

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW 1948-58

1. Our Dominion Provisional President in his address at the First National Convention, May 1950, laid out some basic guidelines for the development of Wings, and these guidelines continue to remain both appropriate and fundamentally necessary throughout the history of the Association. In addition he stated that, quote, "the best advertisement of the Association is our Wings. A live Wing attracts interest and before long, neighbouring communities become interested and want an organization of their own." unquote.

2. WINGS FORMED 1948-1958

With the formation of the Association evolved a regional structuring of the country into Groups and with each Group being assigned an overseeing responsibility of the Wings located within the boundaries of the Group. The charts listed below reflect this information in detail:-

- (a) Chart No.1 - Group/Wings Membership Count10/49 to 3/53
- (b) Chart No.2 -Group/Wings Membership Count..... 3/54 to 3/58
- (c) Chart No.3 - Individual Wing's Membership Count 10/49 to 3/53
- (d) Chart No.4 - Individual Wing's Membership Count 3/54 to 3/58

2.1 The records show that in the first ten years of operation a total of 98 Wings were formed and within the same period of time a total of 21 Wings were closed or ceased to operate.

The distribution of Wings across Canada was as follows:-

| Group Name | No. Of Wings Formed 1948-1958 | No. Of Wings Closed 1948-1958 |
|------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Maritimes | 21 | 1 |
| Quebec | 15 | 6 |
| Ontario | 43 | 10 |
| Manitoba | 3 | - |
| Saskatchewan | 5 | - |
| Alberta | 6 | 1 |
| British Columbia | 5 | 3 |
| Totals | 98 | 21 |

2.2 From the various reports tabled at Conventions, it might be safe to say that one of major difficulty being experienced in these early days was the inability of Wings to find suitable accommodation from which to operate. Sharing accommodation with branches of the Royal Canadian Legion and of the Army Navy Air Force Association was a very popular alternative. However, Wings in the Maritime provinces, a few of which were operating as Air Force clubs even prior to the formation of the RCAF Association, appear to have had less difficulty in getting their operation more firmly established.

3. THE SURGE AHEAD DESPITE HANDICAPS

3.1. Despite the fact that many starters fell by the wayside, the majority of Wings persevered and survived. Some of the achievements and challenges encountered are detailed as follows:-

3.1.1. **FORMATION of Air Cadet Squadrons** - In keeping with the Aims and objectives of the Association, Wings devote considerable time and talent in the sponsorship of Air Cadet squadrons. In many cases, providing training officers, rendering Financial assistance, providing band instruments and assuring the provisioning of adequate training facilities.

In addition to serving as a means of excellent disciplinary training for the youths of Canada, Air Cadet training also served as an excellent recruiting foundation for service in the then Royal Canadian Air Force. By 1953, twenty-three Wings of the Association were sponsoring Air Cadet squadrons and many other Wings were providing assistance to sponsoring bodies of squadrons.

3.1.2. **RECRUITING Personnel for the Royal Canadian Air Force Association members.** exhibited keen interest in the welfare of their fellow airmen in uniform and in the preservation of an adequate Air Defence system in Canada and North America. As a consequence, and with the encouragement of the Chief of the Air Staff, many Wings took an active role in the recruiting program of the RCAF, to the extent, in some cases, of assisting in the manning of recruiting booths or centres operated by RCAF personnel.

3.1.3. **BON Voyage Parties** - First mention of this activity is recorded in the Minutes of the 1953 Annual General Meeting. These parties were actually organized by individual Wings and were held primarily at embarkation points for RCAF personnel proceeding on overseas postings for service during the period of the Cold War. During the latter part of 1953, overseas drafts became larger and the calls upon individual Wings became too heavy and to offset this, a Bon Voyage Fund was set up. Each Group was committed to remit to the National Headquarters an amount equal to \$10.00 per active Wing in the Group, and the Group in turn to determine what each Wing should contribute.

The records indicate that the RCAF was highly appreciative of this activity and the personnel proceeding overseas were extremely delighted with the farewell parties. Primary organizers of these parties were the Wings of Montreal, Quebec City, Saint John/New Brunswick and Halifax/Nova Scotia.

3.1.4. **RCAFA AWARD** to the Air Cadet League of Canada - Minutes of 1953 Annual Meeting indicate that an RCAF Association Award was offered in competition for the best all-around squadron of the Air Cadet League of Canada. The trophy was competed for in 1952 and the first winner was No. 187 Squadron, High River, Alberta.

- 3.1.5. Yorkminster Memorial - During 1953 the Association was asked to raise a portion of the money required to erect a shrine in Yorkminster, UK, to the memory of the Commonwealth and Allied Airmen who lost their lives in World War II. It would be a tribute to our comrades in No.6 Bomber Group and Coastal Command. A Committee was formed under the Chairmanship of Air Vice-Marshall Brookes, and a target of \$5,000.00 was set. The Minutes of the 1955 Annual Meeting indicate that a sum in the amount of app. \$7,500.00 was collected and donated to this project.
- 3.1.6. PILOT OFFICER Andrew Charles Mynarski, V.C., Memorial Trophy-The establishing of this Trophy was announced at the Eighth National Convention held in Edmonton June, 1958. The announcement was made by Group Captain Stefan Sznuk, Fourth Vice-President of the National Executive Council, RCAFA, and President of the Council of Polish Wings which are member Wings of the RCAF Association. The Trophy pays tribute to this great airman who was the first Canadian of Polish descent to be awarded the highest military decoration.

THE CITATION READS AS FOLLOWS:-

“Pilot Officer Mynarski was the mid-upper gunner of a Lancaster aircraft detailed to attack a target at Cambria in France on the night of 12th June 1944. The aircraft was attacked from below and astern by an enemy fighter and ultimately came down in flames.

As an immediate result of the attack, both port engines failed. Fire broke out between the mid-upper turret and the rear turret, as well as in the port wing. The flames soon became fierce and the captain ordered the crew to abandon the aircraft.

Pilot Officer Mynarski left the turret and went towards the escape hatch. He then saw that the rear gunner was still in his turret and apparently unable to leave it. The turret was in fact, immovable, since the hydraulic gear had been put out of action when the port engine failed, and the manual gear had been broken by the gunner in his attempts to escape.

Without hesitation, Pilot Officer Mynarski made his way through the flames in an endeavour to reach the rear turret and release the gunner. Whilst so doing, his parachute and his clothing, up to the waist, were set on fire. All his efforts to move the turret and free the gunner were in vain. Eventually the rear gunner clearly indicated to him that there was nothing more he could do and that he should try to save his own life. Pilot Officer Mynarski reluctantly went back through the flames to the escape hatch. There as a last gesture to the trapped gunner, he turned towards him, stood to attention in his flaming clothing and saluted, before he jumped out of the aircraft. Pilot Officer Mynarski's descent was

seen by French people on the ground. Both his parachute and his clothing were on fire. He was found eventually by the French, but was so severely burnt that he died from his injuries.

The rear gunner had a miraculous escape when the aircraft crashed. He subsequently testified that, had Pilot Officer Mynarski not attempted to save his comrade's life, he could have left the aircraft in safety and would, doubtless, have escaped death.

Pilot Officer Mynarski must have been fully aware that in trying to free the rear gunner he was almost certain to lose his own life. Despite this, with outstanding courage and complete disregard for his own safety, he went to the rescue. Willingly accepting the danger Pilot Officer Mynarski lost his life by a most conspicuous act of heroism which called for valour of the highest order."

- 3.1.7. MEMBERSHIP Campaigns - This activity has maintained a top priority status in the life of the organization and it is most interesting to observe the significant fall-off in the membership count which occurred between March 52 and March 53. The records indicate a change in the recording system as the contributing factor, whereby, the Association decided to use the count of paid-up members rather than that of the total enrolment figure. This change resulted in a decrease of approx. 4,600 members. However, a gradual build-up is observed through to 1958.
- 3.1.8. NATIONAL Membership Fees - The National President, A/V/M Morfee, in his address at the 1953 Convention stated that from the \$2.00 of annual membership fee received, forty cents pays for the badge and enrolment kit given to each member, fifty cents is returned to Group and under present arrangements, over \$1.00 is required to finance National Executive Council meetings and National Conventions. This leaves very little for operating expenses. At the 1954 Convention it was agreed to raise the dues from @2.00 to \$3.00 effective April 1st, 1955.
- 3.1.9. LINES of Communication - Or in other words, the strengthening link within the perimeter of any forward-looking organization. It is noted that even in these very early days all Wings were encouraged to have a good public relations person on the Wing's executive and to make use of all available tools for publicity including a Wing bulletin, phone committee, the local newspapers, radio, etc. Then looking further a-field, we first learn of the publication, Wings At Home, in the National President's address at the Third National Convention May 1953, at which he stated:-

"Wings At Home" is a media through which Wings may keep abreast of the activities of each other, and in this way less active Wings may be helped from the results of their more active brothers. Previously, this work was farmed out to

different companies and the cost was very high. We now have the facilities within our organization to produce “Wings At Home” at a minimum cost of approximately \$75.00 per issue.

Wings have been very cooperative in sending pictures of executives, parties, and so forth. However, space in the Roundel is limited and only a few of these pictures can be reproduced each month, the others are not being given the publicity to which they are entitled. To overcome this, we have found that these can be reproduced on zinc plates, and hope to make them a part of “Wings At Home”. Thus the activities of each Wing will be given full coverage in “Wings At Home” We cannot become too well known.”

The mention of “Roundel” refers to a magazine that was being published on a monthly basis by the Royal Canadian Air Force and in which some space allocation was made for use by the RCAF Association. Each paid-up member of the Association was included on the mailing list of the Roundel publication.

3.2.0. ANNUAL General Meetings - While keeping the Association family in a closed circuit communications link, it was found to be extremely necessary to meet in body on an annual basis. A few samplings of the NEC/Group representatives and Wing delegates who attended Annual General Meetings are detailed as follows:-

- (a) Chart No.5 - NEC/Group Reps at 1950 AGM
- (b) Chart No. 6 - Wing Delegates at “ “
- (c) Chart No.7- NEC/Group Reps at 1953 AGM
- (d) Chart No. 8 - Wing Attendees at 1953 AGM
- (e) Chart No.9 - NEC/Group Reps at 1958 AGM
- (f) Chart No.10 - Wing Attendees at 1958 AGM

Annual General Meetings which are formally recognized as National Conventions, soon became the heart-throb of the organization in that they provided a yard-stick for measuring the successes and failures within the organization . However, they also provided the platform from which to initiate changes and to implement strategic planning in order to ensure the progress of the organization. It is in this vein that the agenda item dealing with resolutions was awarded top priority for the deliberations which take place at these meetings. It then became customary to divide resolutions into the following three categories:-

- (a) Those for the consideration of the Federal Government, primarily, the Department of National Defence.
- (b) Those relating to the Royal Canadian Air Force, appropriate to this period under review.
- (c) Those relating to the RCAF Association.

3.2.1. IN REFLECTION - but briefly, and as a point of interest, here are some of the resolutions which were concurred in during this decade in review - all identified by year of AGM:-

(a) To the Department of National Defence:-

1. (1952) Whereas in time of war it is necessary to recruit into the Services members of the medical, dental and other professions who normally serve the public;
AND WHEREAS there is continuing need on the part of the public for professional care,
BE IT RESOLVED that representations be made to the Department of National Defence to the effect that they, in conjunction with the various Professional Associations, set up a board for the purpose of procuring and assigning professional personnel necessary for the needs of the Armed Services, having due regard to the needs of the civilian population as a whole.
2. (1957) Resolved that the Federal Government is hereby requested to consider the advisability of establishing a National Shrine of Remembrance in Canada in the form of a Military cemetery, in which all who gave their lives while in the Service of their country at home, and those who render outstanding service while serving in Her Majesty's Services at home or abroad, may be buried with fitting honour and lasting recognition.
3. (1953) Moved that the allowance made to prisoners of war in Korea and Japan be extended to prisoners of war in Europe during the Second World War.

(b) To the Royal Canadian Air Force:-

1. (1952).Whereas it has been the policy of the RCAF to avoid active recruiting among personnel of Air Cadet Squadrons;
BE IT RESOLVED that the RCAF, after having obtained approval of the Air Cadet League, adopt an active program of recruiting among personnel of the Air Cadet Squadrons.
2. (1953) In order to further and increase cooperation between the RCAF and the RCAF Association,
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that a liaison officer or some liaison establishment be arranged to effect closer co-operation between these two organizations dedicated to furthering air power.
3. (1954) Whereas the Minister of National Defence and the Government of Canada have recognized the importance of air power and have brought into being a modern fighter air defence Wing and Maritime components within the RCAF, all of which are basically defensive in character, and WHEREAS Canada has two large army components overseas, and an army mobile striking force within Canada, all of which require tactical air support in event of hostilities,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Canada and the RCAF consider the advisability of organizing, equipping and training an adequate tactical air force which can efficiently provide tactical air support of army ground forces.

(c) To the RCAF Association:-

1. (1950) That the Dominion Executive Council give consideration to calling members of the Association who are serving in the R.C.A.F. (Regular) by the term "Serving Members" rather than "Associate Members."
2. (1953) WHEREAS one of the main Aims and Objects of the RCAF Association is in part to support the Royal Canadian Air Cadets, and WHEREAS a further aim and object of the Air Force Association is to support and encourage aeronautics in all its branches,
BE IT RESOLVED that it becomes the duty of every RCAF Association Wing in Canada, if not already doing so, to sponsor, raise and actively support an Air Cadet Squadron in the city or town in which the Association Wing is located.
3. (1958) RESOLVED that the National Executive Council of the RCAF Association investigate the feasibility of the Association approaching the governments involved to encourage retiring service personnel towards training in the school teaching profession.

4.0 SOME ADDITIONAL REFLECTIONS - from the wealth of information which is still available (on files), it would be safe to say that this was indeed a very busy decade. The marshalling of support to form the organization was by no means a simple task and as we move forward into the next decade it might be worthwhile to gander through some additional reflections and/or observations.

4.1 W.D. REPRESENTATION WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION. It is noted that the position of W.D. (National) on the Dominion Executive Council of 1950 was increased from one to a total of four positions by 1953, namely, W.D. Representative (National), (Central), (Eastern) and (Western). However, at the National Convention of 1957, the following suggestion concerning amendments to the RCAF Association By-Laws was made by Miss Marion Graham, President of Saskatchewan Group. Quote: That the Organization committee consider the desirability of deleting from the National Executive Council the position of W.D. National. Unquote. Miss Graham stated that the former W.Ds attending the convention had discussed this matter and were in agreement with the proposal.

4.2. MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY - INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATE. A category which was always recognized but never activated. The following is an extract from the Minutes of the 1957 National Convention. Quote:

Air Vice-Marshal A.L.. James, Chairman, reported that in his discussion with Industrialists regarding our proposal that aircraft firms become associated with the RCAF Association in the category of Industrial Associates, he had found that

most of these firms are now associate members of other national organizations which represent the voice of industry and provide the same services which we had proposed.

It was also pointed out by the Industrialists that their becoming associated with us might create the impression that we were lobbyists and thus detract from the freedom of action which the Association now enjoys. Air Vice-Marshal James concluded that he deferred to the wishes of the Industrialists that we let the matter of Industrial Associates rest for the present. Unquote.

4.3. LADIES AUXILIARIES - It was at the National Convention held in Windsor, Ontario, 17-19 May, 1956, that the Association formally recognized the excellent support being extended to Wings by ladies groups within Wings which in turn incited the following resolution which was submitted by Maritime Group:-

Resolved that the Association express publicly its appreciation of the services performed and the cooperation extended by the Ladies Auxiliaries established by many Wings and that it also express its approval of the establishment of such Auxiliaries at Wing level. **RESOLUTION CARRIED**