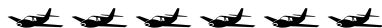




Fly North

Volume 4, Number 1:
January—March, 2012



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

Oral History Project: NOAHC has extended its contract with Nextlibrary Inc. to enable us to continue to record the region's aviation history through the memories and knowledge of the individuals who lived it. At this time nine interviews have been conducted, recording the experiences of bush pilots, individuals who worked at Can-Car, pilots who instructed or trained at the Elementary Flying School and others who worked in various elements of the local aviation industry. In addition, a video record was made of a number of slides and old photographs, which will ultimately be developed into a DVD illustrating the 'History of Aviation in Thunder Bay'. It will be used as part of the education program being developed by NOAHC. Our most recent interviewee was Bill Turner and a short bio of his exciting aviation career can be found on page two of the newsletter. Excerpts from other interviews can be found on the NOAHC web page (<http://noahc.org>) - click on **Videos**. As the web page continues to be developed, the full interviews will be made accessible to NOAHC members.

Donations: NOAHC has received a donation of plastic model kits courtesy of one of our members, Gerry Bell. These belonged to Onni Saline, a Lakehead native, who over the years acquired a collection of aviation artifacts and memorabilia. On Onni's death, most of his collection went to museums in the US and Canada, but the models were left to Gerry, who thought that an ideal location for their display would be the Centre. In all there are three dozen kits, including examples of many of the aircraft associated with northwestern Ontario, such as the Beaver, Otter, Norseman, Beech 18, Cessna 180 and the DC-3. In addition, there are models of Can-Car's wartime products, the Hurricane and Helldiver plus a Tiger Moth such as used at the Fort William Elementary Flying School. There are multiple copies of a number of the aircraft, which is ideal for the development of dioramas such as a wartime assembly line at Can-Car, for example, or a float-plane base somewhere in the north-west. All of the models are unassembled and the Centre hopes to co-opt volunteers from the local model building community to help in the assembly. The plan is to have the models painted in the colours of local aircraft companies with registration letters that would have been seen on planes in the skies above the north-west.

(For an account of the life of Onni Saline see page 2)

Gerry Bell was also instrumental in rescuing a bunch of aviation video tapes that were being discarded by the local Air Search and Rescue group. These include tapes of several of the renowned Oshkosh Airshows from the early 1990s as well as information and training videos. These will be useful in our educational programs.

The Robert Arnold Photo Collection: On page 4 of this issue we are highlighting the bush planes of northwestern Ontario in pictures taken by aviation photographer and collector Robert Arnold. When asked to write about what got him interested in aviation and aviation photography, Robert submitted the following:-

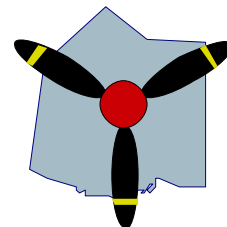
"I suppose it all started when I was a child and grew up under the glidepath of Runway 31 to Winnipeg International Airport. The fact that I lived only a five minute walk from the former Trans-Canada Air Lines (now Air Canada) maintenance facility (which, at the time also housed the Winnipeg Airport Terminal) helped encourage my interest some. I remember walking with my father to the corner of Ellice and Ferry Rd. to watch as the aircraft were shuffled around the tarmac in front of the TCA facility. If we waited around long enough we would actually get to watch a North Star or DC-3 belch smoke as it started its engines. I thought that was the neatest thing to see. Sometimes my dad would even bring his camera with him and snap a picture. Later I would walk there on my own to watch the T.C.A. Connies, North Stars and DC-3's go about their daily routines. As time went by these aircraft would slowly disappear to be replaced by more modern aircraft like the DC-8, Vickers Viscount and Vickers Vanguard, and Winnipeg would become the primary maintenance facility for the Viscount. To this day I can still hear the four Rolls Royce Dart engines of the Viscount start up if I put my mind to it. After all, I had heard the "whine" of these engines from the time we moved close to the airport in 1956 to 1974 when Air Canada retired the Viscount from service.

When I was fourteen I joined the Royal Canadian Air Cadets. During my four years with the Cadets I would have the opportunity to fly on several military aircraft of the day. These aircraft would include the DC-3's for familiarization flights, and while at summer camp we would also have the opportunity to fly in C-45 Expeditors, Harvards and if we were lucky even in a glider. To get to these summer camps we would fly in DC-4s and Viscounts."

(..to be continued in Fly North, Volume 4, Number 2)

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Onni Saline 1909 - 1999



Onni Saline was born July 11, 1909 in Fort William, Ontario and raised in a railway family. He grew up in Savanne located 105 km northwest of Thunder Bay where his father was a CPR section foreman. As a youth of 10 years old Onni witnessed the first crash of an Ontario Provincial Air Service aircraft, a HS-2L flying boat and was involved in the rescue and extrication of the survivors. He can be seen in a picture of the rescue party in *The Fire Birds* a book about the history of the Ontario Provincial Air Service.

In 1928 Onni visited family in Los Angeles, California and while there began flight training flying in a 90hp WACO 10 bi-plane. During one training flight seated in the front cockpit he was on final approach to the runway when he experienced a sharp pain in one foot, undaunted he continued on and landed only then did he mention his hurt foot to his instructor. Upon investigation it became evident that Onni had been shot in the foot and a search of the area found the cause, a small group of boys were off the end of the runway shooting at aircraft with a 22 calibre rifle. While training Onni did have occasion to run into Howard Hughes and remembered hand cranking his engine to help him start his aircraft. Onni did solo in the WACO 10 but never did finish his licence as his visitors visa had expired and he had to return to Canada.

In 1941 after years of working for the CPR railway Onni answered Canada's urgent call for skilled workers in the war industries and began work at Canada Car in Fort William where he worked on the final assembly of Hawker Hurricanes and Curtiss Helldiver dive bombers. After the war his new found career in aviation took him to the United States where he worked for the next 30 years for some of the major airlines in their component repair shops, specializing in propeller governors before jets took over. As an avid collector of aviation and railway memorabilia Onni used his airline privileges to travel the world in search of new materials for his collections.

Onni returned to Thunder Bay in 1993 where his passion for collecting aviation materials continued, in particular his beloved Canada Car. He was fortunate to be able to attend a special gathering of "Rosie the Riveters" where he was able to contribute his insights and experiences of working at Canada Car. He also made frequent road trips to places like Red Lake, Geraldton and Sault Ste Marie to see and fly in vintage aircraft, meet the pilots, and collect anything he could.

After Onni Saline passed away in January 1999 most of his vast aviation collection was donated to the Smithsonian Museum in Washington DC, the Pan-Am Museum in Miami Florida, and the Canadian Bush Plane Museum in Sault Ste. Marie Ontario. Onni's equally large collection of railway materials and artefacts was donated to the Winnipeg Railway Museum. It was always Onni's desire that his collections would benefit as many aviation and rail enthusiasts like himself and wanted them to be accessible for everyone to enjoy.

Gerry Bell

Bill Turner:

*Aircraft builder, bomber pilot, flight instructor,
air carrier operator*

Bill Turner spent the first two of the 72 years he has been involved in aviation building Hurricane wings at the local Canadian Car and Foundry plant in Fort William. In 1942, as soon as he was old enough, he enlisted in the RCAF. He did his initial flying training at EFTS#2 in Fort William where he soloed on Tiger Moths in only 7 hours and 55 minutes. From there it was on to multi-engine training on Cessna Cranes in Yorkton, Saskatchewan where he was commissioned and was awarded his wings. By 1944,

Bill was in England flying familiarization flights in Airspeed Oxfords before crewing up in a Vickers Wellington, twin-engine bomber at an Operational Training Unit. At that stage of the war the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan had been so successful that there was actually a surplus of pilots, despite the horrendous toll that five years of nightly operations had taken on Bomber Command. Training continued, however, and Bill was sent to a Heavy Conversion Unit where he began to fly the Canadian-built Mk X Avro Lancaster, which he describes as the 'sweetest airplane you can imagine'. By the time he had completed his training, the war in Europe was over, but Bill volunteered for the Tiger Force,

a long-range heavy bomber unit, made up mainly of RAF and RCAF squadrons, which was to be used in the Pacific against Japan. Before it could be deployed Japan surrendered and the Force was disbanded.

Back at the Lakehead, Bill continued his involvement with aviation, as an instructor with the Thunder Bay Flying Club—at the princely sum of \$2:00 per hour. He later succeeded John Paterson as the President of the Club. In the 1950s, during the so-called Cold War, the RCAF was keen to maintain a pool of experienced pilots to be ready should things begin to heat up. It instituted the Chipmunk Scheme, in which Bill participated. The scheme provided flying clubs with one or more DHC Chipmunk trainers, allowing veteran service pilots to keep in practice. The first Chipmunk assigned to the Thunder Bay Flying Club was lost in a hanger fire in 1957, but it was replaced and the scheme was generally considered a success. Despite that it was cancelled in 1958.

Following a spell with the Canadian Grain Commission in Winnipeg, Bill Turner returned to north-western Ontario in 1976 where he established Shebandowan Air. The Cessna 180 he flew was too small to make the airline profitable and denied a licence for a larger Beaver he sold the business. Over the years Bill has owned and flown a variety of aircraft including a Piper Cub, Piper Pacer, Luscombe and several Cessnas. Most recently he has constructed and flown a Murphy Rebel homebuilt machine. Construction took about 1000 hours, perhaps bringing back memories of his first aviation job building the Hurricane wings at Can-Car.

(The information above came from an NOAHC Oral History interview with Bill Turner in January, 2012)



**Bill Turner by the tail fin of his
Lancaster, with the Snowy Owl
insignia of 420 Sqdn. RCAF**

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Jellicoe

Established in 1914 as *Hector*, a divisional point on the CNOR. Renamed in 1916 in honour of Admiral Jellicoe, commander of the British fleet at the Battle of Jutland in World War One

WINGS OVER JELlicOE

Today, Jellicoe is a small community of little more than 100 people on Highway 11 in the Municipality of Greenstone, 250 km or so north-east of the Lakehead. It was established in 1914 and for the following 20 years existed as a relatively quiet divisional point on the CNOR line. That changed in 1934 when high grade gold deposits were discovered north of the town and the Sturgeon River Gold Rush began. In a matter of months, the population grew tenfold, from about 50 to over 500, as prospectors and later miners flooded into the community. At that time, Jellicoe had no road access to other parts of the northwest so all of the people and their supplies came in by way of the railway. However, a few enterprising aviators realised the business opportunities to be had by serving the town and the mining camps growing up along the Sturgeon River, and at the height of the boom as many as six bush airlines were operating into and out of Jellicoe.

The airlines companies were small operations with only one or two aircraft each and a similar number of pilots. They included *Century Airways*, *Cowan Flying Service* (G.A. Cowan), *Nipigon Airways* (Roy Spooner), *Parsons' Flying Service* (Henry Parsons), *Norman Miller Flying Service* (Norman Miller) and *Prospector Airways*. The companies made regular flights carrying supplies and men into and out of the various mining camps along the Sturgeon River, as well as those at Kinghorn and Longlac, either on floats or skis depending on the season. Nipigon Airways seems to have been most successful, being the first into Jellicoe in the summer and fall of 1934. It had three aircraft. Starting with a Fleet, in 1935 it added a new WACO and in the following year a new Fairchild monoplane (probably a Fairchild 24). The WACO was perhaps the pride of the fleet, with a 220 hp engine, an upholstered interior and a heater, which the Jellicoe News noted 'made winter flying a pleasure'. In 1934 and 1935, most of the flying seems to have been done by Roy Spooner and his manager, Louis Bisson, but in 1936 two new pilots, Jack Smale and Eric Bendell, were brought in suggesting that business was good. While most of the business involved the mining operations, Nipigon Airways also serviced a commercial fishing operation on Onaman Lake owned by Jack McKirdy. The fish were flown to Jellicoe where they were packed and shipped out to points south by rail.

The companies also flew what must have been some of the earliest air search and rescue and medevac flights in the north west. In the winter of 1934-35, for example, Century Airways flew 3 mercy flights into the Kinghorn area east of Jellicoe. A medical doctor was flown in to assess the condition of patients. If their injury or illness was serious enough they were air-lifted to Jellicoe to be treated in the Red Cross Hospital Car set up there. A longer distance evacuation took place in July 1935, when Norm Miller of Norman Miller Flying Service flew the critically ill mother of Frank Allen, the proprietor of the local hotel, to Toronto. With refuelling stops, the trip took about 6 hours, but the same trip by train at that time would have easily taken more than a day.

One of Century Airways' pilots, Douglas McDonald, who flew many of the medevac flights, found himself in need of help in January 1935. He had flown into the bush to pick up two mining company employees, but failed to return at the expected time. Captain G.A. Cowan of Cowan Flying Service with Henry Parsons of Parsons' Flying Service volunteered to fly a search mission. They located McDonald's plane on Davis Lake where in deep snow it had become completely frozen in. Cowan's plane was lighter and did not sink far enough into the snow to become frozen. MacDonald and his passengers were found sheltering in a cabin on the lake and were brought out to Jellicoe. At a later date, the trapped plane was also recovered.

(With thanks to Ken R. Johnson of Surrey, British Columbia who provided the research notes for this piece)

Bush planes in north-western Ontario as photographed by Robert Arnold



Beech C-45H c/n AF-378, C-FNKL while operating for Northwestern Flying Services was spotted tied to the dock at Nestor Falls, Ontario, June 1988. The aircraft came out of the Wichita Kansas plant in 1955

DHC-3 Otter c/n 365, C-GUTL operating for Fort Frances Sportsmen Airways based out of Fort Frances, Ontario. Here it is tied up at the dock at Rainy River near Ft. Frances in October 1991.



Canadian Car and Foundry built Noorduyn Norseman Mk-V, C-FJIN c/n CCF-55 operating for Sky North Ltd. and tied to the dock at Kenora in May, 1989

DHC-2 Beaver 1, c/n 819, C-FNFO as it was tied to the dock at Nestor Falls Ontario August 1991. At the time it was working for Nestor Falls Bait and Tackle Ltd. Air Services.

