



415 (Prince Edward County) Wing  
Royal Canadian Air Force Association  
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# CHOCKS AWAY

Summer 2015

## President's Message



Greetings from a retired pilot.

This is my first time on the cover of our news note so I'll start with a bit of background, although I already know most of you as wing members and fellow travellers.

First things first: that picture is not really me; I am not that ugly, I am approximately 25 with 75 years of experience, having spent 26 of those in the AIR FORCE in various locations in Canada. And yes, I have done my penance in Training Command, but mostly hauled trash and travelled the world. This is much to the chagrin of my wife, Sharron, who says she is coming back in her second life as a pilot.

I have only been in this job for a few months but am already up to my eyeballs in paper and E Mails. I have the greatest respect for my predecessor and their organizing abilities.

We have had a number of changes on the executive and the new guys are doing a marvellous job of keeping me hopping. I know I have a very good memory but it is extremely short, so please keep me posted many times of the things I'm supposed to do.

As you are aware, your executive has many tasks and we are asking for help from the membership. There are several positions/jobs open that REQUIRE filling! STEP UP and get involved

**Per Ardua Ad Astra**

*Your 415 Wing President ... Tom*

## WING NEWS



On 15 May 2015, 15 Members of 415 Wing toured 8 Wing Trenton. This event was organised by our former liaison officer, CWO Gaidies who is to be congratulated for an excellent day. I am sure that everyone who participated had their eyes opened with all the improvements that have taken place over the past few years.

Courtesy of the technical crew in 1 Hanger the 415 Wing cribbage players will be pegging on a custom built board at the next Regional Conference hosted by 418 Wing Belleville and held at the Trenton wing on Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.

Eight members from 415 Wing attended the Memorial Service to honour those members of the Royal Flying Corps who died undergoing training at Deseronto during WW1 on Saturday 13 June.

**The annual 415 Wing Golf for Fun Day took place at the Roundel Glen Golf Course on Monday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Twenty seven members and guests participated in what was considered by all an enjoyable day of golf followed by a delicious Bar-B-Q steak dinner.**

**Although it was a perfect weather day, power carts unfortunately were not permitted on the course because of the record breaking rainfall the previous evening. Nevertheless this did not deter anyone from playing at least 9 holes of golf. Those who were not sure whether they could walk 9 holes soldiered on in typical military fashion and successfully completed the task.**

**Closest to the hole competition on #17 was won by Alex Chambers, our Wing treasurer. Alex commented that had there been enough prize money he would have generously paid everyone's 2015 membership dues!**

**In closing, although it was disappointing that power carts were not allowed, I would like to say THANK YOU to all the players for being so understanding and rising to the occasion. You made my job so much easier.**

**Spike Gammon**

**Wing Sports Officer Emeritus**

August 7, 2015 saw three Wings (415, 416 and 418) vie for the Quinte Region Golf Trophy. The tournament was hosted by 416 Wing Kingston, with play occurring at The Landings Golf Course at the Kingston airport. 415 Wing provided three foursomes, with one team augmenting 418 Wing. Participating for 415 Wing were Tom Ross, Bob Bird, Brian Burke, Don Bengert, Spike Gammon, Dennis Margueratt, Bob Prystai and Doug Yates, while Gerry Howlett, Bob Doan, John McCrae and Jack Dingle played for 418 Wing. After a fine day of golfing, 415 Wing was victorious in winning the trophy, finishing with a combined total of 121, 5 under par. In the closest to the pin competitions, Bob Prystai and Dennis Margueratt were victorious and each received a bottle of wine for the efforts.

416 Wing provided a very nice steak dinner with lots of comradery after the event. It was decided that 416 Wing would host the event next year around the same time.

Robert Prystai

Wing Sports Officer

**Mal Campbell advises that he has Slip-ons for the epaulettes on our summer dress shirts available for \$8.25 per pair and wing numbers (415) at \$5.00 per set.**

**The annual Wing Picnic was held again at “Bird House City” on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. Once again, we enjoyed delicious steaks procured by Don Janes and barbecued to perfection by Chuck Flower and Ted Kasprzak and great pot luck provided by everyone. Thank you to the stalwarts who set up and tore down.**



Another great day for 851 Squadron thanks to the volunteers of # 415 Wing.

Chuck Flower and Dennis Margueraat were a tremendous team working the one serviceable BBQ. Tom Ross collected the funds and also was a master at hustling the walk by crowd. Bob Bird did a little soliciting himself and enticed his never ending flow of contacts to join a steady flow of patrons enjoying the food graciously served by our two cadets, Jessie and Colby Swackhammer. These two young cadets were well turned out in their uniforms and extremely helpful in our successful endeavour.

Ted Cullin, once again, was our roving assistant and kept things running smoothly.

Mal Campbell and I did the grunt work and thank all of the team in helping set up and then cleaning up after wards.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the generous backing of Jamie Yeo and his staff at Picton Sobeys.

To all of you, a grateful thank you.!!

The final tally was \$650.00 – a record for this event.

Cheers....Dave

## **PROGRAMS & SOCIAL**

The annual memorial service to honour the 6 RAF members who died while participating in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan at RAF Station Picton, and the over 200 other veterans who are interred in Glenwood Cemetery will take place 26 September 2015. Fall in at 09:45 hours.

The Fall Regional Conference hosted by 418 Wing will take place on Saturday, 4 October 2015 at 413 Wing headquarters in Trenton. More details later.

### **Fall Dinner Meeting Schedule**

The fall Dinner/Meetings will continue to be held at the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 78, Picton, Ontario. The schedule is as follows:

Tuesday, 8 September 2015, Battle of Britain;

Tuesday, 6 October 2015, Air Cadet Night;

Tuesday, 24 November 2015, 415 Wing RCAFA Charter Night;

Tuesday, 8 December 2015, Christmas Dinner.

Final details for these functions will be published approximately two weeks prior to the event.

Glen Crellin

415 Wing RCAFA Housing Officer

## **IN MEMORIAM**

**AUBIN, Ethel Gwendolyn "Gwen"** - (Retired lab technician, BGH & TMH) Passed peacefully, at the Belleville General Hospital on Thursday, July 30th, 2015 in her 83rd year. Beloved wife of 50 years to the late Paul Joseph Aubin (Retired Major, R.C.A.F). Loving mother to Brady (Sandra) of Beaverton, ON and Philip (Sylvie) of Barrie, ON. Gwen is survived by her brother Bud Weaver (Joyce) of Calgary, AB. She will be lovingly remembered by her 4 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. In keeping with her wishes, cremation has taken place. Gwen's life was deeply involved in her community and with the military as a military spouse. A celebration of life will be held at the 8 Wing Canadian Force Chapel, 91 Namao Drive, CFB Trenton (from Hwy 2 take RCAF Road North, which is the road on the west side of the airfield) on Saturday, August 8th, 2015 at 12noon. (time of visiting will be held one hour prior from 11:00a.m. - 12noon). Rev. Michael Rice officiating. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Belleville General Hospital Foundation would be greatly appreciated by the family.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Treasurer Alex Chambers informs me that all but 2 members have renewed their membership for 2015/16. Our numbers stand at 78 regular and 1 dual for a total of 80.

## PICKED UP IN PASSING

Submitted by Bill Franklin

**Plane Landing in Cobourg – 1951** There is no airport in Cobourg and there never has been - yet on Dec 20, 1951 a passenger plane landed in Cobourg. Quite a story!



### **Story as told by Larry Wilson**

A young boy at the time the plane landed on his parents' farm.

*DECEMBER 20, 1951 to JANUARY 10, 1952*

*By Larry Wilson*

Wednesday, December 20, 1951 started out as a normal day for our family. Father (*Charley Wilson - Ed*) and the hired man had risen earlier to do the morning milking.

Mother had now risen to prepare breakfast and to get her darling sons out of bed for school. As my father was leaving with a load of milk for the local dairy in Cobourg, I thought the noise was that of the milk cans sliding around in the back of the 1950 Studebaker 1/2 ton. It was cold enough outside that we had no vision through our bedroom window (because of frost) to see what was taking place.

With that, our hired man (*Harold Drinkwater - Ed.*) ran into the house to inform mother that a plane had landed in the field below the barn. Mother took one look out the back door, informed him to get the people into the house and then ran to my bedroom to get me moving. Her remarks went something like "there is a plane in our field and there must be one hundred people coming up to the barn". Now mother was not one to tell stretched stories, but that morning I figured she was losing it.

I finished dressing and headed for the back door. Holy Hanna.

It looked like one of those pictures you would see in a magazine of the gold rush days. There was a line of people snaking across the field towards the barn.

It had snowed that night, possibly one or two feet and had also drifted. As a matter of fact, it was snowing like the devil at that time.

Father arrived at the dairy and was unloading his milk cans when our neighbour Bob Staples pulled in behind him. Bob informed father that a large plane had just landed on our farm. Now Bob was one who loved to lead you on and father figured he was having his leg pulled again. After washing his milk cans, possibly telling a joke or two, he was off for home to get his breakfast and to do the daily farm chores. What a surprise he was in for, he never did get his breakfast that day.

I pulled on my coat and boots and proceeded out the back door. As I landed on the back landing, a voice behind me said "and where are you going young man". I turned around to see one of the tallest R.C.M.P. officers I had ever seen. He directed me to bring the people to the house, as he wished to speak with them. He had been traveling along Highway #2, following the plane (*RCMP had been notified by Air Traffic who had seen a mystery plane on radar - Ed*). When it had landed, he drove into our drive, getting his cruiser stuck in the snow. Boy would dad be some ticked off, as he had just gone out the drive making a trail. I ran to the barn, opening the gates so that the people could pass through to the house. I continued on towards the plane to see if any help was needed.

I came upon a lady who was walking in a pair of opened toed, high heeled shoes. Her feet were now swollen enough that the shoes would not stay on, so Mr. Macho picked her up and carried her to the house.

By this time most of the passengers had made their way into the house. They were in every room of the house, all forty-four of them. It should be noted, that for the past two hours there was no heat on the plane, so they were glad of some warmth.

Mother loaded the old wood cook stove with more wood and handed out wool work socks to warm their feet. I should note, that several months later, one of the passengers sent mother several new pairs of wool socks to replace the ones that she had used.

I was directed to the basement, to throw more coal on the furnace. By this time father had arrived home and took over. You had to know my father, his taking over would be to visit with our new guests and make sure that mother had looked after everyone's needs. (I do have a picture of father handing out coffee cups, so our guests could have a nice hot cup of tea - bottom left).

By now our neighbours were starting to arrive with loaves of bread, the makings for sandwiches, fruit cakes, cookies and anything else pulled from the freezer that could be used to feed this hungry bunch. Those were the good old days when neighbours jumped in to help and then thought about what they had done afterwards.

What an exciting time. All these new guests, who were so happy to be safe and alive. Many, this being their first visit to Canada. Our guests were made up of families with children, single people and service men. One service man was a day late for his wedding and when he phoned his bride to be, she informed him that she would wait another day, but no longer. By ten o'clock some of the service men were getting bored, so, I figured that I could solve that problem and get myself out of some work. I gathered them together and we headed for the barn. I put some at cleaning out the cows, some at feeding, and the rest I took to slop the pigs and feed the chickens. I do believe they enjoyed this change in routine, as years later, one of the service men looked me up, and in our visit he mentioned

about feeding the animals.

Along about noon, a bus arrived to take our new friends away. They would be taken to the air base at Trenton for the night before going back to the US. The bus was owned and driven by none other than our very good friend Keith Burley. Keith always had a smile, but that day it was bigger than usual.

Keith told us afterwards, that when he got to the US Border, he was passed through without inspection and that the border inspectors wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

I'll go back a bit in my story and tell you about the plane etc.. The plane was a C46 Curtis Commando troop plane, now owned by the "99ers" from Burbank, California and used as a charter passenger craft. There were forty-four passengers and a crew of three. Of the forty-four, four were children. They were to leave from Burbank and travel to Newark, N.J. The plane was plagued with problems from the start. They were a day late leaving Burbank and after a short flight landed in the desert. Later that night, they then left for Chicago. As they continued on from Chicago to Newark, the radio antennas started to ice up and radio contact was lost. As they could not contact anyone to get bearings, the plane strayed to the north.

As they passed Toronto, Malton Airport had them on radar, but could not make any radio contact. It was at this time that the R.C.M.P. were called about this unidentified craft. The craft continued along the north shore of Lake Ontario. Oshawa Airport got them on the radar, but no radio contact. Trenton Air Station was notified. They were put on alert, loading jets with ammunition for the meeting with this mystery craft.

As this mystery craft passed Port Hope, they were low enough to see the waves of Lake Ontario. The left engine ran out of fuel, the pilot feathered the prop, he feared for the worst, they had gone too far and were over the Atlantic Ocean.

As they passed Bob Carr's Marsh, he spotted a jut of land on his left. With that the right engine ran out of fuel. He slowly turned the craft to the left coming over the Cobourg Dye Works, over the County Home, continued turning west.

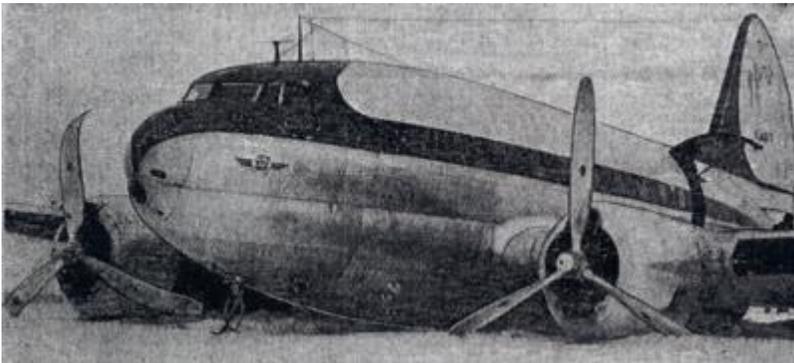
When he saw a flat field on our farm, he said, that's where it will take place. He continued over the Burnham's farm, swinging over the Johns' farm and turning east, making his approach to land. The pilot brought the plane in so low that he only cleared the fence posts before settling into the new fallen snow.

As he touched down, he released the landing gear, allowing the tail wheel to come down and act like a rudder on a boat. The pilot Mr. Bruce Smelser (right) told me afterwards, that his next big concern was a large tree at the east side of our farm, which they were coming straight toward. This tree was located on the south end of what is now Rogers Road. They were lucky that the snow was dry

enough to act like a brake and the plane stopped within several hundred feet of touching down. It should be noted, that the landing was so smooth, that a cup of coffee sitting on the pilot's console was not spilled, nor were the sleeping babies wakened

The passengers did not know the plane had stopped moving until the stewardess opened the plane door. Remember, in those days planes did not have escape chutes, you jumped from the plane to the ground, a distance of possibly five to six feet.

A TCA flight on its way from Montreal to Toronto, heard the air news and diverted his flight to see what had taken place. As they passed over Cobourg, he circled his craft so that his passengers could see the downed craft. At this point the downed passengers were just getting off the plane and waved to the TCA Flight.



It was only a few days before mechanics from the US arrived to work on the plane, but due to Canadian Regulations, they could not work on the craft. The work had to be done by Canadian mechanics, so a Toronto firm, Sanderson Aircraft, were hired to do the work.

The first thing was to get the craft up on it's wheels. This was done with the help of Ron Gagne and Fred Ito. Ron had a D7 Cat dozer and Fred had an old backhoe mounted on an army truck and old Ford dump truck, which had to be towed each morning to start. The work began by digging ramps under the plane, which were then lined with planks to make a roadway to pull the plane up. The landing gear was pumped down by hand, the plane was jacked a small amount to clear the ground and to allow the wheels to come into the locked position. The D7 was then hooked onto the front of the plane and it was slowly pulled up the ramps to a level area where work could continue. With Fred's backhoe, the old propellers were removed and new ones installed. The batteries were recharged, fuel put in the tanks and the engines started. Voila - the props ran true and smooth, well, as true and smooth as those engines ran.

All the time that Fred was putting on the props, Ron was busy levelling out a 2,500 ft. air strip, in preparation for the upcoming take off. A Mr. Charles Rector was the person hired to fly this craft out. Assisting him would be his mechanic, Mr. Gordon McBride, both from North Hollywood, Calif. They

arrived the day before the big event was to take place and traveled the air strip until every bump and wave was clear in their minds. Then the big day arrived, January 10, 1952. Nylon sheeting was soaked in glue and pasted to the damaged under belly, the engines were then started and revved up and down, up and down, to make sure they responded properly.

Three weeks after it landed, the plane took off again. Pilots were Charles Rector and Gordon McBride of Burbank California. It took 1000 feet of the makeshift runway to get the craft airborne. Finally, Charles moved the big craft out onto the makeshift runway. Had Ron done his job? In a few minutes we would know.

The runway was lined with news cameras from all over Canada and the US. Our neighbours, who had been so helpful were also there, but everyone else was kept back at the highway. Highway # 2 being the only route from Toronto to Montreal carried a lot of traffic (for those days). The OPP stopped all the traffic.

The Ontario Hydro and Bell Telephone crews were on hand in case the wires should be hit.

Charles taxied the big craft down the runway to its takeoff starting point. It should be noted that there was one spot on the air strip that was a raised ridge, created by the starting furrows when father had plowed the field the year before. As the plane came down the air strip, it must lift clear before this ridge and not touch the ridge after it cleared or the drag would be enough to delay the liftoff, causing the plane to hit the utility wires.

The plane was lined up in its starting position, blocks were put in front of the wheels, the brakes applied to their fullest and the engines were revved up to their top R.P.M.s. The plane started to shake, rattle and roll, the brakes were released, it bounded over the blocks and started down the runway. Faster and faster it moved until light could be seen under the tires, BUT NO, the tires touched that ill fated ridge of father's plowing days, but no need to worry, Charles was at the wheel. The craft slowly climbed, narrowly missing the utility wires and off it moved into the blue skies. It was 2:30pm, a roar was heard from the crowd as he circled the craft back over its previous path, over the Burnham and Johns farms, turning east to travel over its previous resting place and on to Trenton for the night. (All other airports were closed due to bad weather).

The next morning they left Trenton to fly to Malton, where they would clear customs and continue back to Burbank via Chicago .

I should go back a bit, to fill you in about Ron and Fred. Ron went on to form Beaverdale Construction. Fred's company, Fred Ito Construct went on to be known as Cobourg Construction. My hat is off to both of these gentlemen, who froze their buns off, working in the open with no protection. The day the plane took off, the temperature was -6 degrees (old temperature). Ron wore a fedora all

the time and Fred wore a winter hat with the flaps pulled down. I have several pictures of them working or standing by the plane, but best of all is the old scrap book that my mother made.

*Author Larry Wilson is the son of the Wilson family who owned the farm where the plane landed.*

Submitted by Ralph Patrick

#### SIX LITTLE STORIES

(1)Once all villagers decided to pray for rain. On the day of prayer all the people gathered, but only one boy came with an umbrella. That's FAITH

(2)When you throw a baby in the air, she laughs because she knows you will catch her.  
That's TRUST

(3) Every night we go to bed,  
Without any assurance of being alive the next morning but still we set the alarms to wake up.  
That's HOPE

(4)We plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future.  
That's CONFIDENCE

(5)We see the world suffering, but still we get married. That's LOVE

(6)On an old man's shirt was written a sentence  
'I am not 60 years old.... I am sweet 16 with 44 years experience'  
That's ATTITUDE

#### Wing Executive – Effective 1 July 2015

| <u>Position</u>                         | <u>Incumbent</u>  | <u>Telephone</u>      |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------|
| <u>President</u>                        | Tom Ross          | 613-475-0381          |
| <u>Immediate Past President</u>         | Bob Bird          | 613-476-1636          |
| <u>1<sup>st</sup> Vice President</u>    | Bill Maier        | 613 968-9077          |
| <u>2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President</u>    | Dennis Margeuratt | 613-476-2923          |
| <u>Secretary</u>                        | Ken Pfander       | 613-967-3728          |
| <u>Treasurer</u>                        | Alex Chambers     | 613-398-1420          |
| <u>Membership / Regalia</u>             | Malcolm Campbell  | 613-476-3179          |
| <u>Housing Officer</u>                  | Glen Crellin      | 613-392-3398          |
| <u>Public Relations</u>                 | Bob Bird          | 613-476-1636          |
| <u>Wing Padre</u>                       | Rev Eric Davis    | 613-392-2811 Ext 2490 |
| <u>Bulletin Editor / Wing Historian</u> | Ted Cullin        | 613-394-0571          |
| <u>Sergeant at Arms</u>                 | Vacant            |                       |
| <u>Sports Officer</u>                   | Robert Prystai    | 613-771-1912          |
| <u>Telephone Committee</u>              | Lise Rolsky       | 613-962-0372          |
| <u>Telephone Committee</u>              | Dorothy Heisler   | 613-966-3292          |