

# FLY NORTH



## NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO AVIATION HERITAGE CENTRE

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



### NOAHC News ...

#### **D-Day**

#### **Eightieth Anniversary**

Eighty years ago on June 6, 1944, Allied forces landed in northern France to begin a campaign that ended about a year later with the defeat of the Nazi regime. British, Canadian and American troops landed on the beaches of Normandy. While public recognition of D-Day, as the invasion was called, usually focuses on the landings and the battles that followed, there was also a major air component. Aircraft from the British, Canadian and United States air forces, bombed the defences, delivered airborne troops by parachute and glider and provided top cover over the beaches.

Bill McRae, a Spitfire pilot from Port Arthur, flew over the beaches on D-Day and in his book, *They Also Served*, published by NOAHC, recounts that, "the air was full of aeroplanes of all descriptions". There is no doubt that these planes and the airmen in them made a major contribution to the success of the invasion and in this year of significant aviation anniversaries that should not be forgotten.

#### **RCAF Centenary Display**

The Centre now has a display to celebrate the Centenary of the RCAF. Exhibited are various memorabilia such as uniforms, models of aircraft that were flown by RCAF pilots, pictures of aircraft and aircrew plus a variety of artifacts of local and more general interest, which include a WWII vintage parachute and a jet era "Bone Dome" pilot's flight helmet. Much of the material dates from the WWII and immediate post war period, in large part because this was the time when the RCAF aircrew and aircraft numbers reached their peak.

#### **Canso visit**

When the last newsletter was published the poster for the July visit of the Canso was not yet available. It is now included below

The Northwestern Ontario Aviation Heritage Centre presents:

### the PBY-5A Canso

as restored by the Fairview Aircraft Restoration Society



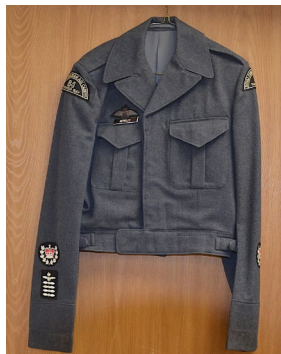
When: 11am to 4:30 pm, July 6 and 7  
Where: Wasaya Airlines terminal  
Thunder Bay Airport

For more information go to:  
[www.noahc.org](http://www.noahc.org) and  
[www.savethecanso.com](http://www.savethecanso.com)




#### **Acquisitions**

Kevin Merkley has donated two uniforms that he wore when he was a member of the local Air Cadets and later as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. in the Canadian Armed forces.



*Kevin's uniform when he was Squadron Warrant Officer with 84 Squadron RCAC.*

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## ***THE HARVARD: A DEFINING CANADIAN ICON***

by Ian Dew

My history with the Harvard began in the mid-1960s, when, living in Lacombe, Alberta, summer and winter I was often able to see, hedge-hopping across the fields, a noisy, yellow, low-wing monoplane flown by dotting owners and flying farmers in a hurry. Once seen and heard on a cold prairie afternoon, the sound of a Pratt and Whitney Wasp at full throttle hauling the plane through the chilly air, was a thrilling sound. It was loud – the never-to-be-forgotten snarling roar of a radial engine. Its distinctive sound was produced by its 600hp engine together with its nine-foot propeller the tips of which, when in fine pitch at high rpm, approached sonic speeds.

By the 1960s, the Harvard had been around for almost 30 years. It was designed and manufactured initially in 1937 by the North American Aviation Corporation, and given the name Texan. Being a cantilevered monoplane with a powerful radial engine and retractable undercart, it was advanced for its day. It was an instant success; a sophisticated, reliable, advanced trainer during the period when everything that could fly was being used to prepare for the coming war.

The Texan was designated as the AT-6, an advanced, single seat trainer by the United States Army Air Force and SNJ in United States Navy service. By 1953 it ceased to be considered advanced and became simply the T-6 basic trainer, a role that it maintained for another decade in American service.

The original design was so successful that the aircraft was manufactured under license from Australia - where it was named the Wirraway – to France and pre-war Japan. In Canada, it was built as the Harvard by Noorduyn of Montreal, who during the war years produced 2,800 machines. By the end of the conflict more than 17,000 of these trainers, by whatever name they were known, were in use by the allied nations. Overall, some 21,000, of various marks were produced. The ultimate development of the design was built at Canadian Car and Foundry in Fort William, Ontario as the Harvard Mk IV, with 270 delivered to the RCAF and 285 to the USAF.

Among aviators of a certain age, and especially pilots of single-seat aircraft, the Harvard remains the iconic aircraft for the period from the earliest days of WW II to the waning days of the Cold War. Instantly recognizable from afar by its sound as well as its silhouette, in its bright yellow RCAF livery, it is known around the world. During the war years Canada was home to the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, which included provision for elementary and advanced training as well as bombing, gunnery and navigation schools. The pilots who learned to fly basic trainers such as the Tiger Moth or the Fleet Finch then moved on to more advanced trainers. Those who were recognized as having the potential to be fighter pilots graduated to the Harvard, which prepared them to fly front-line aircraft such as the Hurricane, Spitfire or P-51 Mustang. Over 50,000 pilots graduated from the BCATP in Canada, with a high proportion completing their advanced training on the Harvard.

With the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 and the onset of the so-called Cold War, there was again a demand for pilots and again Canada participated in a training program similar to the BCATP. This was the NATO Training Plan which was in operation between 1950 and 1957. It was at this time that Can-Car began building the Harvard IV, ultimately producing 550 by the time the program ended. They served in training schools across North America into the 1960s with last of the Harvard's in RCAF service being retired in 1966. Some 350 Texan/Harvards of the 21,000 built are still airworthy. In Canada, the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum flies a Can-Car built Harvard IV and the Canadian Harvard Aircraft Association has a fleet of nine operating out of Tillsonburg Airport in southern Ontario. Five of these were built at Can-Car.

### Selected sources:

Burkowski, G. *Can-Car, A History 1912-1992*. Bombardier Inc. 1995  
Lyzun, J. *Aviation in Thunder Bay*. Thunder Bay Historical Museum 2006

### Webpages:

Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, Hamilton, Ontario. [www.warplane.com/vintatge-aircraft-collection/aircraft-history.aspx?aircraftId=31](http://www.warplane.com/vintatge-aircraft-collection/aircraft-history.aspx?aircraftId=31)

Training Video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UZmEhayBV1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UZmEhayBV1)



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**RCAF Centenary Display**



*Uniforms on loan from the Thunder Bay Military Museum, courtesy of Captain George Romick*



*Uniform of WO Arthur Puchalski DFC*



*Vickers Wellington*



*LAC Puchalski pictured during his training as an air gunner*

*His uniform and portrait were donated by his daughter Dr Ione Puchalski*



## *Here come the Harvards*

On August 10 and 11, (rain dates August 17 and 18) NOAHC is hosting a visit by a number of North American Harvard aircraft including several built by Can-Car in Fort William. There are four confirmed; two from the Canadian Harvard Aircraft Association (CHAA) in Tillsonburg, Ontario, one from Lethbridge and the John Magee, named after the poet who wrote *High Flight*, from the Potter collection in Gatineau. There is a possibility of a third from CHAA, a chance of the Canadian Warplanes Heritage (CWH) bird from Hamilton and possibly one from Davidson, Saskatchewan flying in also.



The Harvard is a variant of the T-6 Texan, designed by North American Aviation as an advanced trainer, which first flew in 1935. By 1950, more than 15,000 had been built. Designed originally for the United States military, its potential was quickly recognized by other air forces. Outside the United States, in Canada and Britain, for example, it was known as the Harvard and most of the fighter pilots in WWII trained on the Texan/Harvard. The Harvard was the mainstay of advanced training in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP), allowing pilots who had passed out of the Elementary Training Schools, such as the one in Fort William, to prepare for the transition to the more advanced Hurricanes and Spitfires they would fly in combat. Thunder Bay's link with the Harvard came in 1951 when events during the Cold War seemed to indicate the need for more pilots. To help meet that need Can-Car was contracted to build the Harvard Mk IV, the final and most advanced version of the type. Between 1951 and 1955, 555 aircraft were built for the RCAF and USAF with many still airworthy. Several of those coming to Thunder Bay are Mk IVs so their visit can genuinely be described as *The Homecoming of the Harvards*.



*The planes will be on display at the Air Bravo ramp on the north side of the Thunder Bay Airport on Derek Burney Drive.*

*The Canadian Harvard Aircraft Association will be offering flights in their Harvards, charging \$275 for 10 min., \$475 for 20 min., and \$575 for 30 min. The price includes insurance and a one year membership in the Association.*



*A Can-Car built Mk IV Harvard*

*Thirteen flights have already been sold, but there are still a few left. To book one contact John Hill at [jdhill@tbaytel.net](mailto:jdhill@tbaytel.net)*

*The organizers have themed the event to the 1950s and invite the public to dress as they would have in the '50s. There will be '40s and '50s swing music playing, with a dance demo given by the local Swing Dance club.*

*To support the atmosphere Bob Manns will be driving his '52 Willys Jeep for transportation between the parking lots and ramp and his '54 truck will be on static display.*