

971 RCAF AIR MARSHAL SLEMON WING

Air Force Association Newsletter July 2008



Spring at Alert, Ellesmere Island.
That white stuff is not snow but wind-driven ice pellets.
See pages 6-7.

- May 12 Thanks to the generosity of Ent Credit Union, Title America, AFAC, Wing funds, and to the genius of Paul Ellis in organizing it all, there were two tables of 971Wingers mingling with the throng who attended the NORAD 50th Anniversary Ball. It was great to see again Dave and Loreen O'Brien and George and Melanie Macdonald who had flown in from Ottawa for the event. Dan Clark was an entertaining master of ceremonies while Robert Gates, US Secretary of Defense, and Peter MacKay, Canadian Minister of National Defence were excellent guest speakers. The Big Cod, Rick Hillier, was also there. I had fasted for a month to get into my 1950 mess kit but the dinner was so fabulous that I was looking for the nudist table afterwards. To these old ears the music and singing were just a lot of annoying noise. I do miss Guy Lombardo and his ilk. But, it was an enjoyable evening.
- May 24 41 of us enjoyed yet another evening hosted by Yvonne and Gerry Robitaille, ably assisted by Donna and Dave Bristow.
- May 26 A cloudy Memorial Day with a larger-than-usual turnout but . . . the Canadian Regular Force contingent was well below its usual dominance and as for 971 Wing - deplorable. 41 of us flocked to wine and dine at the Robitaille's on Saturday but only 12 - the same old reliables - saw fit to honour those who had their young lives torn from them and whom we once said we would never forget. This old veteran thanks Mike Doohar, Jim and Carol Brown, Paul and Louise Ellis, Frank and Ida Fraser, Darrell Levitt, Carl Matson, Gerry Robitaille, and Roy Thompson for caring enough to attend.
- June 07 45 of us enjoyed another delightful evening in perfect weather at Jim Berwick's palace. Chef Bob Freimuth looked good in an apron while Valerie and Judy Maestrelli were great assistants..
- July 01 Dominion/Canada Day. 1300-1500, Penrose House, El Pomar Center,
- July 19 1800 at the home of Nancy and Peter Rallis, 4355 Winding Circle, 80917, 597-7825
- August 02 1500 at Charlene and Bill Champion's, 12612 Pommel Circle, Elbert. 495-0529. The 971 Wingers, as Champions of the NORAD Canadian Hockey League, will have the Roy Jackson Memorial Cup at the Champions for photo sessions, traditional "Drink from the Cup", and a chance to make a reservation to have the "A Day with the Cup".

SICK PARADE: Wing members are stoically enduring health attacks without advising Ye Olde Scribe thus preventing him from advising the world. I just have rumours that Barry Edwards, Don Swift, Frank Fraser, and Margit Thompson are in this club. My memory for rumours is not what it used to be so my facts suffer. I need e-mail advice.

The Editor's Corner

Poor Penny

There is a cry in the land to abolish it. Now held in contempt, it has gone the way of the Roman Piece of As that once bought something eagerly sought by the men of Rome.

Yet, it is a mere 80 years since I could buy a dozen varieties of candies for a penny each (for a farthing Joan could buy a gobstopper -a candy ball that changed colours as you sucked it). For 2 pennies I could buy a newspaper or mail a letter to any of my pen pals in Australia, Britain, Germany, Gold Coast (Ghana), Malaya, or South Africa. It took 5 of them to buy a chocolate bar, a hot dog, or a bottle of pop, and a 3-course restaurant meal cost 25 of them. My first job paid me all of 20 cents an hour, reduced to 17 cents with my first permanent job in a bank. Even so we all skimmed to put aside a few pennies for our old age (bank interest 1.5%), never realizing that inflation would nullify our thrift.

It is also a crime that the average family income of \$5,000 in 1961 is now \$62,000 for those under 65 and \$42,000 for those over that mark. What you scrimped to save in 1930 or 1961 buys little today.

Even though its now costs us 1.7 cents to manufacture a penny, I urge its retention as a constant reminder, and irritant, of our failure to preserve the value of our currency and our relegating thrift to the past because saving has no future.

If I have to pay you more than a penny for your thoughts, do make sure they will be worth the expense.

Tipping Points

We are racing towards yet another tipping point that will dramatically change life on this globe, so let us consider an earlier one while we still can. Shortly after the first crust formed, life arose only once, and we have never been able to duplicate it in the lab. Some say it was started by aliens on meteorites some of which have been found containing up to 34 different amino acids. The first bacteria were anaerobic for whom oxygen was a deadly poison, but they were their own undoing. Life was really humdrum with change not a political rallying point. They supped on water, using its hydrogen while releasing the oxygen which, over a billion years or so, increased to the point where anaerobics had to retreat to bogs and, later, to our intestines. About 3.5 billion years ago these cyanobacteria, who happened to be in shallow seas, trapped sand particles to build stromatolites (examples can still be found in Shark Bay, NW Australia) - a living rock and our first ecosystem, containing 3 billion organisms per square yard, giving off oxygen. It took some 2 billion years for the Oxygen level to reach 20%, then suddenly a tipping point and a whole new world erupted.

A cyanobacteria got a strange urge (the one we inherited and cherish) and embraced another. Their dance became beneficial to both. One became a cell with a nucleus, the other a resident mitochondrion. Sex was born and they lost no time in multiplying. Today almost everything we consume goes to feeding these hungry mitochondria, a billion of which would equal the size of a grain of sand. They manufacture the energy we need to grow, change, and do things. My mitochondria are now falling down on the job. How about yours? Makes us wonder what the next Tipping Point will bring. We do need to remember that all life on this globe is one. We are all related with the same blueprint - grass, insects, fish, petunias, humans, et al. **We do need to show more sympathy and respect for all our relatives.**

The Red Snake - The Great Wall of Gorgan

Currently, an Iranian-British team is studying and excavating a massive engineering feat that has been nominated for protection as an UNESCO historical treasure. About the time the Great Wall of China was being built, the Parthians also built a wall to form a barrier along a stretch of their long border. This was restored during the Sasanid Persian period, probably under King Peroz (459-484 AD) who disliked all those White Huns who were appropriating tracts of land in his northern, semi-arid regions. The wall is 200 km-long, 5-metres high with over 30 large forts. Several thousand kilns produced red bricks of standard dimensions. Barracks were built for an army strength of 30,000 men. Building and/or repairing a protecting wall was slow work. First river systems had to be diverted and numerous canals built to sustain warriors, workers, and brick-making. Security was vital in the vulnerable building stage just as we are finding today in the same part of the world. These Sasanian Persians built and garrisoned a defensive work of greater magnitude than anything in the West. Their engineering, water management, and military organization was more than a match for their late Roman rivals.

AN AMAZING FEAT

Low -80C, high -30C, wind speed 20km, barometric pressure 8.5 millibars, clear skies, dust storms in the distance. The first Mars weather report from the \$37 million Canadian weather station on the \$420 million Phoenix, a NASA triumph with help from Denmark and the UK. This is the sort of human endeavour we can all support - a successful landing of an incredibly-complex explorer after a 9-month, 680 million kilometre journey renews our hope that mankind will bury his terrestrial antagonisms and embrace co-operation.

VENERABLE BEDE: Although many scribes were employed to exaggerate the heroics of warlords, we are indebted to thousands who laboured to record history as they knew it. One of these was Bede who was born in Tyne, Durham, in 673. At age 7 he started his education in the monastery in Wearmouth, then Yarrow, Northumbria, that boasted the largest library in Europe with some 400 books. He mastered Latin, some Greek, and a little Hebrew to become the most learned man of his times. He spent his life painstakingly copying old works and, by using numerous sources, compiling a history of England from the invasion of Claudius in 43 BC to 731. It was he who first used the Incarnation of Christ as the boundary between our current BC and AD. His works included *On the Reckoning of Time*, and *On the Nature of Things* that included linking tides with phases of the moon. From observations he deduced the earth was round, a belief shared by intellectuals throughout Europe. With other monks he produced a massive 27 by 20 inch book of 2,060 pages on vellum containing all the works of the Bible, each letter being formed by a broad-cut quill. In all, Bede produced over 30 volumes many of which were destroyed after his death in 735 by Danes who plundered the country for 73 years, culminating in the conquest of York in 867.

King Alfred the Great, 849-899, ordered the translation of surviving Bede's works into Anglo-Saxon from Latin although Latin remained dominant in Germany until 1475 and England until 1643.

DIPLOMATS AT RISK: When WWII broke out in September 1939, Canada had diplomatic offices in Paris, Brussels, Geneva, and the Hague. Charged with looking after Canadian nationals, they all knew they would be the last to flee any German onslaught. On 10 May 1940, Ken Kirkwood in the Hague reported heavy, nearby bombing and strafing starting at 0400, followed by German paratroopers and 5th-column Nazi sympathizers fighting to take over government buildings. All roads out were blocked, but just before the city fell he and his staff fled on foot, managing to reach a Royal Navy ship that took them to London where they were met by Lester Pearson, future prime minister. Also, on 10 May, Jean Désy in Brussels reported being bombed and that staff families, along with Belgian officials, were leaving by car for Coxyde on the coast. Désy and his remaining staff were forced to flee from 8 different locations they tried to set up, all the while evacuating Canadians plus the UK ambassador and his wife via Spain because heavy air attacks prevented evacuation from Ostend. Clogged roads were strafed, but, with only the clothes on their backs and sleeping in fields and barns they reached Paris 21 May. They had to flee again ending up in Poitiers, swamped with refugees. Somehow, Désy got his wife and family to Portugal where they got a flight home. Helped by General Brutinel, who had commanded Canadian units in WWI and who now

owned an estate near Bordeaux, he found makeshift accommodation for 30 members of the Paris legation that had been forced to close. With no papers or possessions he persuaded Spanish border guards to let them pass en route to Portugal just two hours before the border was sealed on 20 June. The sentiment in Franco Spain was anti-British so this was a considerable achievement.

Alfred Rive and his wife, Harriet who was 7 months pregnant, had left their Geneva post to help out in Paris. Harriet refused to flee with others but stuck with Alfred. On 08 Jun they reached Bordeaux, catching the last ship out. They were intercepted by a U-Boat whose commander ordered all into lifeboats before he sank their ship. Surveying the destitute creatures in the lifeboats and realizing they would all perish at sea, he relented, allowing all to return to the ship which then sailed safely on to England.

Major-General Georges Vanier, WWI hero and future governor-general, was in charge of the Paris office. On 09 June, with clouds of smoke from fires hanging over Paris, the French government ordered the Canadian legation out. They travelled at night without lights as roads were clogged and strafed and a constant threat were paratroopers who would shoot car passengers to take over their vehicles. The few bottles of brandy Vanier had carried from the legation were soon used up as disinfectants for the wounded lying along the way. By 17 June they reached Bordeaux via Tours. A British destroyer raced in to their rescue, then transferred them to a cargo ship at sea and it took 4 days to reach Britain, sleeping on deck with little food, water, or clothing. Another British ship, with space for 130, evacuated 1,800. Vanier remained behind, finally leaving on a sardine boat that transferred him to a Royal Navy cruiser.

All Canadian diplomatic personnel managed to get back to Britain, but only with the clothes on their backs. It was not until December that the snail-paced bureaucracy in Ottawa got around to granting them compensation. (*The Beaver*, October 1990).

PRECESSION: Because they told us so in school, we all know that our polar axis precesses every 26,000 years from having Polaris as our North Star to having Vega - and back again. This was well known in ancient times by Sumerians, Egyptians, Indians, Persians, Greeks, and Mayans. This precession is at the rate of one degree every 72 years yet with the naked eye and a little arithmetic they were able to compute the duration of the cycle. How many of us can?

DIANA'S EXTRAORDINARY THINGS: Our congratulations to Diana DeLuca for being a semi finalist in the Reviewers' Choice Award for her first book. She has donated \$600 from book sales to the Halifax museum in Trenton. A second book, *All Things Under Heaven*, is on the way.

POLAR PROBLEMS: It is getting crowded. April, which is not exactly a summer month, saw: a polar cricket match between the Indian Navy and the UK, a Russian Orthodox church service, 7 Russian and 1 British teenage guests, a group of London socialite women, the planting of the Tibetan flag, and a scared Ontario father with two sons. Hiking to the Pole they encountered a small fissure. The father and one son jumped across. Before the second son could follow the fissure opened into a wide inlet of open water that required the launching of a kayak to get across.

The closest habitation to the Pole is the Russian research station, Camp Barneo, a mere 100 km away. Next comes Alert, Ellesmere Island, at 775 km. Svalberg, Norway, is third.

During the 3 years I spent flying over this terrain (1946-49), April always was the best for clear skies. But below was an endless vista of impassible rough ice with huge pressure ridges and only the odd river of open water. Too often, in our B-29s, we would lose an engine in this wilderness - and our only alternate was Prestwick, Scotland! One night, the only radio station we could raise in the world was Leopoldville in the Belgian Congo. It was a bit lonely with only the stars and the ice for company. Things have changed.

THE BEARS ARE BACK: They have yet to pass back and forth cups of tea but smiles and waves are exchanged as CF-18's from Inuvik intercept Bears grazing Canadian Arctic airspace - once in 2006 and 4 times in 2007. Meanwhile the USAF intercepted 12 Russian flights off Alaska.

CANADIAN TIBETANS: In the 1970s Pierre Trudeau opened the door to Tibetans in dire straits in India after being chased out of Tibet by occupying Chinese. The city of Belleville, population 49,000, became home to the first community. Here, in 1992 they hosted the first North American Tibetan Youth Conference. Today, with only 80 still in Belleville, they are dwarfed by the 3,500 in Toronto.

ASYLUM FOR THE VERBALLY INSANE:

We'll begin with a box, and the plural is boxes,
But the plural of ox becomes oxen, not oxes.
One fowl is a goose, but two are called geese,
Yet the plural of moose should never be meese.
You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice,
Yet the plural of house is houses, not hice.
If the plural of man is always called men,
Why shouldn't the plural of pan be called pen?
If I speak of my foot and show you my feet,
And I give you a boot, would a pair be called beet?
If one is a tooth and a whole set are teeth,
Why shouldn't the plural of booth be called beeth?
Then one may be that, and three would be those,
Yet hat in the plural would never be hose,
And the plural of cat is cats, not cose.
We speak of a brother and also of brethren,

But though we say mother, we never say methren.
Then the masculine pronouns are he, his and him,
But imagine the feminine: she, shis and shim!
Let's face it - English is a crazy language.
There is no egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger;
Neither apple nor pine in pineapple.
English muffins weren't invented in England .
We take English for granted, but if we explore its paradoxes, we find that Quicksand can work slowly,
boxing rings are square, And a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig. And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing,
Grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham?
If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught?
If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat? Sometimes I think all the folks who grew up speaking English should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane. In what other language do people Recite at a play and play at a recital?
We ship by truck but send cargo by ship.
We have noses that run and feet that smell.
We park in a driveway and drive in a parkway.
And how can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?
You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling it out, and in which an alarm goes off by going on.
And, in closing, if Father is Pop, how come Mother's not Mop?
(Thanks to Bob Johnson in North Gower, Ontario)

CANADIAN MONARCHY A HIT IN FRANCE:

The great great granddaughter of French-owned Haitian slaves, Canada's Governor General, Michaëlle Jean, drew rave reviews from President Sarkosky, the French press, and the French public during her May tour of France which included a speech in Bordeaux that had been a hub of the French slave trade. She was portrayed as "La petite reine du Canada".

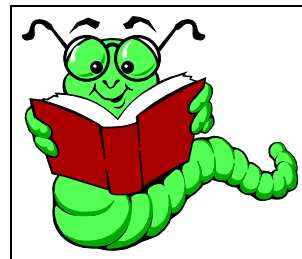
THE UKRAINE AND PRESIDENT VIKTOR YUSHCHENKO:

After 25 painful operations, 85% of the dioxin poisoning that so disfigured Viktor has been removed. It was caused by poisoned soup served him during his pro-democracy 2004 Orange Revolution. With great courage he has continued to lead a fractured country where newly enriched oligarchs are vying for power while a growing percentage of the population prefers closer ties with Europe. Visiting Canada to address a joint session of parliament and to also visit Toronto and Edmonton, he praises Canada's 1.3 million Ukrainians - the largest group outside the Ukraine.

E-MAIL SAVINGS: The newsletter now goes to 2 in the UK, 22 in Canada, and 23 in the US via e-mail, saving us \$27.38 a time. Bob Freimuth continues to run off the hard copies, saving us even more.

Book

Reviews



THE GREAT WAR FOR CIVILISATION - THE CONQUEST OF THE MIDDLE EAST

by **ROBERT FISK**, Fourth Estate, London, and Random House, NY, 2007, 1112 pages

Surely, you cannot expect me to review all 1,112 pages in just one newsletter. Rather, let me introduce you to Robert Fisk who holds more UK and International awards for journalism than any other correspondent. In 2006 he was awarded the Lannan Prize for Cultural Freedom.

Robert Fisk's father, Bill, fought with the British Army in the trenches of WWI. Robert grew up with an intimate knowledge of the war, a passion for world affairs, and with an intense desire to be a correspondent.

He worked for two other newspapers before persuading *The Times* in 1971 to send him to Northern Ireland. In 1976, at age 29, he was sent to Portugal to cover the aftermath of the Portuguese Revolution, but soon went on to the Middle East to fill a vacancy and has since covered wars in Algeria, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Iraq, Iran, Palestine, and Lebanon.

He stresses that wars are endless repeats of hordes of fighting men who come to rape, kill, and destroy, then move on, leaving huddled masses to suffer in untold misery. He witnessed the civil wars in Lebanon and two Israeli invasions, amassing 350,000 documents that reveal the horrors. He berates the arrogance of power and describes the Iranian belief that the United States is "The Centre of World Arrogance". He tells how the victors of WWI carved the boundaries of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East while abandoning the Armenians and Kurds, and how he watched the people within Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia, and the Middle East burn.

In Afghanistan he interviewed Osama bin Laden in his tent and lived with the Taliban fighting the Soviets; he was in the front lines with Iranians during the 8-year war provoked by Saddam's invasion who in 1980 called it a "Whirlwind War". He describes Iranians clutching their Korans as they died with lungs full of Iraqi gas. In 1991 he followed coalition forces into Iraq to establish "A New World Order". In Serbia he found Serbs killing Muslims to perfect a "Serb Civilisation". In 2003 he was in Baghdad when the first missiles of the Blair-Bush war of "Shock and Awe" screamed over his head. He saw the bodies of children shattered by USAF cluster bombs. He also saw the mass graves of Saddam's victims. He recounts the dead in Kosovo both from civil wars and from NATO bombings.

Fisk argues that war represents the total failure of the human spirit and that a correspondent's responsibility is to monitor the sources of power as stressed by his friend, Amira Hass, the brilliant Israeli reporter who told of the horrors of Israeli occupations in more detail than any non-Israeli reporter. Amira was influenced by her Mother who survived Bergen-Belsen but who could never forget the German women watching, without interfering, the sick and dying being herded from cattle cars to extermination. Fisk's work is a masterpiece. Do yourselves a favour and read it.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE - CELEBRATING 90 YEARS

by Ken Elis, Nigel Price, and Sqn Ldr Brian Handy, Key Publishing, Stamford, Lincolnshire, 2008, 130 pages

This official Souvenir Issue, which is available at Borders Book Stores as is Fisk's book, is an excellent statistical summary of the RAF from 1918 to 2008. It gives high praise to Lord Trenchard for his successful fight to create and sustain the RAF as an independent service. It includes the names and bases of 133 RFC squadrons on 01 Apr 1918 that founded the RAF: 76 in France, 9 in Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia, 8 in Italy, 7 in the Balkans, 2 in India, 16 in the UK for home defence, 15 in the UK training for France, plus 10 training squadrons and 20 in the formative stages.

Between 1919 and 1939, The RAF operated in Aden, Afghanistan, Burma, India, Iraq, Kurdistan, Palestine, Persia, Somaliland, Sudan, Transjordan, and Waziristan. During WWII the RAF operated in Burma, Canada, Ceylon, East Africa, Egypt, Greece, Iraq, Libya, Madagascar, Malaya, Middle East, Iran, Norway, Rhodesia, the Arctic (from bases in Iceland, Russia, and the Shetlands), Syria, the Pacific as well as the UK and western Europe.

Since WWII the RAF has been engaged in Afghanistan, the Balkans, Canada (Calgary, Goose Bay, Gander), the Congo, Cyprus, Diego Garcia, Georgia, Gibraltar, Korea, the Falklands, Iraq, Kosovo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and the USA (Nevada and Florida).

The current Battle Order includes 40 squadrons in the UK plus 7 helicopter squadrons, 49 training and ceremonial squadrons in the UK, plus 1 flight in the US, 1 wing in the Falklands, 1 wing and a flight in Afghanistan.

Also included are lists of 211 different aircraft operated by the RAF with dates and numbers totalling 182,992.

Canadian Forces Station Alert - by David Greenwood

Our Editor, knowing that I spent some time in Alert, and also that this is the 50th Anniversary of Canadian Forces Station Alert, asked me to write some memories and provide some pictures of this far off remote place. I have not any shortage of stories; my problem is going to be to edit and shorten them. Alert is at the top of Ellesmere Island, the most northerly island in the Canadian arctic. My story starts with how did I, a young Naval Supply Officer, happily at sea, end up there. Well, every year you were supposed to put your top three posting desires on your annual personnel evaluation report. The previous year, I had put CFS Bermuda. Later, I got called by the Career Manager, "I don't have Bermuda - but I have a job (Station Logistics Officer) which is identical in another place."

I was designated for Alert 6 months before I was to go, just in case something happened to the fellow that was there then... I was in the jump seat. Another colleague, "Jim" was named as my alternate. Jim was a young married man with two small girls, so we decided to play a joke on him. As my time to leave approached, we in the office had the hospital put a full plaster cast on my leg. They could only do it on Friday afternoon so I had to hop around all weekend. The Warrant Officer in the office was married to a woman up in the Message Center, and she made a fake posting message for Jim. First thing Monday morning, I showed up with my cast and Jim found the posting message in his In-Box. Before we could "spring the joke" Jim typed up a request for release resignation letter and submitted it to the Base AdminO. The situation was not so funny after all. It took a lot of pull to reverse his request, but Jim was never the same.

It was a 22 hour flight from Ottawa to Alert on 10 April 1983. We stopped in Frobisher, now Iqaluit, and Thule for fuel. We deplaned in both places. I clearly remember the folks of Frobisher dressed in their heavy sealskin parkas - they looked very exotic. In Thule Greenland we had to wait in the air terminal and inside there was this very meager Norfolk Pine tree with a sign hanging on it - "Don't pour your coffee on me; I am the only tree in Thule."

When I reached Alert the sun was shining and I could hardly see with all the brilliant glittering reflection off the ice. I soon learned that this was new as the sun had only risen from 6 months of darkness two weeks before. Coming up from the airstrip, I could see the large gray box of the three story Ops Building. Attached to that were three eggplant coloured nodes of the barracks. There was nothing else. I was taken to the Headquarters building, which was a series of one-story ATCO trailers linked together. We walked down carved ice-steps into the HQ. I remarked, "How clever to build the base underground." I was wrong. I was actually surrounded by a number of buildings - the Senior Staff Mess, the Cafeteria, the Gym, several storage buildings, a diesel generator building... all close by but buried in the deep packed ice crystals. Later in the "summer" all the buildings became exposed as orange trailers, but on that first day, everything was under the snow level. Actually, it never snowed. What it did was blizzard-compacted ice crystals which hardened into concrete-like drifts. After a blizzard, the Vehicle Techs and Drivers would get out the 10-ton fork lift which would make runs at the drifts that blocked the "roads" to break them into chunks which would be carried off by huge dump trucks.

One of my initial challenges was the accounting for beer purchases. I would call the Trenton Global Support Desk and they would order us beer. The brewery would deliver it to Trenton, and then on a resupply run, it would be flown to Alert. Every time... one, two, or three dozen cases of beer would be missing. The brewery claimed they delivered it all. Trenton said they loaded it all; and the squadron swore they flew all of it up... but dozens would evaporate en route. One time when 50 cases went missing, I went to see the Station Senior NCO who also doubled as our "Sheriff." I wanted to get to the bottom of it. So the next time the beer was loaded in Trenton the Military Police were there to help count the load. When it came off the plane, the "Sheriff" was there to count the load. All were there except one case... and, unexplainably, there were a dozen empty beer cans in the garbage bag containing the airplane crew's empty boxed lunches. Now we had a real scandal on our hands. The crew certainly was not supposed to be drinking beer as they flew to Alert. I was soon called before a Board of Inquiry to say what I knew - which was very little. The eventual findings of the Board, was that a case had come loose and cans had spilled and broken open. The crew had swept them up and tossed the debris in the same garbage bag as their lunches. No one had consumed any alcohol at all. What was never explained, though, was why every boxed lunch had two beer cans neatly tucked inside. The end result was that we, I, Alert didn't get ANY beer flown up for weeks upon weeks. No resupplies for our small Canteen. No soda pop. Nothing of a personal nature. It was clear we were being punished. We quickly became a dry camp. It took phone calls from the General in Supplementary Radio Systems (our Boss) to Winnipeg to smooth the rough edges and get our supplies flowing again.

There were 200 guys in Alert and 9 women - all military. We were part of the CREW trials - Combat Related Employment of Women. I had to fill in a report every month on how the women were doing. The first month I reported that things were not working out. Our five supply huts did not have a concrete floor and no loading doors. Every palette had to be broken down and the supplies carried through the regular sized domestic doors and walked across rough uneven floors to the shelves. The women, I reported, did not have the upper body strength to carry all the boxes. Three weeks later, a full Construction Engineering crew arrived on the once-a-week flight, to pave all our storage room floors and widen all the doors. I liked this system.

We had a Station dance once a month. The nine women had dance cards, just like in the olden times. You would approach a girl and ask for a dance, and, if she accepted, she would jot your name down on her card for dance #7 or such. When that dance came... you got to dance with her, for that time. All the girls soon learned to block some dances off as free-time for themselves or their feet would soon be sore.

Some of the dances would be declared section dances... and a group of 8 guys would all dance (always a fast dance) in a circle with one girl joining them.

There were only nine people in the Senior Staff Mess. Four Officers (CO, DCO, SLogO and AdminO/Nurse) and five MWOs (the Station NCO/Sheriff, the Senior Ops NCO, The Senior Technician for the diesel generators and water purifying system, the Senior Vehicle Tech, and the Chief Cook). We were a good group of friends. Every Saturday morning we all had cleaning stations. Everyone on the Station did. I had all the showers and washing facilities in the Senior Staff Mess. The Station NCO damped mopped the mess hallways. Even the CO worked; vacuumed all our carpets. We also had a local radio station that EVERYONE listened to. Many volunteers took shifts. We had about 20,000 records and the Station would buy more every week. I helped the CO with his Wednesday evening Jazz two-hour show. I was the runner and fetcher. Saturday morning, when we were cleaning, we had three very funny Warrant Officers who ran a comedy and music show where they would "Send up" and lampoon people and events of the week. Very popular, you always knew what was happening from their show.

We were too far north for TV. There were seven micro-wave relay towers that went south to Eureka, and even then it had just a 2 degree angle on the Anik satellite which allowed for a few telephone lines and some computer data linkage. Aside from the radio station, the CF Personnel Support Program in Ottawa would tape four hours of TV (thankfully without commercials) from CBC or CTV for each day for the whole week and then mail them up to us. We would then broadcast those four hours, each day, six times per day in the week that followed. So on Tuesday, we would get four hours of last Tuesday's TV shows repeated six times over the day. If you liked a show, you could watch it again four hours later and then again four hours later. Sometimes you would do this, since there was little else to do.

Well there was lots to do. We had an active rock cutting and polishing (lapidary) club, the radio station, and the gym, I joined the local small Bible Study group and took my turn in leading Sunday morning worship. There were cards to play and small dog-eared library books to read. Often we would have a General Officer come for a visit. It seemed every General who was about to retire would find a reason to come for a visit. We delighted in meeting them. They would come in on the Thursday supply flight... the only flight a week. In the Senior Staff mess we would have a cocktail party for the VIP guest on Thursday night, then a TGIF, then a TGIS with BBQ, and then a Sunday mess dinner. We all had our mess kits, of course. Then Monday morning we would head off to work and the VIP would come to tour our offices. By Monday afternoon the guest would be bored. More so on Tuesday. By the time the Thursday flight arrived, there were bags packed and waiting expectantly down at the runway- often an hour before the plane arrived. Frequently their departure would be concurrent with the arrival of another VIP and the social circle would continue.

My final memory to share with you was the long walks that were possible over the summer. At the height of summer it would actually get a few degrees above freezing. You could see forever. My bedroom window looked south towards the mountains along the north coast of Greenland. While walking you could explore the amazing tundra. In mid July the tundra would blossom with a carpet of lichen in various hues of purple and blues. It was beautiful. There were huge arctic hares and small arctic foxes everywhere. On one occasion a wolf came into camp; on another a small herd of musk oxen. There was Crystal Mountain, a small hill to climb with quartz crystals to hunt for and the ice cave, a permanent fixture, to hike towards. But most of all there was camaraderie and fellowship of folks in isolation together - similar for me to a ship's company at sea. (David and Cynthia are being transferred to Rome - a great loss to all of us here)

Franz Stigler

An article entitled "Luftwaffe Restraint" in our May 07 newsletter outlined the Franz Stigler story. Now Vern White of Oakville, Ontario, Bomber Command and POW veteran and frequent contributor to this newsletter, has sent an account by his Oakville friend, Lourens van Monsjou, who was on his bicycle in Ijmuiden, Holland, in 1943 when . . .

"I heard this horrible high-pitched engine sound and saw a crippled bomber flying at no more than 100 metres, barely able to fly on one engine as three were dead. The highly over-revved roaring engine sound was so overpowering one would expect it to break down at any moment. It flew over the heavily-defended Ijmuiden harbour with two large U-Boat bunkers. Its marking could be clearly read but no one fired on it. It was so unreal. We were used to Allied bombers at high altitudes being met by searchlights and flak. I could see a small escorting aircraft but thought it was RAF."

Franz died in Surrey, BC, 22 Mar 08 at age 92. The Toronto Globe and Mail ran a full-page obituary:

In 4 years of operational flying, Franz served in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Holland, and Germany. He was shot down 17 times, bailing out 4 times and crash landing 14 times. He was credited with 28 enemy aircraft shot down plus 30 probables. He was wounded 4 times, suffered burns, and sustained life-long scars on his legs and head. In late 1943 he was posted to Holland to intercept Allied bombers. On 20 Dec 1943 Charlie Brown from West Virginia took off in his B-17 on his second mission, this time to bomb Bremen. Turning for home, after dropping bombs, they were hit by flak forcing them out of formation. Then 8 fighters pounced. Most of the tail was shot off, the rear gunner was killed, engines were lost, the oxygen, hydraulic, and electrical systems were mostly gone. Wounded in the shoulder and half unconscious Charlie lost control as the B-17 inverted and spiralled down. Regaining consciousness he pulled out at 100 metres. Franz, in his Me109, was ordered to finish him off. Charlie ignored Franz's orders to land. Franz then escorted him out to sea, pointed the direction to England, saluted, and returned to base to report that he had shot the B-17 into the North Sea. Earlier in the day Franz had shot down two B-17s.

In 1953 Franz emigrated to Montreal then to the Queen Charlotte Islands as a logger, then Surrey, BC where he ran a trucking company with his wife, Hija. Charlie Brown had retired from the USAF as a LCol living in Florida. He told his story to the USAF Association seeking any information on the Luftwaffe pilot. Two months later he got a letter from Franz. The two met in Seattle in 1990 and became fast friends. Both were interviewed for a CBC program.

FORGET BIG FOOT - UTSKY NOW PROWLs BC SKIES: Peter Tutt, ex 426 Squadron, has sent us pictures of this monster which happens to be a Russian helicopter rented at \$30,000 an hour to carry supplies to mines at places like Galore Creek, BC. The Utsky is 40 metres long with 8 blades each 2 feet wide. It can carry 75 troops, has a range of 580 km, and burns 2,000 litres of petrol per hour. It has a crew of six: 2 pilots, 1 navigator, 2 engineers, and 1 loadmaster. And then there is the old reliable **ANTONOV-124**. We bought four Boeing C-17s for \$3.4 billion to avoid the \$900,000 rental each time we needed heavy airlift, emboldening our politicians into promising to airlift to Myanmar several MI-8 helicopters which would have to be dismantled to board a C-17. Alas, 3 of our C-17s were grounded awaiting parts while the 4th was busy in Afghanistan. We had to return to the Russians to again rent an Antonov. Actually 16 NATO countries rent these aircraft which are available on short notice.

PAUL WHITE died of cancer in Tucson 11 May 2008. Paul and Marilyn were popular members of this Wing from 1984 to 2003. They began spending more time in their San Carlos, Sonoro, Mexico, retreat where he was a commodore in the Yacht Club. They also retained a home in Tucson. During WWII Paul spent 4 years in the RCAF flying Cansos on anti-submarine patrols, then owned a car dealership in Niagara Falls before taking a teaching job in Colorado Springs with School District 11. He is the 22nd of our membership to join our Heavenly detachment.

CAE (Canadian Aviation Electronics) and BOMBARDIER: Founded 17 Mar 1947 by ex-RCAF Ken Patrick, CAE now employs 7,000 people at 75 sites in 20 countries. It trains 75,000 aircrew annually with training centres in Canada, Chile, China, Dubai, Germany, India, Italy, Netherlands, the UK and the US. It manufactures full-flight simulators for Airbus, Boeing, Bombardier, Dassault, Dornier, and Embraer aircraft as well as for helicopters and China's new ARJ21 Regional Jet. In the last 2 months sales of new simulators have gone to Australia, India, Japan, and Russia. Bombardier reports a backlog of \$34 billion in orders for aircraft and \$31 billion for trains.

OLD AGE HATH YET ITS HONOUR AND ITS TOIL: In the Indian Ocean, on the deck of HMCS Calgary, sat an ageing Sea King, dreaming of the days gone by. Suddenly a distress call from a ship under attack by two boatloads of Somali pirates. **SCRAMBLE!** Racing to the scene, the heroic old Sea King so terrified the pirates that they fled back to Somalia. I have never seen a helicopter Victory Roll. Must be invigorating!

THE WHEAT SHEET: Canadian Geographic magazine, with help from the Alberta Research Council and Dollco Printing of Ottawa, is saving our boreal forest by using wheat straw to manufacture its paper - but for only 20% of the current issue as they had to go to China for the straw when enough for 20 million magazines goes unharvested in Canada. They urge a new Canadian industry - copying what those clever Chinese have been doing for years.

EDUCATING YOUR SCRIBE: You silent-majority Moderates out there need to pitch in to balance all the daily diatribes he receives from belligerents seeking enemies. Most diatribes are cleverly written with half truths to frighten recipients into opposing what they consider to be "liberal" views. Yes, we have *Mea Culpas* that do go too far but these are not passed on. Anti-Hillary attacks have been replaced by anti-O'Bama outbursts. As Bin Laden and Sadaam have faded, dire warnings of a united and deliberate attack on the West by evil Muslims are multiplying. Balanced assessments are lacking. Surrounded by holders of nuclear arsenals, Iran is castigated for an implied desire to join the club. No one suggests the nuclear club could lead by example by reducing its own terrifying arsenal. Israel gets deserved credit for its many accomplishments but only silence on treating Palestinians as we treated our natives. We are not supposed to talk to the democratically-elected Hamas. Real problems like climate change, over population, food shortages, ocean care, wealth disparity, self-serving dictators, funneling world resources to a favoured few, drug addiction, prison populations, torture, human trafficking, and so on are ignored by those worried that any change to the status quo will destroy their comfortable life styles. Fair Play needs you as a promoter. Historically it has not fared well. It did resurface under the British in their empire-building days. Native groups still look to the Queen as their protector. Doctors Without Borders, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Peace Corps, and the like deserve our support.

SEND INPUTS TO georgesweanor@comcast.net, or to our president, Paul Ellis, at rcafret@aol.com. First come first served. Two pages are already complete for the September issue. Past newsletters, along with other Wing data, can be found on our web site: www.971WingAFAC.com