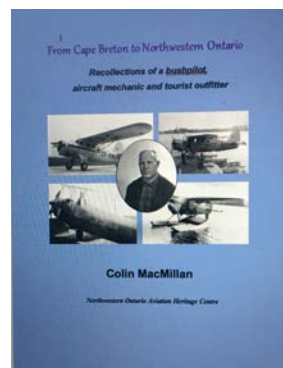
**Die-cast models**  
**\$5.00 - \$12.00**

**Members  
receive a 10%  
discount on  
all purchases**

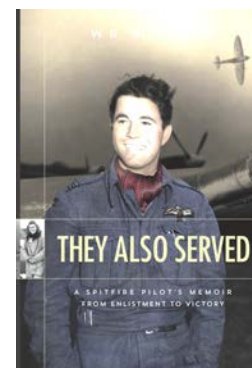
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**Cash,  
Credit/Debit  
Cards  
accepted**

## *NOAHC publications*



**From Cape Breton to  
Northwestern Ontario**  
**Colin MacMillan**  
**\$20.00**



**They Also Served**  
**Bill McRae**  
**\$30.00**