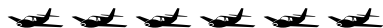




Fly North

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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

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Our official history with its accounts of political activities, military campaigns, famous people, national successes and failures is stored in libraries and archives across the country and generally accessible to anyone who is interested. There is another history, however, stored in the memories of people who participated in the events of the day or whose friends or relatives were involved. That version of history may never see the light of day, yet it may contain material more directly relevant and interesting to many people than the political speeches, backroom business dealings or the goings-on of royalty and the nobility that make it into history books.

As our contribution to the preservation of the history held in the memories of those involved in aviation in northwestern Ontario, NOAHC has entered into a partnership with NEXTLIB, a Thunder Bay information organization with experience in the concepts and methodology of digital oral history development. Over the next couple of years NEXTLIB will conduct a series of up to 40 audio/video interviews with individu-

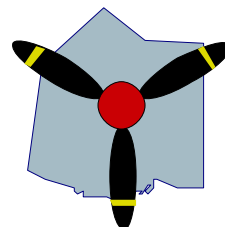
als who have been involved in the aviation industry in northwestern Ontario. The plan is to interview people and groups from all sectors of the industry, including pilots, mechanics, airport administrators, aircraft builders and a variety of service providers. Interviews will be conducted in centres across northwestern Ontario to provide the widest possible coverage of our aviation history.

The results will be saved on hard drive and DVD, and ultimately made available for public viewing through NOAHC's website. For those without access to the web, or those who like to get their information from the printed word, it is hoped that in the not too distant future the interviews will be available in a book.

Liz Wieben's interview with Gord Leamy, on page 3 of this newsletter, is a little taste of what to expect. NOAHC is developing a list of people we would like to interview. If you have ideas on anyone that could contribute to the project, by sharing his or her memories, we would be happy to hear from you. Contact us through our webpage or by mail at the address below

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NOAHC HAS A HOME

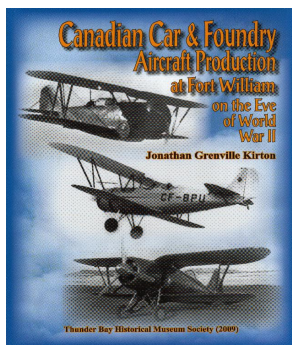
As of March 1, 2010, the Northwestern Ontario Aviation Heritage Centre will be moving into rented space at 430 Waterloo Street, S., next to the DaVinci Centre. This will provide us with an office, display and exhibition space plus a location for board meetings and public presentations. It will take time to get everything organized, but we will be inviting NOAHC members to an official opening sometime soon.

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Books, books, books...Canadian Car and Foundry Aircraft Production at Fort William on the Eve of World War II, by Jonathan Grenville Kirton



Available from Thunder Bay Museum - \$39.95

When aviation at Can-Car is mentioned in Thunder Bay, the Hurricane and Helldiver immediately come to mind rather than the Goblin, the Gregor or the Maple Leaf. Jonathon Kirton has changed that. He has written a book, published by the Thunder Bay Museum, that provides a detailed look at a period in Can-Car's development as an aircraft constructor that has received very little attention, but was crucial to the company's later success. It has something for all of the different tastes that people interested in aviation might have. For those interested in the technical side there are designer drawings, component lists, lists of proposed and actual flight performance and pictures of the aircraft under construction. For the historian Jonathan Kirton takes the stories beyond what is normally covered. For example, some of the Grumman G-23s that were built at Fort William have entered the history books because they were purchased by the Republicans for use in the Spanish Civil War at a time when there was an embargo on such sales. Usually the story ends there, but Jonathan has gone further, searching out information about the

planes that survived the conflict and were subsequently taken over by the Nationalists, as the Delphin. He writes about their use in the Spanish Air Force and provides a range of pictures with interesting commentary on their modification and the colour schemes they carried.

Most of the accounts of this period in the company's development say little about the 'behind-the-scenes' activity that was required to design a new plane, build it, bring it into production and sell it. This book has all of that. It contains copies of the multitude of letters and official forms that had to be completed to get the process under way and the official reports that had to be filed for flight tests and accidents. They make fascinating reading. It is easy to say "In the late 1930s, Canadian Car and Foundry built the Gregor Fighter at Fort William", but to find out about the bureaucratic comings and goings behind such an achievement puts a whole new perspective on the process.

For the flying enthusiast, the book includes reports from those who actually flew the planes that Can-Car built detailing their good points as well as their shortcomings, and the modifications required before air-worthy status could be granted. These reports provide an important link between the aircraft and the people who flew them. On the people side, the book has sections on the Can-Car pilots including information on what they did after leaving the company. The stories of those who stayed on the ground, from the designers such as Michael Gregor, to the engineers like Elsie MacGill, to the plant managers, the workers on the shop floor and the salesmen who

tried to sell the finished product are all here as well. Together they provide a fascinating glimpse into the aeronautical industry in the 1930s.

Fascinating it might be, but this was not really a very successful time for Can-Car at least in terms of aircraft production and sales. It had a major struggle to sell the Grumman G-23s – or Goblin as it became - until the RCAF became desperate for aircraft as war approached; the Gregor fighter, said by some to be the most advanced biplane ever built was still a biplane and uncompetitive at a time when the future was really with monoplane fighters; the Maple Leaf I trainer was poorly designed and unsafe to fly, while the Maple Leaf II, designed by Elsie MacGill showed lots of promise, but appeared at a time when the market was already well-supplied with other trainers such as the Tiger Moth. Despite this, it was at this time that the company set itself up for its wartime success. The designers, engineers and craftsmen that Can-Car attracted to the Lakehead were vital to the Hurricane and Helldiver programs and the experience gained in the construction of the Grumman, Gregor and the Maple Leaf made the transition to the more complex fighters and dive-bombers that much easier.

Jonathan Kirton has put all of this together in a very readable book full of interesting historical detail, new interpretations of seemingly established facts and a multitude of pictures, many of them not previously published. It has something for everyone and I recommend it to you.

David Kemp

Northwestern Ontario Aviation Heritage Centre

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

for the acceptance of reports and the election of office-bearers

Tuesday, April 20, 2010 at 7:00 pm

A FLYING VISIT—Elizabeth Wieben interviews Gord Leamy, retired MNR Waterbomber pilot

What is your first aviation memory?

I was living in Noranda, Quebec and I was fascinated with the floatplanes of Goldbelt Air Service taking off and landing at Osisko Lake. I was 10 years old.

When was your first flight?

My first flight was at Wabigoon Lake, near Dryden, when I was 13 years old; it was in a Bellanca Skyrocket with Carl Crosley. I never had heard so much noise in my life as inside that airplane...no headphones in those days. My second ride was in a Cessna 180, CF-HEQ with Severn Enterprises in Sioux Lookout and that was when I really got interested.

When was your first solo?

November 13, 1965 in Kamloops, B.C. in a Cessna 150 and I remember being very nervous. The instructor just climbed out of the aircraft with no warning.

What prompted your career in aviation?

In the summer of 1957, I was working in mining exploration as a summer student and flew in a brand new DeHavilland Otter. Something went “click” and all I wanted to do was fly a floatplane.

Tell me briefly about your flying career.

I started with Fecteau Air Transport, Mattagami, Quebec as a dock helper and “swamper” on the Otter. I had my Commercial Licence by then and it was a very good experience; we went everywhere the company flew. In January 1967, I started flying a Cessna 180 on skis. After that I worked at Laurentian Air Services in Ottawa and Austin Airways in Sudbury, Moosonee and Nakina. I spent 28 years with the MNR flying at first the Turbo Beaver, the single engine Otter and the Twin Otter, travelling the northern part of the province doing general transportation and moose surveys. In 1987 I checked out on the CL 215 Waterbomber, became captain on that and then later the CL 415. We travelled around the country doing waterbombing. It was very interesting work. I retired from MNR in 2004 and since that time have flown a Twin Otter in the Maldives and some other northern contracts.

Can you think of a time when you looked out of the cockpit and thought “this is what flying is all about”?

I have always loved the flying; it never really felt like work...so I have had many such moments

What has been your “worst” moment in the cockpit?

Most of my “worst” moments involved “pushing VFR”... the weather getting worse and you’re trying to get the job done to the satisfaction of others. Probably the worst was flying goose hunters out of Attawapiskat with fog and low ceilings.

What is your favourite aeroplane?

The single engine Otter. I enjoyed the work I did with it... it is easier to load than some of the others and more doors to get out if you upset the aeroplane. Also the Twin Otter...”that sucker was pretty amazing!”



DHC Otter

(This is the first of what will be a continuing series of interviews with individuals involved in aviation in the northwest. Suggestions for future columns will be welcomed)



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The "Paterson" Spitfire

Among the most famous aircraft of all time, the Spitfire began operations before the Second World War and was one of the few pre-war types to remain in front-line service until the end of the war and beyond.

Along with the Hurricane, the Spitfire ensured the success of the RAF in the Battle of Britain, but by 1941 its supremacy in the air was being challenged by the Luftwaffe's new Focke-Wulf FW 190. That challenge was successfully countered by the introduction of the Mk. IX Spitfire.

The Mk. IX was produced in a number of variants including the L.F. in which low

level performance was enhanced by an engine designed to give its best power at a lower altitude and by clipping the wing tips to increase the speed and rate of roll. The Rolls-Royce Merlin 76, V12 power plant, rated at 1710 hp produced a maximum speed of 404 mph (650 kph). Normal armament consisted of 4 machine guns and two 20 mm cannon mounted in the wings.

The Paterson Spitfire is a L.F. Mk. IX. It was built in 1944 and flew with the RAF, as well as with one RCAF and one Polish squadron. After the war it was sold to the Netherlands Army Air Force and sent to the East Indies. After further service with the

Belgian Air Force and private owners, it was purchased by John Paterson and brought to the Lakehead.

The Spitfire was similar to one he had flown during World War II in the RCAF and, at a time when the preservation of historic aircraft was still uncommon, he restored and refurbished it to flying condition. It flew first in the winter of 1961/62 and remained at the Lakehead until 1964 when Paterson gifted it to the Canadian Aviation Museum in Ottawa.

(Pictures from the Jim Lyzun Collection, via Joe Osmulski)

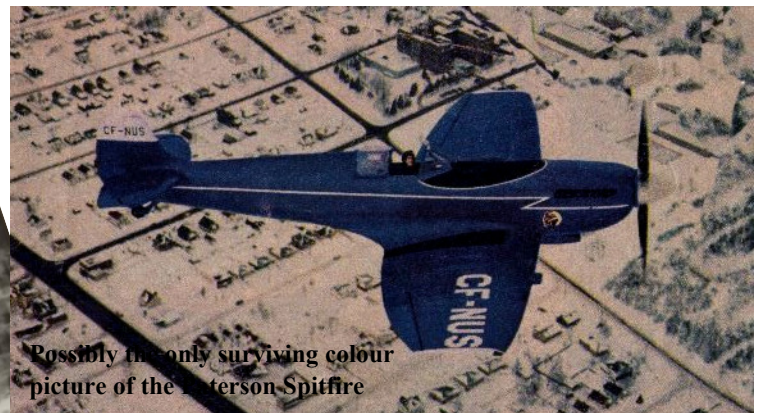


Pilot John Paterson (right) and mechanic Ron Kyle (left) following the first post-restoration flight, January 13, 1962

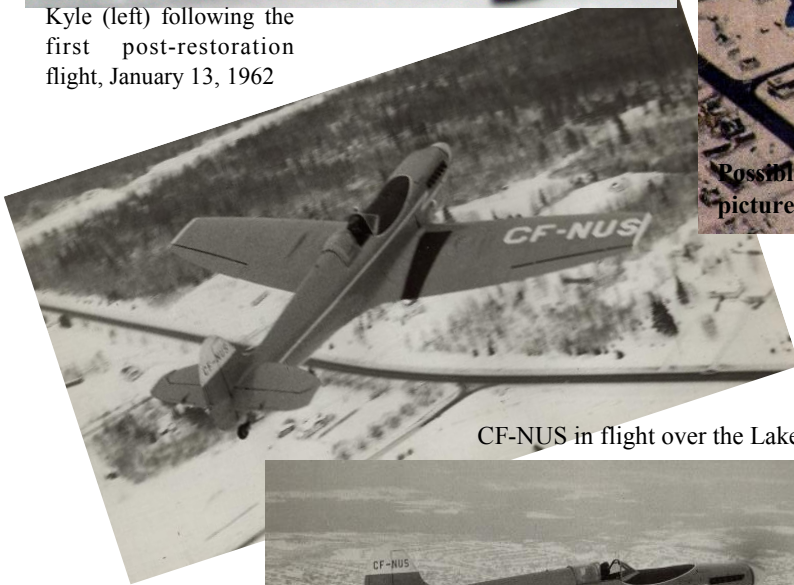


Supermarine Spitfire L.F. Mk. IX

Running-up the Merlin 76, V12 engine prior to the first flight



Possibly the only surviving colour picture of the Paterson Spitfire



CF-NUS in flight over the Lakehead

