

**the**  
**OBSERVAIR**  
**Ottawa Chapter Newsletter**  
**Canadian Aviation Historical Society**



Volume 52, Number 3

March 2015

---

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Since September, your executive has been exploring the idea of moving our Thursday meetings to Saturdays. The results of this work have shown that, for a number of reasons, moving the meetings is not feasible. Because of this, your executive has come up with several ideas in order to address some of the reasons put forth for the proposed date change. Some of our ideas, such as advertising our meetings to the public, have already been implemented.

In an email that will go out later this month I will be asking for your feedback on a few other ideas, such as preparedness to deal with severe winter weather, carpooling, and branching out onto social media. We've opted for feedback in this manner instead of the usual vote taking at the meetings for two reasons. Firstly, we want to hear feedback to these ideas before we put it to a vote, and secondly we hope we will hear from more of our members, even if they can't make meetings. For those who still receive the paper copy, we encourage you to contact myself or any other executive member with feedback. We want to hear from everyone!

As January and February are notoriously bad months for weather, we would like feedback on the idea of skipping our January (and possibly February) meeting; either by cancelling one of them entirely (leaving us with 7 meetings a year) or pushing one (or both) back and extending our meetings into the summer. We are also working on a cancellation policy should severe weather threaten an upcoming meeting. This would involve informing members at least 24 hours in advance through either phone or email. We would like to help get more members to our meetings by arranging carpooling. This will involve your executive organising those willing to drive others, and those needing a ride into neighbourhoods. Members, who would be willing to drive other members in their area, please let your executive know so we can begin building a carpool list. Those who would require a ride to the meetings please let us know as well.

CAHS Ottawa has decided on joining the world of social media. This will include a Facebook and Twitter account to share interesting Canadian aviation facts, update meeting information, and attract new members.

The annual CAHS convention will be held in Hamilton this year, June 17-19. We need to know, how many members would be interested in renting a bus to get us down there? If enough members are interested, the cost would greatly be reduced.

Please keep an eye out for this upcoming email. We sincerely appreciate feedback from you, the members of CAHS Ottawa, on these items.

*Kyle Huth, Chairman*

---

*The Observair* is the newsletter of the Ottawa Chapter, Canadian Aviation Historical Society and is available with membership. Membership fees are payable in September. Any material for *The Observair* Newsletter should be directed to the Editor, Colin Hine. All matters relating to membership should be directed to the Secretary/Treasurer: Mat Joost.

Kyle Huth  
Mathias Joost  
Colin Hine  
Don MacNeil  
Hugh Halliday  
George Skinner  
Erin Gregory  
Bill Clark

Chairman  
Secretary/Treasurer  
Newsletter Editor  
Program convener  
Official Greeter  
Museum Liaison  
Research Group  
Refreshments

## PAST MEETING

### Wally Kasper – *Letter to a New Grandson* – *The Story of a WWII Lancaster Pilot*

Fifty-five people attended the 26 February meeting in CASM's Bush Theatre to hear RCAF veteran Wally Kasper speak on his Second World War experiences piloting an RCAF No. 408 (Goose) Squadron Avro Lancaster Mk II in RAF Bomber Command. Wally was introduced to the audience by his good friend, Ottawa Chapter member Garry Fancy.

Garry noted that Wally enlisted at the age of 20 and he is likely the only Lancaster Mk II pilot remaining alive. He first trained on Tiger Moths and Cessna Cranes, then after graduating he was sidetracked to navigation school in Summerside, PEI. This proved to be very fortuitous as the need for navigational expertise proved to be very critical to some of his wartime flying missions. In "Jolly Olde England" he did further training on Oxfords and Wellingtons then went to 408 Squadron at Linton-on-Ouse in Yorkshire. His tour there ran from January of 1944 to August 1944. During that time his aircraft was shot up five times and he had a number of other interesting experiences many of which are related in his book. One of these included experiencing a blown tire: the only recorded incidence of a pilot successfully landing a Lancaster with a blown tire in Bomber Command history.

After his tour was over he was selected to fly Spitfires and Hurricanes in training missions with bomber crews to help train them about what he had learned from his own combat experiences. Post war he attended the University of Toronto, studying philosophy and economics. Then in 1951 as the Cold War was heating up he re-entered the RCAF and he trained NATO pilots on T-Birds. Then he was posted overseas to 444 Squadron flying F-86 Sabres. After retiring from the Air Force he worked in academia as a professor then moved on to work in international development. He was later inducted to the Canada Veterans Hall of Honour. Wally is a prolific author. Two of his works include *Letter to a New Grandson* and *A Night Out with the Boys*. Wally signed copies of *Letter to a New Grandson* after his presentation.

Garry also recognized the role that Wally's wife Ruth still plays in his life and noted that it is likely only due to the loving care that she has provided over the past years that Wally has survived some serious health problems and remains amazingly active today.

Wally spoke with emotion, candor and humor; he related some of his wartime experiences (his "miss-spent youth," flying on Bomber Command operational sorties over Germany). He spoke about two of his sorties. In the first one he explained that during the war years there was little awareness of the jet stream phenomena and of the high winds that can occur at altitude.



Wally Kasper. (© Rod Digney)



Avro Lancaster B Mark II, LL725 'EQ-C', of No. 408 Squadron RCAF, on the ground at Linton-on-Ouse, Yorkshire. Armorers are backing a tractor and trolley loaded with a 4,000 lb HE bomb ('Cookie') and incendiaries under the open bomb-bay. LL725 was lost over Hamburg on 28/29 July 1944.

© Imperial War Museum

On one particular sortie, on the out-bound trip Wally and his navigator realized that their position was much further east than estimates based on airspeed; in fact at 20,000 feet they had a 120 mph tail-wind. This eventually brought them over the target area ahead of schedule; ahead of the Pathfinder markers in fact. So they were forced to turn around and repeat their bombing run over the target. Turning around in a 120 mph wind dropped their ground speed from 385 mph to 145 mph and they were quickly picked up in the beams of searchlights and subjected to vicious barrages of flak.

Evasive manoeuvres resulted in the aircraft descending from 20,000 feet to about 8,000 feet and they sustained significant damage; the aeroplane held together however and they were able to complete their bombing run – aware all the time that there were hundreds of other bombers flying above them, dropping bombs on the same target area. All this effort and the need to regain altitude for the journey home resulted in them using up a large amount of fuel. This made it necessary for them to head for an emergency landing airfield at Woodbridge and they were escorted by a squadron of Spitfires, protecting them from German fighters. As Wally says in his book: “...All-in-all, a night to remember, and hopefully, never to be repeated”.

Wally’s second story told of a dangerous take-off run and heroic efforts taken by Wally and his flight engineer to save the aeroplane; as well, the story contained some moments of humor. He also spoke about the dressing-down he received from his Wing Commander. Wally was berated for causing minor damage to an airfield beacon structure during take-off, but received no praise or acknowledgment for having saved the entire aircraft and crew after landing with a punctured tire.

On this occasion the Lancaster was carrying an extremely heavy bomb-load and the take-off run was quite risky. Unfortunately, one of the tires blew out before lift-off and it took a supreme effort to get the aeroplane airborne. Struggling to stay airborne after lift-off the undercarriage door struck and damaged the paling structure surrounding a radio beacon at the end of the runway. They still managed to close the undercarriage doors and climbed away to complete their mission. On returning to Linton they were diverted to Carnaby, an emergency landing aerodrome.

The landing was made with the right (punctured) wheel as close to the edge of the runway as possible and the aeroplane slewed to the right, off the runway, onto the grass. The Lancaster continued to roll in the direction of a bomb blast shelter from behind which Wally and his crew were amazed to see a young airman and his airwoman girlfriend beat a hasty retreat! This proved to be a good tension breaker and there were many laughs and ribald comment forthcoming from crewmembers at the expense of the courting couple. Damage to the wheel and undercarriage was not serious and the wheel was replaced and the undercarriage was speedily repaired and tested, enabling Wally to fly the aeroplane home to Linton in time for his “dressing down.”

Wally finished his talk with a moving poem, *Tomorrows*. This poem can also be found in his book:

“They gave all of their tomorrows  
So that your tomorrows could be free  
Asking only that in your tomorrows  
Lovingly remembered they would be.

“What gifts have been found in your tomorrows  
That have been paid for with their lives,  
The lilting laughter of your happy children  
And the warm caresses of your wives.

“These and a thousand others filled your days  
And filled your years.  
Many joys and a few sorrows;  
A land alive with opportunity; their gift to you  
Paid for by giving us all of their tomorrows.”

After a lively question and answer session, Wally signed copies of his book, *A Letter to a New Grandson*, for appreciative audience members.

Altogether, a wonderful evening; thank you Wally.

Colin Hine  
Editor



## RAMBLING THROUGH RECORDS – THE SERVICE HISTORY OF MICHAEL JOSEPH KOBIEFSKI

Rambles such as this often owe much to other people. Peter Robertson has been an invaluable colleague in providing obituaries that help update the RCAF Honors and Awards data base. One of Peter's recent notices covering records for Michael Joseph Kobierski, an RCAF veteran who died on 22 December 2007 in Sidney, British Columbia set off an interesting quest. Among other things, it described him as having served with No.307 (Night Fighter) Squadron and being awarded "the Polish Distinguished Flying Cross". He did not appear in my lists of awards to RCAF personnel; there was no London Gazette, Canada Gazette or Air Force Routine Order (AFRO) entry that normally accompanied bestowal of decorations.

On the other hand, there was a thin file on him at Directorate of History and Heritage that recorded him as having been awarded the "Polish Distinguished Flying Cross" and confirmed that he had served with "Polish Forces". In lieu of a gazette reference, the authority cited was "AFHQ Letter 12921 (DPC/PC4) dated 22 March 1954." He was then a member of the postwar RCAF; his service number was 12921.

The lack of official notice turned out to be the least of my problems. From previous research into Hubert Brooks I was aware that a peculiar problem had arisen with RCAF acceptance of Polish decorations in the immediate postwar period. Simply put, the Polish government-in-exile based in London had made several awards that the Moscow-based Polish government-in-exile (later in possession of Warsaw) refused to endorse. Once it had been established that the Warsaw (and Communist) authority must be recognized as the official government of Poland, there was no way that awards could be accepted officially over their objections.

Nevertheless, in the case of Brooks (and obviously that of Kobierski) the RCAF adopted a policy worthy of Solomon. Awards made by the "wrong" government could not be formally acknowledged via a Gazette or AFRO announcement. On the other hand, serving recipients of such awards would be allowed to wear the ribbons and medals; the letter on Kobierski's file was obviously his authority to do so.

Another problem persisted - there was no such decoration called the Distinguished Flying Cross in the Polish hierarchy of awards. Could he have received a Virtuti Militaire? On-line records listing those awarded the VM did not list him. The most likely honor would have been the Polish Cross of Valor. Meanwhile the question was one of how or why he received it. The British National Archives "documents on line" service (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/combat-reports-ww2.htm>) enabled me to identify and purchase seven combat reports filed by him while in No.307 Squadron between 21 January and 1 March 1945.

These combat reports turned out to be Night Intruder Reports. While they made interesting reading, the reports contained no record of action with enemy aircraft (though some mutual stalking involving other Mosquitos is recorded). What was most interesting, however, was that his navigator (one NCO Smith) was also a member of the RCAF. The next problem became how to determine whom "Smith" might be.

When in trouble with research, I often resort to RAF Commands Forum (<http://www.rafcommands.com/forum/index.php>), and in this instance a helpful lead from Peter Davies immediately led me to the Polish Squadrons Remembrance website



*Polish Cross of Valor presented to Michael Joseph Kobierski by General Wladyslaw Anders  
© Robert Kobierski*



*Medals and decorations awarded to Michael Joseph Kobierski  
© Robert Kobierski*



News clipping from the Toronto Telegraph (circa 1950/51) on the presentation of the Polish Cross of Valor to Michael Joseph Kobierski  
© Toronto Telegraph

(<http://polishsquadronsremembered.com/307/307airmen.html>) which in turn enabled me to identify my man - Warrant Officer (later Pilot Officer) Robert Lamont Smith of Kingston, Ontario.

Precisely why Michael Kobierski was recommended for an award remained obscure; it may be in his service file, but this remains beyond public access until 2027. Further, there remains the unresolved issue of exactly what decoration had been bestowed. At this point the original obituary provided by Peter came into play. It listed the next-of-kin and a few telephone calls to the West Coast put me in touch with his son, Robert Kobierksi, who kindly photographed his father's medals and sent me the images. These confirmed that the decoration was indeed a Polish Cross of Valor. He also sent a *Toronto Telegram* clipping, circa September 1950 or 1951, showing Michael Kobierski being invested with his medal by General Wladyslaw Anders, himself in exile from Communist Poland.

Rounding out Michael Joseph Kobierski's career, he was born in Sioux Lookout, Ontario on 25 December 1920, enlisted in the RCAF on 25 April 1941, instructed at No.14 SFTS (Aylmer, Ontario), served as a staff pilot at No.3 Wireless School (Winnipeg) and went overseas late in 1943. He joined No.307 Squadron in October 1944. On returning to Canada, he retired 12 August 1945 but rejoined the RCAF on 9 October 1948.

The obituary mentions his being a jet fighter pilot and he is indeed mentioned in Larry Milberry's book, *The Avro CF-100*, as having undertaken the first CF-100 trans-Canada flight (November 1953). He retired with the rank of Squadron Leader on 20 June 1968. There may be more to the story of Michael Joseph Kobierski, but further research is needed - and for the moment, one cannot be greedy with space devoted to rambling.

Hugh Halliday

Editor's Note: This article shows just how much research is needed to properly record the history of aviation veterans. Hugh, your regular contributions to *the Observair* are sincerely appreciated. Many thanks for your ongoing efforts.

# THE PAN AM CLIPPER

Thanks to the [Pan Am Historical Foundation](#) for sharing its photos. The foundation is currently working on a documentary about Pan American World Airways and the adventure of the flying boat age. [Find out more here.](#)

If you thought air travel was luxurious in the 1970s, check out what it was like aboard the WW2-era Boeing Clipper. Clipper passengers took their meals at real tables, not their seats. For most travelers in the 21st century, flying is a dreary experience, full of inconvenience, indignity, and discomfort. That wasn't the case in the late 1930s, when those with the money to afford trans-oceanic flight got to take the Boeing Model 314, better known as the Clipper. Even Franklin Roosevelt used the flying-boat, celebrating his 61st birthday on board.

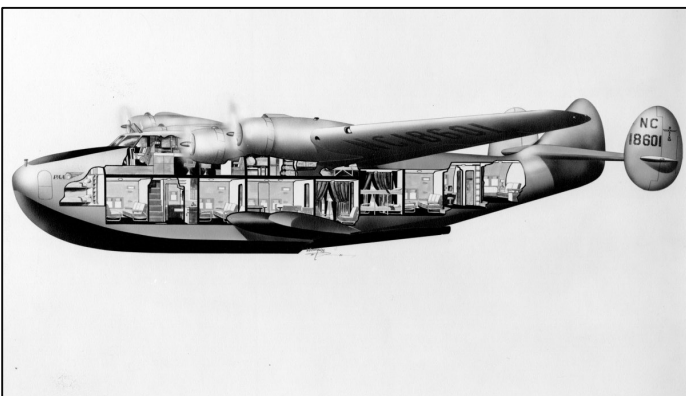
Between 1938 and 1941, Boeing built 12 of the jumbo aircraft for Pan American World Airways. The 314 offered a range of 3,500 miles — enough to cross either the Atlantic or Pacific —and room for 74 passengers onboard. Of course, modern aviation offers an amazing first class experience (and it's a whole lot safer), but nothing in the air today matches the romanticism of crossing the ocean in the famed Clipper.



*The galley served up meals catered from four-star hotels. If you want to sit at a table to eat with other people these days, you have to fly in a private jet. There was room for a crew of 10 to serve as many as 74 passengers. © Pan Am Historical Foundation*



*The Model 314's nickname Clipper came from an especially fast type of sailing ship, used in the 19th century. The ship analogy was appropriate, as the Clipper landed on the water, not runways. © Pan Am Historical Foundation*



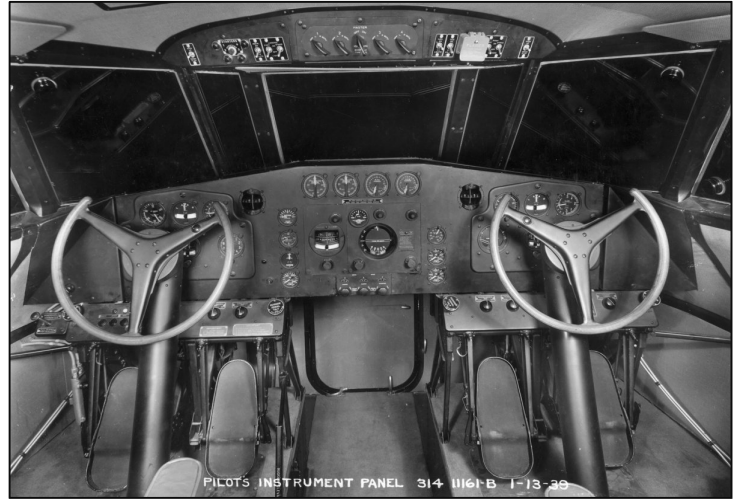
*An image of the different areas of the Clipper  
© Pan Am Historical Foundation*



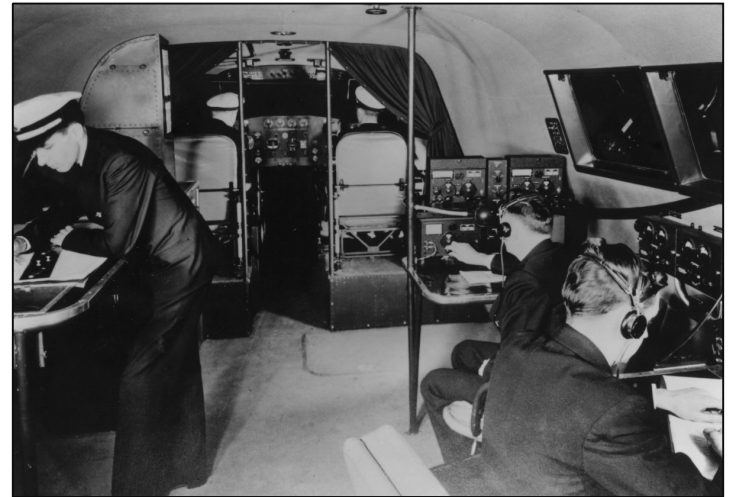
*On Pan Am flights, passengers had access to dressing rooms and a dining salon that could be converted into a lounge or bridal suite.  
© The Boeing Company*



On overnight flights, the 74 seats could be turned into 40 bunks for comfortable sleeping. The bunk beds came with curtains for privacy.  
 © Pan Am Historical Foundation



Unlike some modern jets that come with joysticks, the Clipper had controls that resembled car steering wheels. © Pan Am Historical Foundation



Navigating across the ocean used to require more manpower in the air.  
 © Pan Am Historical Foundation



In 1943, President Franklin Roosevelt celebrated his 61st birthday on board.  
 © Pan Am Historical Foundation



## Images of recent sightings at the Ottawa Macdonald-Cartier International Airport (YOW).

Since its first flight in 1965 the rugged and versatile de Havilland DHC-6 Twin Otter has arguably become as much a Canadian aviation icon as the ubiquitous DHC-2 Beaver. 844 of the aircraft had been built when the line at Downsview was officially closed after 23 years of production.

Recognizing an opportunity to support the nearly 600 Twin Otters remaining in service and to meet perceived demand for new airframes, Viking Air of Sidney BC acquired the DHC-6 type certificate in 2005 along with the TCs for all other out-of-production de Havilland Canada products (DHC-1 to DHC-7).

After several years of market research and technical development, a new marque was born and new-build DHC-6 Series 400 Twin Otters began rolling out of Viking's production facilities at Victoria and Calgary International Airports. The Series 400 features upgraded Pratt & Whitney PT6A-34 engines, a digital avionics suite and more than 800 other improvements and modifications over the original DHC-6. Like its predecessors, the new aircraft retains its STOL capabilities and can be operated on standard fixed landing gear, straight or amphibious floats, skis, wheel skis, or intermediate flotation gear.

Since its launch, Viking Air's Series 400 has been in steady demand and more than 65 copies have been delivered to many corners of the globe, substantiating the oft held belief that "the only thing that can replace a Twin Otter is another Twin Otter."



*This Viking Air DHC-6 Series 400 Twin Otter, C-GVKI (c/n 897) was seen doing local flights from the National Research Council ramp on 27 February 2015. Although well marked in a Viking demonstrator colour scheme, GVKI is actually registered to Pacific Sky Aviation, a BC company that operates an extensive flight training centre at Victoria International Airport. In 2016, the company will enhance its training program with the addition of a full motion Twin Otter Level 'D' flight training simulator that will be the world's first full flight simulator to feature a seaplane configuration. (© Rod Digney)*



*Viking Air DHC-6 Series 400 Twin Otter, C-GVKI (c/n 897) (© Rod Digney)*





Two Dornier Alpha Jets start their takeoff roll on Runway 25 at Ottawa on 27 February 2015. The lead aircraft is C-GQTA (s/n 141) while the second is C-FOTA (s/n 072). The aircraft are part of the fleet of 17 Top Aces Alpha Jets operated by Discovery Air Defence Services to provide combat airborne tactical training services for the Canadian Forces. (© Rod Digney)



Discovery Air's Top Aces Dornier Alpha Jet C-GQTA (s/n 141) ready for takeoff from Ottawa's Runway 25 on 27 February 2015. (© Rod Digney)



The Canada Aviation and Space Museum has acquired the Convair 580 (340) C-GRSC (s/n 72), formerly operated by Environment Canada's Centre for Remote Sensing. Unfortunately, winter set in before the aircraft could be ferried from Uplands to Rockcliffe and it is now spending a very cold winter on the National Research Council's ramp. Photo taken 22 January 2015. (© Rod Digney)



## PUBS & MAGS

### **Airways (Mar 2015)**

-8 pp. historical review of 13 carriers that have catered to flying Canada's winter "Snowbirds"  
 -7 pp. on Porter Airlines and Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport (CYTZ).

### **Aviation History (May 2015)**

-2 pp. on the circuitous restoration of CCF *Hurricane* Mk XIIB, RCAF 5487, through Rhodesian markings into a Finnish Mk IIB.

# NEXT MEETING OF THE OTTAWA CHAPTER, CANADIAN AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Erin Gregory

## *What's happening at the Museum? Exciting events upcoming at CASM*

Assistant Curator Erin Gregory will provide some details of CASM's new exhibitions and initiatives as well as a description of an audio guide that the museum is developing.

Also Museum volunteer Coordinator, Cédric St-Amour, will discuss some of the unique opportunities available to CAHS Ottawa Chapter members who make a commitment to volunteering at the Museum.



*One of the new space exhibits at the Canada Aviation and Space Museum  
(© CASM photo)*

**Location:** Bush Theatre, Canada Aviation and Space Museum, Rockcliffe

**Date/Time:** Thursday, 26 March, 2015, 1930 Hours

**Meetings include guest speakers, films, slide shows, coffee and donuts.**

**Visitors and guests are always welcome.**

**Landing Fees: \$1.00**