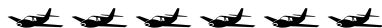




Fly North

Volume 3, Number 2:
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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 Activities: The NOAHC team has been on the road over the past couple of months. In March, Jim Milne, Denise Lyzun and Don McCrae set up our display at the New Ontario Shooters Association Gun Show in Murillo. The following month Denise Lyzun and Liz Wieben from our Oral History group, along with Ian Dew and Kathy Crewdson, our collaborators from NextLibrary, drove up to Dryden to attend the annual meeting of the Northwestern Ontario Air Carriers Association. They gave a Power Point presentation which included an account of NOAHC's activities to date and our plans for the future, along



Jim Milne, NOAHC President at the Gun Show

with excerpts from several of the Oral History interviews already completed. The film of the visit of the Lancaster bomber last year was a big hit. As well as informing the participants of our activities the conference allowed the Oral History group to enquire about possible future interviews with former aviators from the north west. As a regional organization it is important that we establish links with the aviation community outside Thunder Bay. The Dryden visit was our first attempt at reaching out to this wider community. The presentation was well received and those involved felt it was very successful. As a follow up a group from NOAHC will be attending the Norseman Festival in July to promote the organization

and establish links in the Red Lake area.



Liz Wieben's PowerPoint presentation in Dryden



The NOAHC team in Dryden

(l to r) Ian Dew, Liz Wieben, Cathy Crewdson, Denise Lyzun

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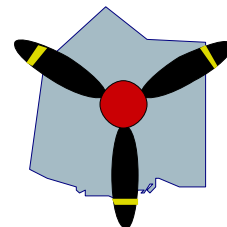
Planning: On April 21, a group of board members held a day-long planning session to examine NOAHC's progress to date and to consider future directions. Strategic Planning is not the most exciting of activities, but is necessary for the successful development of any organization. Examination of NOAHC's original Strategic Plan, drafted in 2008, showed that we had met (and in some cases exceeded) our goals in many areas and in an appropriate time frame. Successes have included the acquisition of suitable premises, the development of an oral history program and the promotion of NOAHC at aviation-related events in the region. In other areas, such as the development of a webpage, the establishment of an educational program and the display of artifacts, it was clear that our original plan had been a bit over-ambitious. These issues will be addressed in the revised plan as work on it continues.

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Thunder Bay International Airport

Thunder Bay International Airport Terminal from airside



Courtesy TBIAA via K. Hlady

The second half of the 20th century was a period of significant innovation and growth in aviation around the world and Thunder Bay participated in the changes that took place. Improved technology saw the progression from piston-engined aircraft to turbo-props and pure jet machines. By the 1960s, the DC3s that had been a common sight in the skies above the airport for nearly three decades had been replaced by larger and faster turbo-props such as the Vickers Viscount and Vanguard or the Convair 540. In less than a decade these in turn had given way to the jet powered DC9s and Boeing 737s to be followed in turn by the Airbus 319 and Bombardier's Regional Jets. Since then there has been a resurgence of the turbo-prop in the form of the Dash-8 and its derivative the Q-400. Among the local operators, turbine powered aircraft are also beginning to predominate. The Fairchild Metroliner, Mitsubishi MU-2, Beech King Air and Pilatus PC-12, along with turbo versions of the Beaver and Otter have an important regional role in the north west. The Cessnas seen regularly flying their training circuits around the airport remain piston-powered.

Just as the equipment changed, so did the operators. Of the major airlines operating into an out of Thunder Bay, Air Canada has the longest service, starting in the 1940s as Trans-Canada Airlines and continuing today as Air Canada Jazz. During that time, Air Canada has faced many competitors, including Transair, Nordair and Pacific Western Airlines. As a result of various mergers and takeovers in the late 1980s, regional carriers such as those were incorporated into one major airline, Canadian Airlines International (CAI), which gave Thunder Bay new links within Canada and overseas. When Air Canada merged with CAI in 2000, Thunder Bay airport experienced a significant drop in aircraft movements, but the impact was limited by the arrival of Westjet in the same year. In 2009, Porter Airlines introduced its turbo-prop service between Thunder Bay and Toronto Island Airport, allowing easy access to the city centre, as well as providing links to other cities in eastern Canada and the United States.

Although it describes itself as an international facility, Thunder Bay Airport's international activities have waxed and waned over the years. The first scheduled flights from the Municipal Airport after World War II were in fact international—to Duluth on Trans-Canada Airlines—but that survived little more than a year and it was not until 1960 that regular trans-border flights resumed, when North Central Airlines re-established the service between the Lakehead and Duluth, initially with DC-3s, then the Convair 540 turbo

props and ultimately DC-9 jets. The route survived until 1980 before economic conditions and low passenger volumes led to its demise. NorthWest Airlink through Mesaba Airlines resurrected the route, providing twice daily flights between Thunder Bay and Minneapolis/St Paul, for more than a decade, using the Saab 340 turbo prop, before it too succumbed to economic realities and was shut down in the fall of 2010. Current international activities at the airport mainly involve winter charters to sun destinations in the Caribbean provided by Westjet Vacations, Transat and Sunwing.

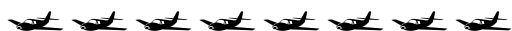
Just as the major airlines changed so did the local companies operating out of the airport. Superior Airlines, which had dominated the industry in the north west in the 1960s and '70s, was sold to Austin Airways in 1981. Austin was in turn acquired by Air Ontario, which eventually left the region. Since then other operators such as On-Air, NorOntair, Awood Air and North American Charters have come and gone until today three companies share most of the local and regional traffic in the area. Bearskin Airways, founded in Sioux Lookout in 1963, is now the leading scheduled carrier in the northwest with routes in Manitoba and northern Ontario and as far east as Ottawa. Wasaya Airways, owned by First Nations' communities in the region provides scheduled passenger and freight service to 21 northern communities. Thunder Airlines, a charter company, provides regular passenger charters, executive travel and air cargo operations, as well as air ambulance services. Wisk Air and Kelner Helicopters operate helicopter services.

Other activities which have a long history and continue to be important in the northwest are also represented at the airport. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Regional Fire Centre on the north west edge of the airport is a service depot for the province's Canadair CL-415 waterbombers and an administrative centre for fire control in the region. Flight training has been a feature of the airport since the beginning and the tradition continues at the Confederation College Aviation Centre of Excellence, a \$20 million facility on the northeastern side of the property. Perhaps the most significant change in the airport's history came about in 1997, when the Thunder Bay International Airport Authority Inc. (TBIAA) took over the running of the facility from Transport Canada. Despite hurdles put in place by airline mergers and bankruptcies, sky rocketing fuel prices, economic recession and growing security costs, TBIAA has been remarkably successful in increasing passenger numbers and aircraft movements and created one of the most cost efficient airports in the country.

Fly North Air Mail: Received from one of our members

Dear Sir/Madam,

May I compliment the persons responsible for organizing and researching the material appearing in the Jan-Mar edition of the FlyNorth newsletter, all of which brought back a flood of memories of those times seventy plus years ago. Aviation has played a major part in my life starting when I gained employment at the *CANADIAN CAR AND FOUNDRY*



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as a riveter in the Wings Department Jan 1940 building Hawker Hurricanes.

With apologies, this letter is to correct a couple of statements that are not factually correct, regarding the fire that occurred Nov 1957. The article states that the fire swept through the old EFTS wartime hanger where Superior Airways and the Thunder Bay Flying Club were located, implying that there was one hangar. The hangar that was demolished was actually a double hangar with the TBFC occupying the west half while Superior Airways occupied the east part of the building with a partition dividing the two parts. To the best of my recollection, the Flying Club lost three Aeronca Champs, one Piper Tri-pacer, one Fleet Canuck, plus the Chipmunk which belonged to the Air Force and registered CF-CYH. At least one privately owned aircraft—a Taylorcraft—was also lost.

The article goes on to say that both Superior Airways and Thunder Bay Flying Club moved into the Can-Car hangar. This statement is not true, and if you will bear with me, I'll explain what actually happened. At the time of the fire, John Paterson was our President while John Styffe was Vice President. The morning after the fire our President phoned each member of the Board of Directors and set up a meeting to take place immediately. I do not remember where the meeting took place, but it probably was in Geoffrey Spencer's Real Estate office on May Street. I was a member of the Board and as such I was the Director of Chipmunk Flying.

As you can well imagine, the meeting concentrated on the disastrous fire and what steps could be taken to get the Club back in business. Early in the discussion it was revealed that the Can-Car hangar may be available and it was suggested that the Flying Club would stand a good chance of getting it. At this point John Paterson spoke up making a comparison between Orville Wieben's business loss and the Flying Club's loss of a few aeroplanes plus the loss of three jobs temporarily. John then suggested that the Flying Club should back off from making any claim for the Can-Car hangar. The entire Board took John's words to heart and agreed that his most humane and magnificent gesture should be put to a vote and it was passed unanimously. I have always been deeply impressed by John Paterson's gesture.

The TBFC took immediate steps to get back into business by setting up an office in the old Airforce Drill Hall, which was now known as the Rec Hall. Furthermore, our manager arranged to rent two Aeronca Champs which got us back into business in short order. The RCAF quickly provided a replacement Chipmunk and my log book shows that I flew it on Jan 5, 1958. In addition we purchased a brand new Cessna 172, registered CF-KIJ, which I flew Feb 5, 1958.

In the meantime, the manager, Jim McLaren, was taking action to acquire a couple of almost new Aeroncas that he had located in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, USA. Within a few days we started to make plans to take two commercial students plus Frank Bryan, who was working on his Commercial Licence. I was a Category II Flying Instructor and it was my job to give the two students dual instruction on the way to pick up the aeroplanes and to test fly them before bringing them home. But that is another story for perhaps another time.

I trust you will find the foregoing of some interest and should you require further clarification, do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kindest regards,

W.E. Turner

(FlyNorth is always happy to hear from its readers. Contact us at noahc@tbaytel.net or at the mailing address shown on Page 1)

Thunder Bay International Airport—Montage

Thunder Bay International Airport looking south west above runway 25. The runway extension completed in 2009 is clearly visible

Courtesy TBIAA via K. Hlady



One of Westjet's 88 Boeing 737s about to head west to Winnipeg



Porter Dash-8 Q400 lands on Runway 25



A wintery view of the airport looking east in the early 1980s



The Con-College Cessnas lined up outside the ACE hangar

Air Canada Vickers Viscount: Thunder Bay July 1972



TBIAA is the Canadian dealer for Boschung runway snow removal equipment such as this snow plough.