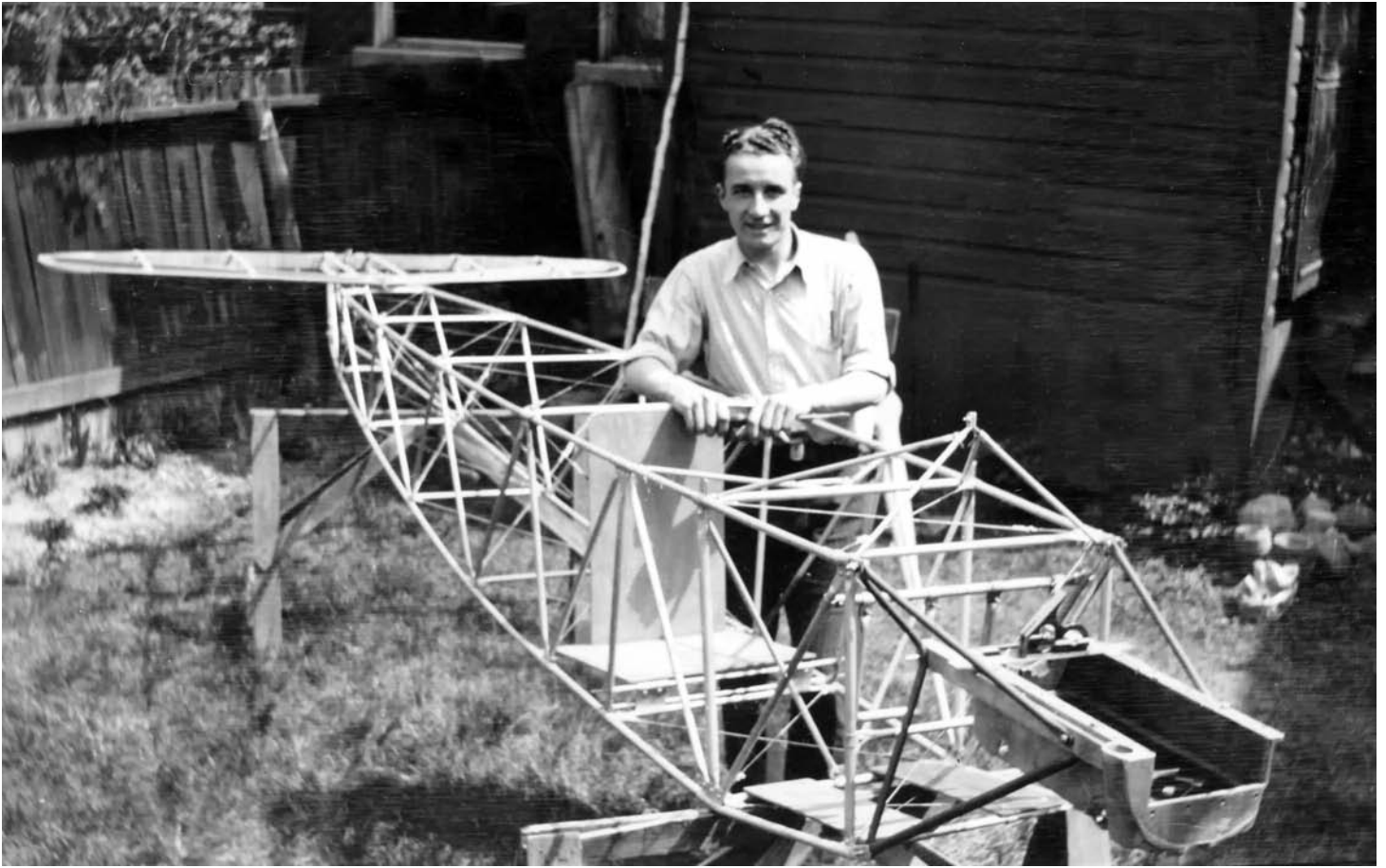


FRED W. HOTSON



An EXEMPLARY CAHS PERSONALITY REMEMBERED

by Larry Milberry

ON 20 JULY 2012 THE CAHS LOST ONE OF ITS MOST REVERED MEMBERS - FRED W. HOTSON. A FEW DAYS EARLIER *Fred had been busy working on his latest book. Born in Toronto on December 29, 1913, Fred spent his boyhood in Fergus, a historic town along the Grand River, not far from Guelph. The Hotsons were frugal, hard-working people, so young Fred acquired a solid work ethic that would serve him well for almost a century. As a lad, he always had several money-making schemes on the go, whether working for local merchants, doing odd jobs for neighbours, even reporting on local sports for the Guelph Mercury.*

Fred's boyhood years were happy ones. He was a dutiful son and student, a good athlete, amateur actor and model airplane aficionado. Thanks to him, many photos and documents from that era were preserved so that, years later, the relevant books and articles could be put together (by Fred). For decades he kept a panoramic photo in his office showing his high school football team. When I asked one day whom from that group of handsome, eager young fellows were still around, Fred chuckled in his trademark way – he was the last man still standing!

From an early age Fred had his sights set on aviation. In his autobiography, *Through My Eyes: A Hotson Family Memoir* (a "must read") Fred tells how he caught this bug:

"My enthusiasm for aviation started early and was encouraged, in many ways, by the Fergus Public Library, particularly by the magazines from England with their high-gloss photos of flying events. It grew whenever a barnstormer came to the area selling airplane rides."

Fred's first "hands on" aviation experience came one day when, being about 12 years old, he bicycled to nearby Elora, after he had caught wind of a barnstormer hustling rides.

Finding the field, he was able to wander around the JN-4 Canuck that had dropped in. He was totally thrilled when the pilot invited him for a ride. Fred jumped into the front cockpit, but his "ride" was only a short taxi on the ground. Still, it was a start, and two summers later Fred did get his first flight. That took place in Hamilton on 28 August 1928, when he laid down five hard-earned dollars for a flip in Moth G-CAUA. Henceforth, Fred was determined to spend his life in aviation, and that's exactly how things would work out for him.

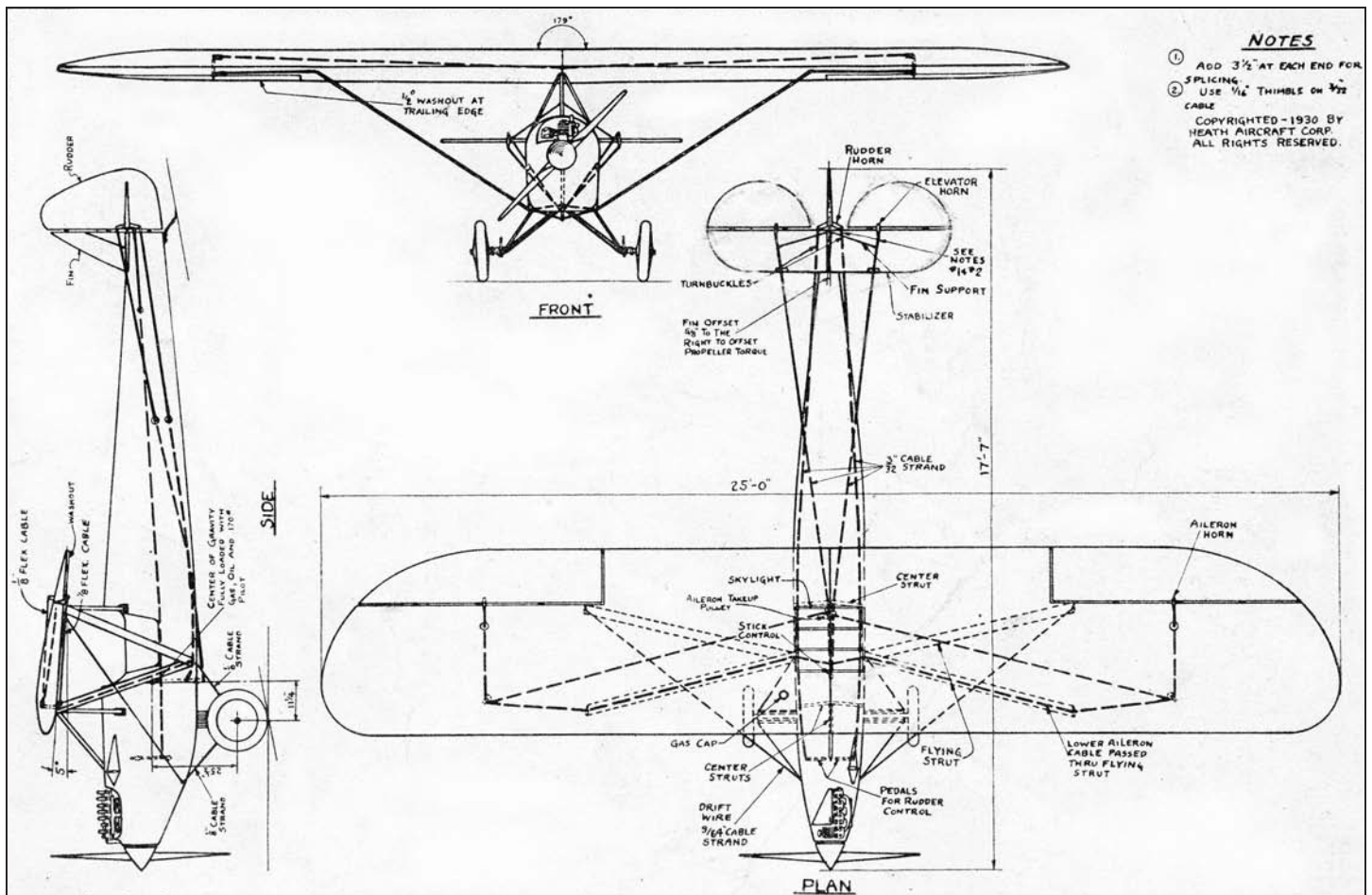
Having turned out his share of model airplanes, in 1931 Fred started building his own Heath Parasol, a tiny plane for which he acquired the parts by mail, ordering as he could afford them. As he explains in *Through My Eyes*: "I was attending Fergus High School at the time and my budget was guided by what I could save from cutting grass and the \$1.25 I got each Saturday helping at the local drugstore."

After graduating from the aeronautical program at Central Technical School in Toronto, in 1935 Fred got his first job in the business. At 25 cents an hour he started at de Havilland of Canada, doing assembly on



moths, learning the business from the ground up. Meanwhile, every so often he would add a new component for the Heath. With the help of such pals as Don Murray and George Neal, he finally got his natty little plane CF-BLS airborne in November 1938.

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Fred would have spent hours analyzing the plans for his Heath Parasol. Shown above is the basic 3-view line drawing rigging diagram supplied by the manufacturer. Opposite page: Fred at work on his Heath. The project lasted about 7 years from start to first flight. Upper right: A teenage Fred Hotson during high school days in Fergus circa 1930.

all photos courtesy of the FRED HOTSON collection via THE AUTHOR unless otherwise noted

In the 1960s artist Bill Wheeler depicted Fred flying his Heath over the old Toronto Flying Club in North Toronto (today's Downsview).



Fred's beautifully finished Heath CF-BLS. Then, below, a photo taken just as he landed the Heath (the blur at the far right) at de Havilland airport in North Toronto. This place would loom large in Fred's life, from the days in the 1930s when he started work here, to the 1960s and '70s when he instructed on the Twin Otter and demonstrated it around the world, to attending events such as the rollout of the Dash 7, Dash 8, Q400 and Global Express.





Left: Fred relaxed and happy in his office at home in Port Credit, with Bill Wheeler. Above him are mementoes of some of his many achievements, and Bill's original 1960's painting of CF-BLS.

LARRY MILBERRY photo



Even at age 98 Fred was keen to keep current. Here he is in Montreal in May 2012 with Canadian astronaut Dave Williams, who had just been inducted into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame.

LARRY MILBERRY photo



Often in the 1990s-2000s, Fred and friends met at The Brogue in Port Credit to eat, drink and resolve world affairs. This get together (December 14, 2004) included Ron Pickler (author of *Canadair: The First 50 Years*), Fred, Larry Milberry, Peter of The Brogue, Dave Clarke (ex-Canadair, author of RCAF WWII books) and Robert G. "Bob" Halford (long time aviation editor and publisher).

LARRY MILBERRY photo



Bremen's aviation history contingent during their April 1997 visit to the Henry Ford Museum. They left for home with an agreement that "The Bremen" soon would follow. The Bremenites are flanked by Canadian representatives Hotson and Milberry.



Left: On December 7, 1999 Fred launched the revised edition of his best-selling DHC book. Here, he autographs a copy for his long-time associate at de Havilland, test pilot Don Rogers. Both were Members of Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame.

LARRY MILBERRY photo

Fred loved nothing more than to get moving somewhere exciting. Here he waits at Vancouver on October 18, 2002 to board a Dash 8 for Victoria. We were off to attend events sponsored by Viking Aircraft on the occasion of the DHC-3 Otter's 50th Anniversary.

LARRY MILBERRY photo



One of Fred Hotson's boyhood aviation photos, taken the day he went up on his first airplane ride. Fred's subject is Jack Elliot's famous base along Hamilton's beach strip.



Fred's aircraft during his landmark career with the Ontario Paper Company (OPC) were Mallard CF-BKE and DC-3 CF-IKD. As captain on these, he flew company executives to such business centres as Chicago and New York, to the main OPC mill towns of Baie Comeau (usually via Dorval) and Welland (using St. Catharines airport), and to vacation getaways, from the OPC's North Shore salmon camp to the Bahamas.

Come the war, Fred served initially with the Air Observer Schools (AOS) at Malton, Ontario and St. John's, Quebec. His task? Staff pilot on Ansons. With hundreds of solid flying hours at AOS, he was able to advance confidently into Ferry Command. There he made some 20 trans-Atlantic deliveries of such types as the Dakota, Lancaster and Liberator.

The war over, Fred ferried surplus Ansons to Latin America, and spent one winter flying a Husky for Nickel Belt Airways of Sudbury. His "dream job" finally came along when he was hired to fly a Mallard for the Holt family of Montreal. This good experience led to an 18-year career flying Mallard CF-BKE and DC-3 CF-IKD for the Ontario Paper Company (both planes are still operating in the United States). Next came an adventurous stint back at DHC that included demonstrating and instructing on the Twin Otter in Norway and Afghanistan.

In the 1950s Fred joined a group of corporate aviation pioneers to form the Canadian Business Aircraft Association (CBAA). He helped develop the association's newsletter and, eventually, donated his set (likely the only one in existence) to the CBAA in Ottawa. Fred supported all such important Canadian aviation organizations. He didn't pay the usual lip service, but would get his cheque book out to cover his membership. It was no surprise in the mid-1960s, when he became CAHS member No.300. He soon rose to the national presidency, which he held for years. Few members would have such a positive influence on the society.

A "take charge" and "lead by example" type, Fred helped set CAHS policy and organize annual conventions. He wrote seminal articles for the *CAHS Journal* on such subjects as Dominion Skyways ["C.R. 'Peter' Troup; and Dominion Skyways Ltd.," Vol 11 No 2 - Summer 1973] and the Fairchild Husky [Vol 19 No 4 - Winter 1981], delivered carefully-researched talks covering everything from the history of Toronto's early airports to the story of the first east-to-west, non-stop Atlantic flight (flown by a Junkers dubbed "The Bremen"), to his incredible adventures in Afghanistan. The latter was eventually produced on DVD with the help of Al Bieck. All along, Fred was writing authoritative news articles in the aviation press, especially for *Canadian Aviation* magazine, then under Hugh Whittington; and the *Canadian Aircraft Operator*, run by CAHS veteran, Robert G. Halford.



Of his two OPC "front offices" Fred far preferred the Mallard, in spite of the DC-3's better performance. Larry Milberry took these photos at Toronto's Malton airport in the early 1960.





Busy as he was, any time Fred received an enquiry – and that was often – he always took the time to answer. There were frequent questions about such topics as Ferry Command, the Husky, de Havilland, and business flying. He was there with whatever info he had, or with a tip to call the likes of Bob Fowler, Lewie Leigh, Jack McNulty or George Neal, where the serious researcher could get the hard facts, find some elusive photos, etc.

Meanwhile, Fred had even more serious projects on the go – in-depth research for important aviation books. First came his best-selling *The De Havilland Canada Story* (1983), then his award-winning *The Bremen* (1988). In 1991 he broke important ground with *Business Wings: 30 Years of the Canadian Business Aircraft Association*, the first serious publication covering corporate aviation in Canada.

Fred's book themes all were rooted in his own deep experience and specialized interests. He was the natural choice to write DHC's history, having been intimately connected with the company since he had been a junior shop floor employee in the 1930s, all the way to being a demonstration and sales pilot on such types as the Twin Otter and Buffalo in the 1960s and '70s.

The Nickel Belt Airways base in Sudbury, from where Fred flew the Husky for about a year. Huskys CF-EIN and 'EIP are at the dock. Fred looked back positively on such periods in his career – they were invaluable in his steady progress up one rung of the aviation ladder to the next. Having put it solidly through its paces, Fred concluded that the Husky was a top-notch bushplane.



Fred never missed a CBAA convention. Here are he and Marg at one of these about 1965, when all the interest was on the new Learjet, but when Dee Howard was still promoting his 400-mph Super Ventura.

Right: Publisher and author with John Sandford (centre) on Dash 8 roll-out day. Both sides had come through.



Far Right: Publisher Milberry and artist Peter Mossman at the Dash 8 countdown display. With just 54 days to go, they were sweating it out along with Fred, all eyes on completing *The De Havilland Canada Story* to meet John Sandford's strict deadline.



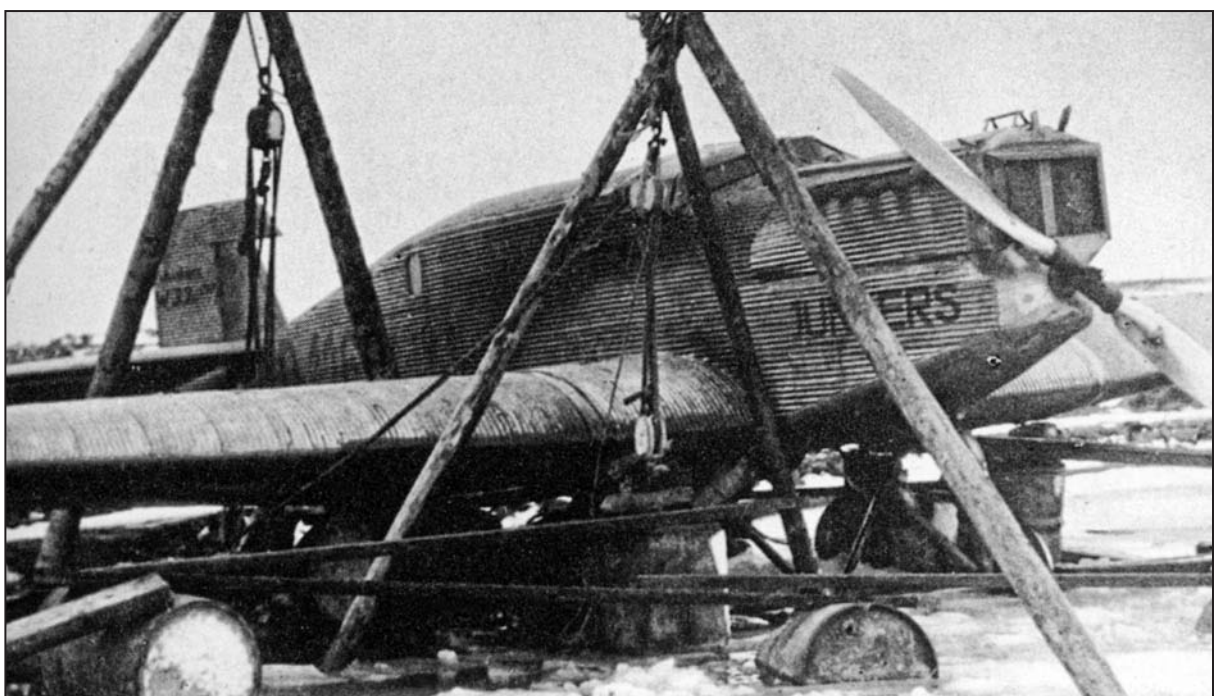
In 1978 Fred had authored a minor history of DHC covering its first 50 years. Little wonder that company president John Sandford (to be inducted into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame in 2013) asked Fred to upgrade his original 60-page publication. The target was a major book to be published for the 1983 rollout of the Dash 8.

With me as publisher, Robin Brass as book designer and CAHS member Pete Mossman as artist, the project was on a crash course, but we got the job done. Mr. Sandford went away out on a limb with us, but we didn't let him down – 3000 copies were delivered to DHC three days before the Dash 8 rollout. Fred was cool all the way and an example to the rest of the team, who had been on pins and needles to the last.

The Bremen sprang from Fred's close connection with the Quebec North Shore during his years with the Ontario Paper Company (OPC). Having spent so much time in this region, where the OPC had mills and an exclusive salmon resort, it seemed natural that Fred got fascinated by the story of how a little Junkers, crewed by three zany characters, had flown the Atlantic in 1928, only to miss New York "by a mile" and crash-land on an isolated island far down the North Shore. In due course Fred completed this book, which CANAV published. The Aviation and Space Writers Association of America selected it as the best new aviation history book for 1988.

The Bremen eventually engendered a renewed interest in Germany in this amazing story. Fred co-operated

After years of arduously researching the flight of "The Bremen", Fred completed his book. Here the adventurous Junkers is seen stranded, after a forced landing on Greenly Island, at the far limits of the Quebec North Shore.



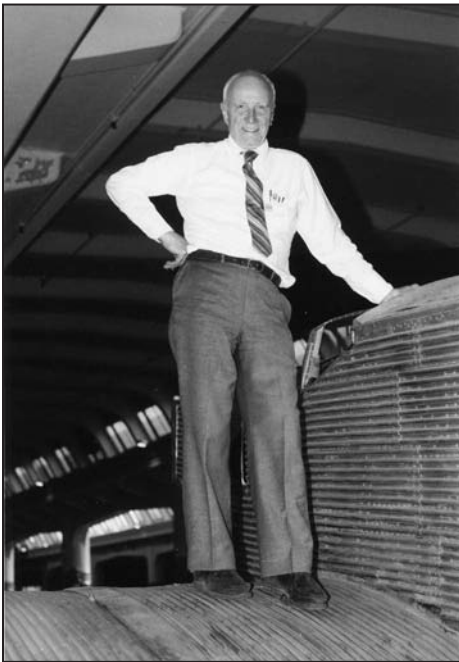
with Josef Krauthauser of NARA-Verlag publishing, to produce a 1996 German translation. This spurred interest further – the City of Bremen sent a delegation to the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan and negotiations there led to an agreement to return the famous Junkers to its native land.

Fred and I were VIPs at the Ford Museum when the Bremen delegation visited for several days. Plans were finalized and the tired-looking, dusty old Junkers was dismantled and flown home aboard two *Luftwaffe* Transal transport planes. A complete restoration was undertaken and the resplendent plane was dedicated in Bremen in June 1998. Fred was present (humbly as always) as the

man of the moment. His seminal book had started the ball rolling. Things snowballed, culminating in a major city-centre event in Bremen. What a grand finish and what a feather in Fred's cap!

In the 1990s Fred, Robin [Brass] and I teamed to “modernize” the history of DHC. This resulted, in 1999, in a new title – *De Havilland in Canada*. This book carries the DHC/Bombardier story at Downsview to the Q400 and Global Express; two planes that remain the lifeblood at this Bombardier location. Meanwhile, in 1998, Fred had been inducted into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame. Now he was in the ranks of his own boyhood aviation heroes, and fittingly so.

All along Fred had in mind to chronicle a plane that was the love of his life – the Grumman Mallard. In his typical way, he spent years doing the research. Besides mining the readily available sources, from his own log books to all the Mallard people he had met, he made contacts around the world, visited the Grumman archives, and travelled far and wide doing interviews, all while he was in his 80s. For this project he teamed with co-author, Mathew Rodina, who had worked in the Mallard world in the Caribbean and had spent years developing a production list. In 2006 Robin Brass published the results in a beautifully-crafted book, *Grumman Mallard: The Enduring Classic*. While all this had



Clockwise from the top left:

Fred with “The Bremen” during a visit to Dearborn in the mid-1980s.

Two of the Bremenites discuss their new favourite book with the author.

LARRY MILBERRY photo

“The Bremen” on the day it was unveiled in the heart of the ancient city of Bremen in north Germany. Only through the seminal efforts of Fred Hotson did this great event transpire.

been going on, in June 2004 Fred and I attended the CBAA annual convention, where he was named an honorary CBAA Life Member.

Fred never showed any signs of slowing. Periodically he would ambush me with one of his wild ideas about attending some conference or event, even after he had passed 90. Our trips certainly were highlights, whether to the Conference of Historic Aviation Writers in Washington, Memphis or Dallas, to CBAA and CAHS conventions, or to Bombardier rollouts in Montreal or Downsview. Fred had zero interest in missing out on anything going on in aviation.

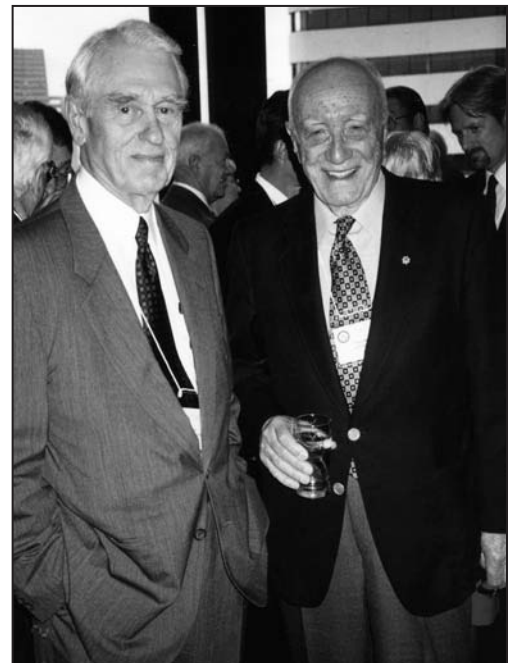
As soon as Fred finished his Mallard masterpiece, he launched into his family memoir, *Through My Eyes*, which Robin produced in 2010. No sooner had the ink dried on that superb book, than he dove into the research for the story of his years in corporate aviation. Fred was working on this project a few days before he finally pooped out. However, his family stepped right in and, with the magic touch of

editor and book designer Robin Brass, Fred's *Flying High: Confessions of an Old Corporate Pilot* was published less than a year after he had passed. This was some extra icing on the cake for a proud Canadian and a leading figure on the aviation scene. In his field, Fred has a legacy that is second to none in Canada.

Lifelong aviation enthusiast, former school teacher, author and, publisher (since 1980), Larry Milberry was a close personal friend of Fred Hotson's. Kindred spirits, they were both early Members of the CAHS and inducted into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame. Larry continues to write and publish aviation history under his CANAV Books imprint, based out of his home in The Beaches district of Toronto.



Fred (standing far right) with those attending the September 2001 Conference of Historic Aviation Writers convention in Dallas. Fred had no qualms about us boarding a 737 to fly to this event a few weeks after 9-11. Amazingly, airport security was smoother than normal, and it was reassuring seeing the military patrolling the terminal at Dallas. Coming and going, our planes were pretty well empty. Among the many aviation history luminaries in this photo are Dr. Robin Higham (2nd from the right in front), John Davis (on Robin's left) and Matt Rodina (behind the kneeling ladies), who was Fred's co-author on the Mallard book.



Fred with R.D. Richmond at the 1999 Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute induction and awards ceremony in Montreal. Richmond, a former senior executive of such companies as Bombardier, Canadair, Pratt & Whitney Canada and Douglas Aircraft of Canada had been on the Fairchild Husky design team and was a CASI founder. Fred was a longtime member.

LARRY MILBERRY photo



Fred in the magnificent Doolittle Library at the University of Texas (Dallas) during CHAW 2001. LARRY MILBERRY photo

CAHS old timers Fred Hotson and George Fuller at Quebec Air and Space Hall of Fame induction ceremonies at ICAO in Montreal on October 21, 2002. Many years earlier Fred, George, John Griffin and Ken Molson had teamed up to produce one of the most valuable Canadian aviation reference books, *125 Years of Canadian Aeronautics*. LARRY MILBERRY photo





Above: Cover images of Fred's books, including the German-language edition of *The Bremen*, and *Flying High: Confessions of an Old Corporate Pilot* which is scheduled for publication in 2013.

Wearing his AOS jacket bearing the "Empire Air Training" patch, Fred poses with CF-BLS circa 1940.

Fred was inducted into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame in 1998. Here he stands by his panel at the CAHF in Wetaskiwin, Alberta during the CAHS Annual Conventon held in Calgary in May of 2000.

SHELDON BENNER photo

