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Canadian Aviation Historical Society

New Brunswick Turnbull Chapter



Winter 2012

<http://turnbull1922.wordpress.com/>

From the President's Desk

Hello Members,

Your Board of Directors held a meeting on February 18th in Sussex, to be up-dated on the coming Convention plans.

Speakers have come forth, locations are confirmed, Banquet menu is being finalized, Lobster supper is set, and other details are coming along nicely.

Sue Ehrlander and Boyd Trites, our Convention Committee co-chairs, have plans well in hand. Pierre Vachon and Harold Wright have made contact with our prospective speakers, and have an interesting selection of Maritime related aviation presentations.



Harold Wright has done a lot of work on the history of the former Millidgeville Airport and his proposal to establish to Wade-Myles Memorial Park on the former site. He has been consulting with the three levels of government these past months and anticipates some good news in the near future.

Keep our Convention dates September 5-8th in mind when planning your holidays. The Sussex Balloon Festival is on the 8-9th weekend, and is only 70 kilometers away, as well. The Delta Hotel will hold the Convention room rate for those days too.

As we are into the new year, I would ask that you consider renewing your membership as soon as possible. It is unchanged at \$20.00, and I encourage you to also consider joining the National CAHS at \$40.00 per year, or a two year membership for \$70.00.

Cheers,

Jim Sulis



One of the highlights of the open house day at the Saint-John Airport last August.

This beautiful restored Vintage Wings Harvard 4 (CF-ORA) is painted in the markings of a Harvard 2 once flown by John Gillespie



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Guest Speaker Joseph (Pepi) DiGiacinto

By Daniel Goguen



It was with great enthusiasm that the members of Turnbull Chapter were treated to another wonderful and often hilarious presentation by none other than Fredericton native, Joseph DiGiacinto, better known to everyone simply as Pepi. Pepi, whose flying experience spans six decades, still own and flies a DeHaviland Beaver. Like a true entertainer, he left his audience wanting more at the conclusion of his presentation.

Pepi started his presentation by welcoming everyone and dove right into his presentation by saying he thinks he still holds the world's record for being the youngest child to solo at the age of 6. His interest in flying began as he often watched a local speeding up and down the Saint-John River in his hydroplane boat as the rooster tail flew behind. He wanted to go down by the river to watch this thing but his father strictly forbid the children from going.



One Sunday morning, Pepi decides to go down the riverbank to a small wharf where the boat was attached and sit in the boat. As he's doing so, his father finds him and yells that it's time to go to church. Pepi climbs the bank and his father grabs him by the ear and gives him a swift kick in the rear. *"I flew about 10 feet and enjoyed the flight, but the take off and landing needed some improvement"*.

Pepi started flying in the early 1940's. He got his private license at 15 year of age by lying about his age. He flew the family plane all over the province doing what he describes as barn storming. He received his instrument rating in 1949 and found a job for Maritime Central Airways (MCA) out of Goose Bay Labrador flying the Canso and DC-3 during construction of the PINE TREE Line. In 1954, he was still with (MCA) as the company's check out pilot and flying C-46s from the construction of the DEW Line.

From 1960 –69, Pepi flew for his father's business in New Brunswick. The company had a forestry contract with the provincial government. This consisted of modifying a DH Beaver on floats to scoop and carry 90 gallons of water and extinguish lightning strikes anywhere in the forested regions of the

province. The company also owned an Arrow Commander which was used to ferry VIPs such as then Premier Louis J. Robichaud.

Pepi took Lancaster 882 from Trenton and brought it down to Fredericton. A few weeks later, he took the aircraft on its final flight to its current resting place in Edmundston on July 14th, 1964. However, he tells us he did a few low passes before lining up for the final landing. The first was between his father in law's house and barn which resulted in the second storey windows being taken out, the second was low pass requested over Loring Air Force Base in Maine and the last over a friend's boat in Baker Lake.

Lancaster 882 on display in Edmundston



In 1970, while on vacation in Austria and close to 20 thousand flying hours to his credit, he landed another job flying jets for the first time with German Air out of Frankfurt.

Wanting for a while to fly a Douglas DC-8, Pepi got the opportunity to do so with United Air Carriers in 1978. As a replacement pilot for airlines whose pilots were upgrading to other aircrafts, he flew the Dash 63 (252 passenger) model and the Dash 21 which was an 85 passenger airplane.

In 1980, Pepi flew L1011s for Saudia Air a few years before retiring. It was with this airline that he had one of the most difficult landings of his career, caused by staff not properly filling the correct fuel tanks, resulting in an unbalanced aircraft during take off, its short flight and landing. Up to this point in his career, he was checked out on aircrafts such as the Beaver, Canso, C-46, Avro York, Bristol Freighter, Lancaster, DC-8, Boeing 747 and Lockheed L-1011 just to name a few..

Joseph Pepi DiGiacinto, a truly jovial character!



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RCAF F/O Basil G. Jackson, RAF Special Reserve, DFC, 1923 - 405 Pathfinder Squadron, RAF Bomber Command



By Pierre Vachon

Isn't life sometimes full of the most wonderful surprises? Last week, my wife Margaret and I were nibbling at a small parish reception following a Ecu-
menical service on Tybee Island, one of the barrier islands of the Savannah river delta where we are wintering in Georgia, when the person seated next to me asked where



we were from. When he learned we were from 'Canader' he was insistent we meet a fellow American sitting not far away who had joined the RCAF as a pilot early on in the last World War. Intrigued by the possibility of meeting an American WWII RCAF veteran, we were soon introduced to Basil Jackson who was accompanied by his wife Ann. Within a few minutes of having exchanged introductions, we were invited to visit them in their Tybee home the next day.

The following afternoon, when we arrived at the southern point of the island where their home is situated, we found a lovely three-story house surrounded by tall palm trees, semi-tropical shrubs and flowers. A small exquisite garden near the entrance was protected by a tall gray wood fence and wrought iron gates. A large pastel pink seahorse and matching size and color tropical fish were artistically displayed on the wall near the front door. This was obviously the home of someone with an artistic bent, we remarked to each other. This talented person, it turned out, was Anne Jackson, Basil's attractive wife of more than sixty years, the mother of their eight children and a person who is not only a practicing professional artist but also the owner of a successful Art Gallery in Roswell, an inland Georgia urban center of about the same population as Saint John.

Basil G. Jackson

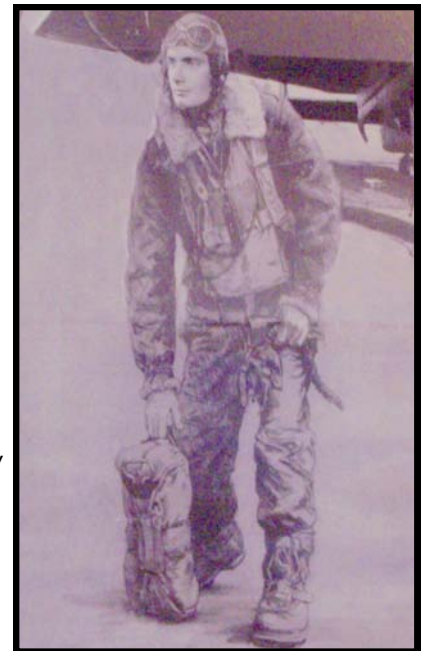
When I began my interview with Basil he was quick to point to his Scottish ancestry, as he was born in Scotland in 1923. His father was in the British consulate service and a world champion badminton player who had been posted to the USA. They lived in a small town near Boston, Massachusetts.

When Basil walked off the coastal steamer where he had been working as a deck hand late in the summer of 1941, he enlisted at an RCAF recruitment office in Boston. Though living in the USA, he was a British subject at the time. He was not naturalized as an American citizen until his marriage took place after the war. In 1941, the USA had not yet joined the

European Allies in their war with Germany but Basil was eighteen years of age and was looking for some action.

He was first posted to a camp near Toronto, then to a camp near Port Huron and that was followed by Centralia. He recalled with relish first having flown in dh Tiger Moths. Later he flew AVRO Ansons and still later, Vickers Wellingtons in Canada. Once overseas with Bomber Command, he at first piloted a Handley Page Halifax and later an AVRO Lancaster. He was assigned to 427 & 429, and subsequently to 405 Squadron (2), and in this latter assignment, he played the part of a pathfinder in raids over Germany.

There were two definitive flights during the war of which he has very distinctive memories. The first is one when he managed to bring his damaged machine and crew back home safely and for which he was discerned a royal citation (photo attached). The second took place in February of 1944 when he was blown out of the cockpit with his navigator during a night-time raid over Germany and managed to parachute to safety in German territory while the rest of his crew died in a spiral crash to the ground just over the border, in France. (1)



When he was blown out of the aircraft, he recounted how he must have been unconscious for some time because, when he finally pulled at the rip cord to open his parachute, it cracked open as he had hoped but it was almost no time at all before he hit the ground hard. As he was then keen to point out, in the explosion he had lost his boots and because he fell quickly through the atmosphere this prevented his feet from freezing solid. It was minus sixty-eight degrees Fahrenheit at the altitude the aircraft was flying when it was destroyed by enemy fire.

Once on the ground he ripped his chute into strips to bandage his feet and managed to make his way to a nearby rail line and crawled into an open freight car and closed the door.

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Continued

By Pierre Vachon



However, he had been seen coming down and German soldiers out looking for him saw a small part of the parachute snagged on the door. When they caught him they reminded him: "the war is now over for you". Eventually he was taken to Stalag Luft III in Zagan, Poland, where 'the great escape' took place. While there he worked for a time as a digger on the Harry tunnel featured in the book and movie titled "The Great Escape". Basil pointed out that the POW's always had a number of tunnel projects underway (I think the book mentions 98) and they would let the Germans find one of them from time to time so that they could protect the principal one called 'Harry'.

However, as Basil says, it was very fortunate for him that he was not picked as one of the candidates for escape; it turned out that, of those who made it out to a point just inside the fence where the tunnel came out by error, only three individuals made it back to England, twenty-three were returned to other POW camps and fifty were murdered as a deterrent for others who might be foolhardy enough to also be inclined to attempt an escape. As an interesting aside, Basil pointed out that those involved in the assassinations had themselves been convicted of murder by the Allies after the war.



In a related anecdote, Basil recounted how parts of his Lancaster had been found by a ten year old boy living in a small village on the French side of the border, where the rest of the machine had come down. (3) The villagers took parts of the Lancaster and created a monument. Many years later the ten-year old became the mayor of the village and wondered if

anyone who had been connected with that incident was still living. This is how Basil and his wife were invited by the mayor to take part in a ceremony commemorating the accident.

Coda

In preparation for my hour long session with Jackson, I did some background research on him via Google and this is how I learned about an interesting guy whom I thought might have been known to Jackson: RCAF Flight Lieutenant George Harsh. (6)

Harsh, the son of a wealthy Georgia family, had been a member of the Great Escape's executive committee and the camp's "security officer". Like Jackson, he was transferred to Stalag VIII C a short time before the escape. However, most unlike Jackson, Harsh had had a very unfortunate history: he had been sentenced to life imprisonment in 1929 when, as a medical student, he had confessed to the thrill murder of a grocer. However, because Harsh had performed an emergency appendectomy on a fellow prisoner, and thereby saved his life, Georgia Governor Eugene Talmadge later granted him a full pardon. As the war began, Harsh also joined the RCAF as a tail gunner and was sent to Stalag Luft III in Poland after he was shot down and taken prisoner.

I asked Jackson if he had met Harsh in Poland. "No", he replied. "There were thousands of allied prisoners there and there was not much socializing. We were confined to our respective quarters most of the time".

I thought to myself, life is really like that, isn't it? Sometimes you get an opportunity and other times you just miss it; "Just by that much", as Maxwell Smart used to say. Thank the Lord I didn't miss mine with Basil Jackson.

References

This is a quote from a web text belonging to Basil that I haven't since been able to locate: "**In the early evening hours of February 24, 1944, Lancaster III JB241/LQ-K from 405 Sqn, 8 Group, Pathfinder Force, lifted off the runway at RAF Gransden Lodge. The crew members were: F/O Basil Jackson DFC, RCAF, pilot; F/O RH Freiburger, RCAF, navigator; F/O John A. Radford, RCAF, bomb-aimer; P/O Douglas Eastham, RCAF, mid-upper gunner; F/S Solomon Kay, RCAF, rear gunner; F/S PGF Redstone, RAF, wireless operator; and Sgt FJ Aberly, RAF, flight engineer**". Douglas Eastham, it should be noted, was from Saint John N.B. I shall be copying the full text in question and suggesting to our Newsletter Editor that it be reproduced in its entirety in a later edition of Contact.





At a Glimpse

Obituary

Turnbull Chapter member Ken Legere 79 and his wife Mae 76 both from Cape Tormentine, lost their lives as a result of a moose and car collision a short distance from home on December 29th. Ken died from his injuries January 11th at the Moncton City Hospital . Both are survived by their 3 sons Terry, Todd and Tim.



Ken was an aviation enthusiast who had built his own aircraft and still maintained a landing strip near his home. Both were very active in volunteering within their community.

Turnbull Chapter Executive

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Turnbull Chapter member Norm Sheppard displayed pieces of Mosquito wreckage recently found while visiting a crash site last November.

The pieces consist of a aileron control pulley system (right) and portion of a radio casing including speaker mesh (bottom).

The aircraft, a Canadian built De Havilland Mosquito MK 20 (KB278) was from No. 7 O.T.U Debert Nova Scotia.



Both occupants, Pilot Officer Donald Lloyd Breadner (Son of Canadian Air Chief Marshal Lloyd Breadner) from Ottawa and Flying Officer Kenneth Brian Benneth of Raymond, Alberta were killed when their aircraft struck the top of a hill north of Westchester on November 30th 1944.



A crater is still visible today along with a small piece of wreckage that is embedded in a tree a few feet off the ground.

Special Thanks

Jim Sulis, Boyd Trites, Pepi DiGiacinto, Pierre Vachon, Lise Goguen, , Harold E. Wright, Norm Sheppard, Everett McQuinn, Sue Ehrlander, Basil G. Jackson, Alan Miller.

Aviation Quiz

Answers at the bottom of page 8

1. Which famous American actor owned a Canadair built jet/light attack aircraft?
2. Where can one find a British AVRO Vulcan Bomber on display in Canada?

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RCAF Flight Officer Charles Gilmour (Gilly) Miller

By Daniel Goguen



Flight Officer Charles Gilmour Miller was born in Darlington New Brunswick, a small community located outside Dalhousie on June 22nd, 1921. He enlisted July 31st, 1942 in Moncton at the age of 21 and successfully passed for aircrew training. His first choice was pilot, however due to his math skills, he was selected to become a navigator.



Charles spent 1 1/2 years at various military bases in central Canada such as the No 9 Bombing and Gunnery School in Mont-Joli and the No. 4 Air Observer's School in London Ontario. Even though this was no doubt a very hectic time for Charles, he did take time off to marry his sweetheart Louise McGarvie on July 19th, 1943.

On March 31st, 1944, Charles embarked on H.M.S. Andes for his deployment overseas. Arriving in England 8 days later, he spent the next 7



Charles with a self proclaimed halo

months training for operational duty with various units such as No. 10 Advance flying unit at Dumfries, No. 24 Operational Training Unit at Honeybourne and Long Marston followed by No. 1659 Heavy Conversion Unit at Topcliffe.

Joining 434 Squadrons in October of 1944, Charles completed his first 3 missions aboard a Halifax III aircraft. Then it was off to join the 420 Snowy Owl Squadron from January to March 1945 where he completed another 9 missions over enemy territory.

On March 19th, 1945 Charles became a member of the 405 Squadron. This was the only Pathfinder Squadron in the RCAF during the war. During this period until the end of the war, Squadron 405 was assigned with No. 8 Pathfinder Group. It was with this group the 405 won fame while flying the famous Lancaster bomber. Charles added 9 missions with this squadron for a total of 21.



Destruction of the Leipzig marshalling yards, April 10, 1945.

The most noticeable of all the missions Charles participated in was the attack (dropping of markers) on a heavily defended private chalet at Berchtesgaden in April of 1945.

The chalet in question was none other than Hitler's Chalet mansion with an Eagle's nest perched on top of a mountain in the Bavarian Alps.

In his log book, Charles writes the following:

"April 15, 1945, Lancaster III LQ-P, Pilot F/L MacGregor, Duty - Navigator, OPS.— Berchtesgaden (4737N 1303E), Bomb Load 7 X 1000—



Arial view of Hitler's nest.

Supporter, Hitler's Hideout in Bavarian Alps, Lost inner engine going out, Vis. Clear at Target—Good Prang. Flying time 7:15."

Common towards the end of the European conflict, were non combat or training flights. Several were made to bring supplies where needed. Some of these life saving flights were called "grocery runs" to help the starving Dutch people while others carried returning P.O.W.s to England.

No doubt, one of the most memorable flights started on June 18th, 1945 when Lancaster LQ-Z took off from Linton on Ouse with a full crew + 2 passengers and a load of equipment.



RCAF STN. No 4 Scoudouc 1945

Destination, Canada via Azores and Gander before landing at No. 4 Scoudouc. Total flight time 18:55hrs. In the remarks section of his log book, he writes, "good to see god's country again!"

After spending a little over a month with No. 664 in Greenwood, Charles was discharged on August 19th 1945. He settled at home in Dalhousie with his wife and 5 children, became chief accountant at the local paper mill until his passing in 1982 at the age of 61.



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Canadian Aviation Historical Society 2012 National Convention

By Sue Ehrlander

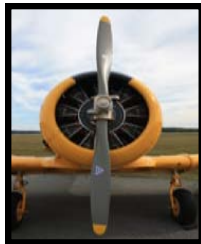


Save The Date!

September 5 to 8. Plan to be in Saint John, New Brunswick.

The Turnbull Chapter are inviting all those with an interest in Aviation History to meet in Canada's First City for the 2012 Canadian Aviation Historical Society Conference.

History, the Bay of Fundy, the Turnbull Gallery at the New Brunswick Museum, Lobster, Loyalist House, Stonehammer Geo Park just some of the attractions waiting for you.



Our hotel will be the Delta Brunswick located in the bustling



Uptown. The hotel is offering the conference rate of \$100.00 per night for a standard room. This rate is also available for 3 days before and 3 days after our meeting. The hotel is accepting registration now for the conference Upgraded rooms are available at additional cost.

A historic site dedication, a poster session, museum access and a wide variety of speakers are just some of the events and activities we are working on for your enlightenment and enjoyment.



A variety of optional tours and events are being developed such as a historic city walking tour and bus tours. Some behind the scene tours are also possibilities.

We are working on developing this interesting and exciting event, but we need assistance to do this. We will be calling for volunteers to assist with speakers, to accompany tours, to help in the hospitality suite and for other positions. So we ask you to keep this in mind as you plan your visit to Saint John.

The registration information will be available by mid-April if not before but if you would like to start planning your trip now you might be interested in visiting the following web sites for information:

www.saintjohn.ca

www.tourismnewbrunswick.ca

www.deltahotels.com/en/hotels/new-brunswick/delta-brunswick

We are looking forward to welcoming all to Canada's First City, Saint John.





Other News

The Canadair Argus

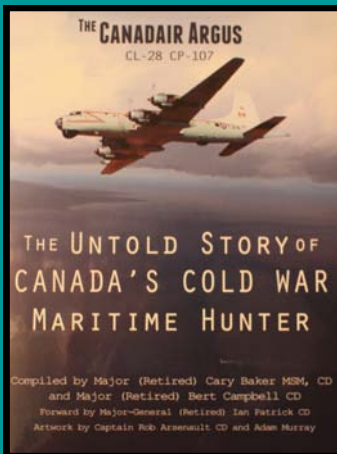
It was with great pleasure that I treated myself to a copy of this book for Christmas. My first thought was, finally a long overdue book on the Canadair Argus!

The authors, Major (ret.) Carey Baker, Major (ret.) Bert Campbell and all others who contributed in the publication of this book did a superb job. For the first time, one can read in detail, see photos and charts of all the facets of the Argus's history and the valuable efforts made by its crew.

From sub hunting, search & rescue, coastal patrol, weapons evaluation system to the role played during the Cuban Missiles Crisis, this book provides information that up until now could only be found by spending numerous hours at the National Archives or at an aviation museum. It answers the questions one may have when standing in front of one the remaining few located throughout Canada as Guard Gates.

Its truly well worth the money!

I still hear the sound of the four 18 cylinders Wright R-3350 engines revving before take off in Greenwood while I was a kid in the early 70s. Ed.



The Turnbull Chapter of the Canadian Aviation Historical Society would like to thank the following sponsors for their generous donations.



Quiz Answers

From page 5

1. Actor/pilot John Travolta owned a Canadair Built CL-41G Tebuan.
2. Vulcan XL361 is on display at CFB Goose Bay, following an emergency landing in December, 1981.