



904 (Lake Chapala-Mexico) Wing Air Force Association of Canada

Aug 2008

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President's Message

I would like to thank all of you for your confidence in me. I shall try to fulfill my role as President in a manner which brings credit to our fine association. I feel some remarks about my predecessors are in order. When Peter DeTracey, Don Slimman and I first discussed getting some retired Air Force people together for a TGIF, I am sure none of us envisioned the result. We held about three successful TGIFs that first winter, but it was not until spring, when Bill Watt joined us for our first organizational meeting, that things really began to happen. Bill is a master organizer. He knew the leaders of the AFAC and the Royal Canadian Legion in Ottawa. He prepared spread sheets on the merits of membership in each group. We four opted for the AFAC, and Bill ran with it that summer. The rest is history that you are familiar with. Bill Watt was not only our first interim, then first, President, but he did monumental work in getting our fledgling association "airborne". I often wonder if there is anything this gentleman does not do?

Our second president was Peter DeTracey, whose experience and guidance, no less important than Bill's, continued to ensure the building of our association. His sage advice, born of years of command experience, stood us all in very good stead indeed. The same can be said of Bob Rowlett, who, armed with the same senior officer experience, made certain that 904 Wing would continue to be recognized in this community as a professional, classy, savoir faire organization. These three gentlemen added their own flair in founding and nurturing our wing. I doubt that few associations anywhere have had the privilege of being initially led by such fine and talented men.

Now to our fourth president, Mario Okunsky. He is a dynamic, hard working individual who could perhaps be called "mister membership". No one has done more to build our ranks than Mario. He is also the valuable liaison with our

Mexican comrades-in-arms, the Asociacion de la Escuela Militar de Aviacion. We are justly proud of our connection to our Mexican hosts and with Mario's help we intend that it continues.

The cliché often spoken on these occasions is, "it will be difficult to fill their shoes". I would not even try. I would much prefer to, "follow in their footsteps", hoping to continue their fine work. I am sure I speak for my truly excellent executive, when I say that we intend to be very approachable. We will listen to your input, good or otherwise, and promise to discuss it for resolution one way or another. I am honoured to lead 904 Wing. Thank you.

Ron Hudson, President

Editor's Message

I hope you enjoy this first issue of the Wing bulletin "Slip Stream" for the 2008-2009 year. New this year will be a series of short biographies of members. Ron Hudson, kindly agreed to be the first member under the microscope.

Friday, September 12th is the Battle of Britain meeting so in this issue I have highlighted this special day in our History with an article on the Battle of Britain from the Air Force Association of Canada.

Bob Rowlatt, Editor

Meet 904 Wing President – Ron Hudson

Our 904 Wing President Ron Hudson was born on the October 10, 1934 on a farm near Weyburn, Saskatchewan. He was the middle of five children to his proud family of farmers who survived through the depression of the "dirty thirties".

In 1940 when he started school the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan was in operation and Ron remembers seeing Harvards, Ansons and a few Lysanders in the sky over the family farm. This early exposure tweaked his interest in aviation.

Ron joined the RCAF in 1956, went through flight crew selection at RCAF Crumlin, in London, Ontario and Centralia for three months of "officers' school". Nine months of Harvard training at FTS Moose Jaw Saskatchewan was followed by three months on the T-33 at AFS Gimli Manitoba. Of the original 40 that started air crew selection, six graduated with wings, three were subsequently killed in aircraft accidents. His instructor in Gimli was an RAF exchange officer who was also the flight commander and he picked Ron for one of only two F-86 postings to Europe. This was a stroke of luck because his RCAF classmates from flying training went to the Harvard Instructors School.

For Ron flying "Sabres" in France was pure enjoyment and the heart of his career in the RCAF. In his words *"Shortly after take off, one began looking around for adversaries ready to bounce you, then for adversaries to bounce. We put those sabres through an awful lot of "G" forces as we wracked them around the skies of Europe."* As punishment for having too much fun on squadron, Ron was posted to RCAF Camp Borden to fly 'Bug Smashers" the venerable C-45. The pilots called themselves "flying training aids" since they flew around for three-hour periods at a time, training GCA controllers.

From Borden, Flight Lieutenant Ron left the RCAF to attend the University of Western Ontario. He graduated with a BA degree three years later, broke and in debt with student loans, and went back to flying with Air Canada. In 28 years with Air Canada he flew Viscounts, DC 8s, 727s, L1011s and 747s. After retiring from Air Canada he spent four and one-half years moonlighting with Cargolux, a Luxembourg Cargo carrier. During this impressive flying career Ron logged nearly 18,000 hours.

Ron met a beautiful French girl named Babette while posted in Europe at RCAF Gros Tenquin. They were married in France in 1960. They have one daughter Nadine and two grandchildren. They moved to Mexico when Ron retired in 1999 and have made Ajijic their home. We are indeed fortunate to have Ron Hudson as our new President and both Ron and Babette as our friends.

904 Wing with our Mexican comrades-in-arms

This July, thanks to the efforts of Past President, Mario Okunsky, our AFAC/AEMA liaison chairperson, several Wing members were invited to the XXXII convention of the Asociacion de la Escuela Militar de Aviacion, in Guadalajara.

On Friday of the convention weekend, Mario Okunsky, John Prichard, Al Trottier, Manuel Cordoba, and Ron Hudson were invited to participate in the march past with 60 of the AEMA members and the smartly uniformed cadets and band of the aviation school.

On Saturday Mario, Ron, Manuel, Peter DeTracey and Don Slimman attended a memorial service for the fallen of the Mexican Air Force squadron 201, who served in the Pacific Theatre with the Americans in WWII.

That same evening a lovely dinner dance was attended by Mario, Don, Manuel and Ron and their ladies. They acquitted ourselves well, leaving the scene at 4 AM when only about 15 percent of the Mexican hosts remained. It is a privilege to be so well accepted by our Mexican friends, and an association that should be fostered. They are gracious hosts, these pilots and their ladies. All comport themselves with style and class, sometimes forgotten in other parts of the world.

Canada Day 2008



The Snowbirds delight audiences at Parliament Hill on Canada Day with their annual fly past. Credit: Ken Lin

Canada Day is a time to celebrate the heritage passed down to us through the works of our authors, poets, artists and performers. It is a time to rejoice in the discoveries of our scientific researchers, in the success of our entrepreneurs, and to commemorate our history — a history in which each new chapter reveals itself to be more touching, more fascinating than the last.

Canada Day is celebrated in grand style in the nation's capital. Every year, tens of thousands of people flock to Parliament Hill to take part in the noon show. A crowd highlight is the fly past of the Snowbirds.

The Battle of Britain

The Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour."



- WINSTON CHURCHILL, JUNE 18, 1940

July 1940, the German war machine had overrun France and was now poised at the English Channel. Britain anticipated that they would be the next to be invaded. The German army and the Luftwaffe had made short work of Poland, before turning their attention north and then west. The British Norwegian Campaign had ended ignominiously while the British Expeditionary Force had

been whipped in France. The successful evacuation of over 335,000 British and French soldiers from Dunkirk hid the apparent failure against the Blitzkrieg. The Germans appeared unbeatable.

With the Germans almost at their doorstep, all England looked to the Royal Air Force. Both the English and the Germans realized that before the German armies could invade, the RAF would have to be eliminated. With this in mind, the Luftwaffe first probed for weaknesses by attacking targets in southern England and shipping. This was followed by attacks against RAF airfields and radar stations.



The RAF, already badly weakened through having sent squadrons to France, was suffering heavily in the daily attacks on their airfields. Although fighting valiantly, losses of men and machines mounted, nearing a critical level. Relief came from an unexpected source. A German bomber accidentally bombed London prompting the RAF to attack Berlin. Hitler was incensed, ordering that the Luftwaffe now turn their attention to leveling London.

With the Luftwaffe's attention now turned to London and other British cities, the heat was still not off the RAF. The elimination of Britain's still developing war industry could have dealt Britain a grave blow. Day after day the Luftwaffe came to bomb the docks, factories and infrastructure of the last bastion in Europe. Daily the RAF met the challenge. The stalwart defence during the day forced the Luftwaffe to attack at night. By the end of October, the Luftwaffe had exhausted itself. With it went the last chance of an invasion of Britain by the German army.

Canadian airmen played their part in the Battle of Britain. Over 100 Canadian pilots flew on fighter operations during the Battle of Britain. Another 200 fought with the RAF's Bomber and Coastal Commands. An untold number served as groundcrew, keeping the fighters, bombers and patrol Aircraft flying.

These Canadian pilots distinguished themselves, not only in the Battle of Britain, but also in later battles. They were not alone however. Joining the British and Canadians, were pilots from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, from Czechoslovakia, France and Poland, and from the United States. It was an international effort to defend democracy. Few of them recognized the significance of their actions at the time.

The significance of the Battle of Britain is more than just a matter of Aircraft kills and medals. It was the first time that air power saved a nation. Not only was it a military victory, but it also gave a somber nation hope for the future. For Canada, the leadership provided by these experienced fliers was to be instrumental in the development of the Royal Canadian Air Force. The Battle of Britain was also the first occasion in which Canadian airmen flew in Canadian units in a sustained battle.

Information provided by Director of Heritage and History, 1 Cdn Air Div

904 Wing Program

The full 904 Wing Program is available on the Web Site at 904wing.org.

Date	Day/Time	Theme	Venue
12 Sep 08	Fri/1600 hrs	Aviation, Battle of Britain	La Nueva Posada
26 Sep 08	Fri/1600 hrs	Beer Call	Rincon del Cielo
10 Oct 08	Fri/1600 hrs	Regular Meeting Guest Speaker	La Nueva Posada
24 Oct 08	Fri/1600 hrs	Beer Call	Rincon del Cielo
07 Nov 08	Fri/1600 hrs	Nostalgia Night	La Nueva Posada
11 Nov 08	Tue/1100 hrs	Remembrance Day with American Legion	Chapala Cemetery, Veterans' Section
15 Nov 08	TBA	93rd Anniversary of the Colegio del Aire	TBA
28 Nov 08	Fri/1600 hrs	Welcome Back Snowbirds BBQ	LCS Gazebo/Bar
30 Nov 08	Sunday	Flyers Air Show	TBA
12 Dec 08	Fri/1600 hrs	Regular Meeting Guest Speaker	La Nueva Posada

Wing Executive Council

If you have any suggestions to improve the program or any of the 904 Wing events, please speak to any member of the Executive Council.

904 Wing Executive Council 2008-2009

Ron Hudson	President	766-2142
Don Slimman	First Vice	765-4141
Tombo Thomlinson	Second Vice	766-4684
Bob Pope	Snowbird Rep	766-3143
John Prichard	Secretary/Treasurer	766-1876
Mario Okunsky	Past President	766-3209