

FLY NORTH

Volume 11, Number 2:
April - June, 2019

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 -----

Community events

Thunder Bay Historical Film Festival

This film festival was held at the Thunder Bay Community Auditorium on Thursday March 21. The event highlighted aspects of Aviation, Rail, and Water transportation history at the Lakehead. NOAHC screened the movie, "Rosies of the North", the story of the women workers at Can-Car during WWII. The event was well attended, as can be seen from the picture below.



Can-Car Presentation

On April 23, at the Thunder Bay Museum, NOAHC's Assistant Curator, Jonathan Sheppard, presented an account of the aviation years at Canadian Car and Foundry's Fort William plant. Jonathan's research for his MA at Lakehead



University involved a detailed examination of the company's history and his wealth of knowledge on the subject was apparent. From the audience response and comments afterwards the presentation was clearly much appreciated by all.

Acquisitions:

RCAF Uniform

Captain George Romick of the Thunder Bay Military Museum donated a 1950s vintage RCAF Major's uniform, which included a khaki jacket, pants, two olive green shirts and a black necktie. This is an addition to NOAHC's existing collection of RCAF uniforms.

Harvard throttle quadrant

A throttle and mixture control from a Harvard, built at Can-Car in the 1950s was presented to NOAHC by Tim Knutsen.



Canada Post Aviation First Day Covers

On March 27, 2019, Canada Post issued a series of 5 stamps commemorating *Canadians in Flight*. Elsie MacGill is featured on one of the stamps. The Official First Day Cover shows her standing in front of the Maple Leaf II trainer she designed for Can-Car. NOAHC has received a set of all 5 First Day Covers.



Inside this issue:

2. Norseman
3. Coincidence
4. NWO floatplanes



**NORTHWESTERN
ONTARIO AVIATION
HERITAGE CENTRE
INC.**

Mailing Address
403-1100 Memorial Ave
Thunder Bay, ON
P7B 4A3

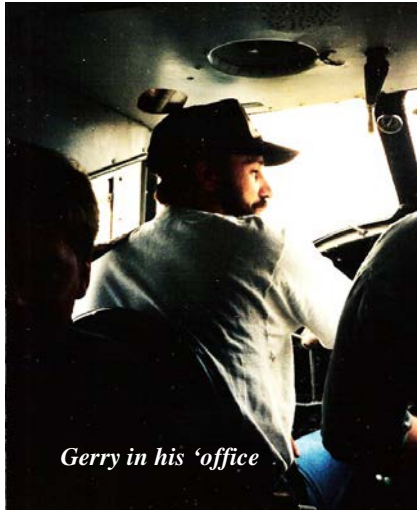
Centre Location
905 Victoria Avenue E
Thunder Bay

Contact NOAHC at
(807) 623-3522
or
noahc@tbaytel.net

Webpage
www.noahc.org

Old Technology in Modern Times: Flying the Norseman – by Gerry Bell

The Norseman was designed in the 30s and first took flight in 1935. Designed as a rugged easily repairable workhorse capable of carrying a variety of loads on wheels, skis, and floats, it had incredible strength and reliability. It provided stellar service exploring and opening up the north, serving during WW2, and in decades of bush flying afterwards. While many Norseman aircraft can now be found in museums, at least one that I flew, there are still working examples plying the northern skies today.



Gerry in his 'office'

I had the privilege of piloting several Norseman during my years flying in Red Lake, the "Norseman Capital of the World". The Norseman was certainly not the easiest aircraft to fly and its performance could not compare to that of modern aircraft, but for me there was something magical about flying such a historic aircraft. Climbing into the cockpit was like going back to another time; there were just a scant few basic flight instruments, a radio, and manual flight controls with no GPS or navigation aids other than maps.

A day's flying began with a careful pre-flight inspection of the fabric covering of the fuselage and wings looking for tears, holes, or other imperfections followed by a close inspection of all the flight controls, flying wires, float cables and water rudders. That being done, both floats were pumped free of water. Following an engine inspection the propeller blades were checked for any gouges and nicks. Having done all that, the next task was to pull the propeller through. That required considerable effort, but was essential to help move any oil accumulated in the bottom cylinders and to help lubricate the top cylinders before starting the engine. Next came fuelling which involved looping the heavy fuel hose over your shoulder and climbing from the float to the wing, ending up over 10 feet above the water. It was no delight fuelling in the rain or with frost or dew on a slippery wing. The cavernous 19 imp gallon oil tank was then filled. At that point you could weigh and load your assigned manifest. A great rule of thumb when loading was that if you could see that 4 rivets on the back of the floats were above the

waterline when you finished you were within the weight and balance envelope for the Norseman.

When starting the Norseman you wished for a third hand since you had to prime, operate the wobble pump, adjust the throttle, all the while turning the engine over with the starter switch, counting the revolving propeller blades before switching on the magnetos. That would bring the engine to life in a haze of oily smoke accompanied by a coughing, sputtering staccato until all the cylinders were firing evenly, producing the powerful throbbing of the 600 hp Pratt & Whitney Wasp R1340, 9 cylinder radial engine. It required a fair amount of time to warm up the engine first thing in the morning, which often required taxiing in the dark so we would be warmed up, ready for take-off at legal light, 1/2 hour before sunrise.

Taking off with a fully loaded Norseman could be quite a work out. Pre-flight run up and take-off checks were done while taxiing and the flaps were lowered by turning the roof-mounted flap handle. After swinging the aircraft into wind, the water rudders were raised by pulling hard on a D-ring on the floor behind the passenger seat, the throttle was slowly advanced to the ear splitting take-off power setting, while easing back on the control column. As the Norseman accelerated the nose came up completely blocking what limited view you had over the big radial engine so you looked out the side window to watch your take-off path. At a certain point you reached forward to the manual elevator trim control and trimmed the aircraft up on to the step of the floats. During the take-off run, one float would be rolled out of the water to break free of the water's drag and reduce take-off distance. Once one float was out of the water the Norseman accelerated much quicker and when take-off speed was reached, more a feel of when the aircraft wants to fly than by the airspeed indicator, you eased back on the control column and lifted off the water. At this point you lowered the nose of the aircraft, raised the flaps, set the throttle and propeller control to climb power and accelerated to climb speed. Upon landing because of the Norseman's huge tail sometimes the wind would not allow you to turn the aircraft and you would have to sail it backwards to where you wanted to go, which was no small feat but could be accomplished by using bursts of engine power and differential ailerons.

The Norseman was a hands-on aircraft and required you to fly it all the time; being heavy on the controls and somewhat slow to respond you needed to think ahead and anticipate what would happen next. It has often been said that flying a Norseman truly makes you a better pilot and I firmly believe that. Flying the Norseman required excellent stick and rudder skills to get the best performance from it, pilots without such skills soon found themselves unemployed.

To say some of the days were extremely long and tiring would be an understatement. Days are long in the northern summer, and we regularly hauled loads late into the evening. With its cramped cockpit and small pilot seat the Norseman was not a very comfortable aircraft to fly for extended periods. It was really hot in the summer and exceedingly cold in the spring and fall, which along with the constant roar and vibration from the engine were extremely fatiguing. When the Norseman was finally tied to the dock and put away for the night I headed home with ringing ears and a very sore back.

Norseman at the dock in Red Lake – Gerry on the right



Gerry Bell is a former bush-pilot who flew the Norseman out of Red Lake. He is a member of the NOAHC Board

Our corporate supporters...


Lakehead Models
Steve Melnick

262 Bay St.
Thunder Bay, ON
P7B 1R5
Tel.: 807-345-5776
Fax: 807-344-6489
lakeheadmodels@shaw.ca
lakeheadmodels.com



DR TERRY TRUSDALE
CIVIL AVIATION MEDICAL EXAMINER

Medicals done at Aviation Centre of Excellence,
ACE Hangar, 2003 Derek Burney Drive, Thunder Bay.
Business Address:
30 Oakleaf Drive, Tel: 807-577-4888
Kakabeka Falls, Ontario FAX: 807-475-5044
Canada. P7K 0H2 email: trusdale@tbaytel.net



SJS Susan J. Southcott
Professional Corporation
CPA CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

#701, 1184 Roland Street
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5M4
(entrance is between 1184 and 1186 Roland)

Phone: 807-623-5977 Fax: 807-623-3524
Email: sjsouthc@tbaytel.net

EKT 90 INC.
INDUSTRIAL CONTRACTORS

BUS: (807) 623-5211
RES: (807) 475-5636
FAX: (807) 623-7415
600 Norah Crescent
MAILING ADDRESS
P.O. BOX 29034
Thunder Bay, Ontario
P7B 6P9

The PATERSON
FOUNDATION

Proud Supporter of Thunder Bay's
Aviation Heritage

www.patersonfoundation.ca

1918 Yonge Street, Thunder Bay,
Ontario P7E 6T9



Thunder Bay Airport

The right approach



Shell Aviation

Maintair Aviation Services Ltd
Brock Marshall

Tel: (807) 475-5915 24 hours
Fax: (807) 475-8321
Cell: (807) 626-3258
maintair@tbaytel.net

316 Hector Dougall Way
Thunder Bay, Ontario P7E 6W6
UNICOM: 122.85

Shell Aviation Dealer




Bearskin Airlines

Let the Bear take you there!



JOHN ANDREWS
FOUNDATION



SUPERIOR SHORES
GAMING ASSOCIATION



NOAHC continues to host 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.

To become a corporate supporter, contact us at
noahc@tbaytel.net
or
(807) 623-3522

Coincidence!

Hi, Liz Wieben,

I really enjoyed the Historical Film Festival put on at the Thunder Bay Auditorium last week; especially the film regarding the events of the aircraft manufacturing at Canada Car. I thought you might be interested to know the irony of the events that took place that evening. When I came in I was issued a little blue ticket that qualified for a door prize. Out of that whole assembly of patrons (over 500 I'm sure) my ticket happened to be drawn for a door prize. The donor sponsor for my prize just happened to be NOAHC for which I was grateful as that was the only sponsor I had any relationship with. The door prize that I won consisted of a T-shirt, a baseball cap with an insignia of a Hawker Hurricane, and two puzzles. One of which was a puzzle picturing two Harvards. Since I have had about 350 hours of flying time on Harvards, I decided to do that puzzle first. I'm not that fast at puzzle making but noticed that the call sign numbers on the Harvard in the foreground were 20417. Just out of curiosity, I checked my log book to see if I had ever flown that Harvard. As you can see from my log book entry, I had flown 1 hour in 417 doing aerobatics. It must have been to provide a break in our air-to-ground gunnery practice at # 1PWS Gunnery school at MacDonald, Manitoba, on

December 29, 1953.

Now what are the chances of that happening? Irony Indeed.

Bill Luft

Dec 23	Hud	2745	Self		
Dec 22	Hud	3253	Self		
Dec 29	Hud	20417	Self		
Dec 29	Hud	2734	Self		
Dec 30	Hud	2587	Self		
Dec 31	Hud	2745	Self		

Excerpt from Bill Luft's log book showing his flight in 20417



The NOAHC jig-saw puzzle won by Bill Luft, showing the Harvard he flew in 1953

Northwestern Ontario Floatplanes



DHC-2 Beaver C-FOBT. Delivered to Lands and Forests in 1948. Moved to Rainy Lake Airways 1959 and Rusty Myers Flying Service in 1991



Piper Supercub C-CPCH. Built in 1979 and originally registered in the U.S. before coming to Canada in 1998. Pictured here at the Nestor Falls Fly-In Outposts dock in Nestor Falls.



C-GUTL was built as a piston Otter in 1960 and was flown by the RCAF until 1981. Following a crash in 1998 when it was owned by Fort Frances Sportsmen Airways it was rebuilt as a Turbo Otter and now flies with Northern Wilderness Outfitters of Fort Frances.



(above)
Cessna 180, C-GIUN was built in 1977 and acquired by Northwest Flying Inc. of Nestor Falls in 1998.

(left)
Cessna Caravan, C-FKSJ was built in 1985 and flew for a number of companies in the U.S. before being purchased by Rusty Myers Flying Service in Fort Frances in 2003



DHC-2 Beaver, C-GEBL was built in 1954 and served with the U.S. military until 1972 when it returned to Canada, where it was acquired by Northwest Flying Inc. in 1980.

The pictures on this page appear courtesy of Robert Arnold who took them during a trip around Northwestern Ontario in 2017.

See *FlyNorth*, vol 10-no 1, 'The Great Beech Hunt – 2017' for more on Robert's trip.