

# Wing Mate



Newsletter 408-437 Wing

Royal Canadian Air Force Association of Canada



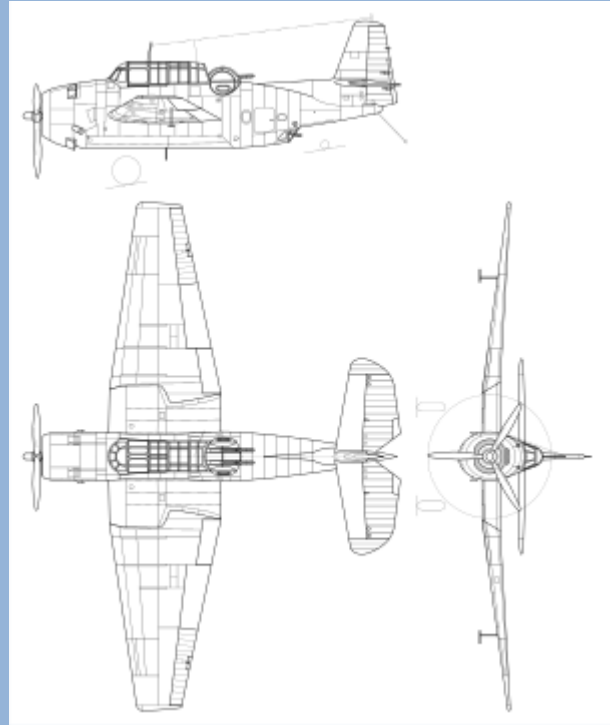
January  2024

## AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION of CANADA MISSION STATEMENT

The Air Force Association of Canada is a national aerospace and community service organization whose aim is to commemorate the noble achievements of the men and women who have served as members of Canada's Air Force since its inception, advocate for a proficient and well equipped Air Force and, support the Royal Canadian Air Cadets.

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**General Meetings**  
Sheppard Ave. Legion Building

### Sick and Visiting

Be sure to advise Barbara Newman, Fellowship Chair, if you are aware of a Wing member who is ill or in distressed circumstances.

Barbara can be reached at 416-223-7840.

**No meeting January**

# President's Report



## Reminder there is no General Meeting in January (8<sup>th</sup>).

Just after New Year's Day brunch with family the usual topic of how time flies come up. Someone had remarked that it seems the that 'the one more matures' the faster it passes. True. Well, here we are nearly a quarter century from the feared Y2K and I'm still waiting. I guess it's safe to use up all the hoarded rolls of toilet paper and paper towels.



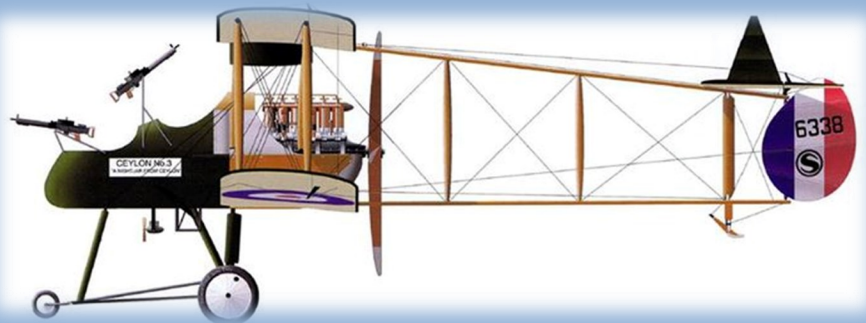
On behalf of your Executive Committee, I wish your New Year to be filled with health, happiness, prosperity for you and family!

We will return on 12 February, which will be a movie night and gossip and food.

*Nick Czernkovich*



F.E2 R.F.C.





## Grumman TBF Avenger

The Grumman TBF Avenger designated TBM for aircraft manufactured by General Motors) is an American World War II-era torpedo bomber developed initially for the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, and eventually used by several air and naval aviation services around the world.

The Avenger entered U.S. service in 1942, and first saw action during the Battle of Midway. Despite the loss of five of the six Avengers on its combat debut, it survived in service to become the most effective and widely-used torpedo bomber of World War II, sharing credit for sinking the battle ships *Yamato* and *Musashi* (the only ships of that type sunk exclusively by American aircraft while under way) and being credited for sinking 30 submarines. Greatly modified after the war, it remained in use until the 1960s.

The Douglas TBD Devastator, the U.S. Navy's main torpedo bomber introduced in 1935, was obsolete by 1939. Bids were accepted from several companies, but Grumman's TBF design was selected as the replacement for the TBD and in April 1940 two prototypes were ordered by the Navy. Designed by Leroy Grumman, the first prototype was first flown in August 1941.

The Avenger was the heaviest single-engined aircraft of the war and only the USAAF's P-47 Thunderbolt came close to equalling it in maximum loaded weight among all single-engined fighters, being only some 400 pounds lighter than the TBF, by the end of the war. To ease carrier storage concerns, simultaneously with the F4F-4 model of its Wildcat carrier fighter, Grumman designed the Avenger to also use the new Sto-Wing patented "compound angle" wing-folding mechanism, intended to maximize storage space on an aircraft carrier. The engine used was the twin-row Wright R-2600-20 Twin Cyclone fourteen-cylinder radial engine, which produced 1,900 horsepower.

There were three crew members: pilot, turret gunner and radioman/bombardier/ventral gunner. A single synchronized .30 caliber machine gun was mounted in the nose, a 50 caliber gun was mounted right next to the turret gunner's head in a rear-facing electrically powered turret, and a single 0.30 caliber hand-fired machine gun flexibly-mounted ventrally (under the tail), which was used to defend against enemy fighters attacking from below and to the rear. This gun was fired by the radioman/bombardier while standing up and bending over in the belly of the tail section, though he usually sat on a folding bench facing forward to operate the radio and to sight in bombing runs. Later models omitted the cowl-mount synchronized 0.30 caliber gun, and replaced it with twin Browning AN/M2 0.50 caliber light-barrel guns, one in each wing outboard of the propeller arc, per pilots'

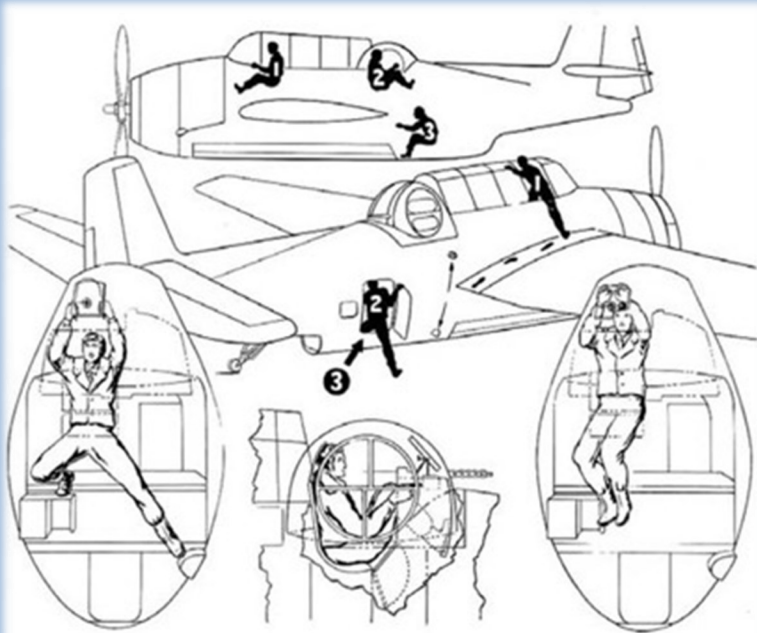
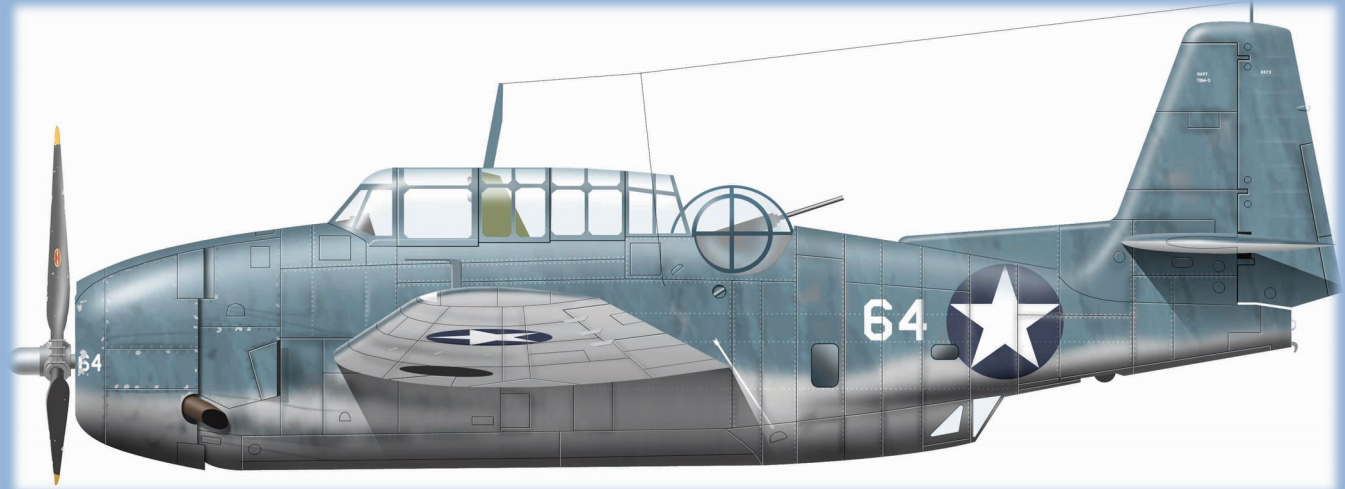


requests for better forward firepower and increased strafing ability.

There was only one set of controls on the aircraft, and no direct access to the pilot's position existed from the rest of the aircraft's interior. The radio equipment was massive, especially by today's standards, and filled the length of the well-framed "greenhouse" canopy to the rear of the pilot. The radios were accessible for repair through a "tunnel" along the right hand side. Any Avengers that are still flying today usually have an additional rear-mounted seat in place of the radios, allowing for a fourth passenger.

The Avenger had a large bomb bay, allowing for one torpedo, a single 2,000-pound bomb, or up to four 500-pound bombs. The aircraft had overall ruggedness and stability, and pilots say it flew like a truck, for better or worse. With a 30,000 foot ceiling and a fully loaded range of 1,000 miles, it was very effective.









**Christmas/Hanukkah Dinner**













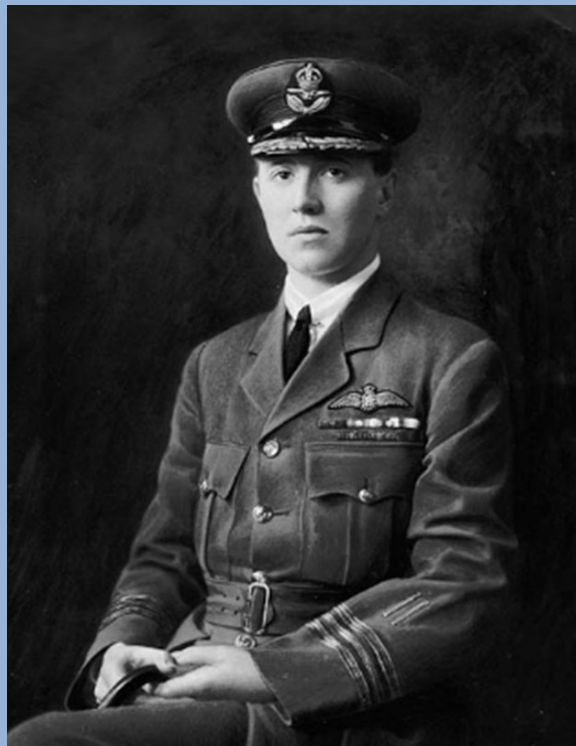


**1 APRIL 1924**

## Authorization of the RCAF

The RCAF was formed on 1 April 1924. It had three components – a full-time permanent force (regular force), a part-time non-permanent force (air reserve), and a reserve of non-active personnel. No non-permanent units were created at that time as the funding was not available. The RCAF was not an independent organization as it reported to the Chief of the General Staff, the head of the Canadian Militia (the name of the Canadian Army at the time). The RCAF was now a full-time organization with its own orders: the King's Regulations and Orders for the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Pay and Allowance Regulations for the Royal Canadian Air Force. Although its role did include the defence of Canada, this role would take a back seat to flying operations performed for other government departments.

*Caption: Wing Commander Barker, VC, DSO, MC, the first director of the RCAF when it was formed on 1 April 1924. He was in the position temporarily, until 19 May 1924.*







## Canadian Pilots of Note

### Andrew Edward McKeever

**A**ndrew McKeever joined the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, a militia unit, as a private. He remained with them until November, 1916, when he was accepted into the Royal Flying Corps. He sailed for England for training in November 1916 and was commissioned a probationary lieutenant in December.

Following training, he was assigned in May 1917 to No. 11 Squadron, which was flying obsolete F.E.2s. They re-equipped shortly thereafter with Bristol F.2A fighters, sometimes referred to as the "Brisfit". Among McKeever's tasks were photographic reconnaissance, with his observer wielding a hand-held camera and taking the photos. Although the Brisfit could do this job well, it was as fast as the Fokkers that opposed it, as well as maneuverable enough to be flown like a single-seater.



McKeever began his career as an ace by destroying a D.V in June 1917 and sending down another out of control. In July he and Powell knocked down three more, with one destroyed and two falling uncontrollably out of the battle. McKeever would repeat this feat of triple victories on three more occasions, in August, September, and October 1917.

On 3 October, when his score reached 20, Lieutenant McKeever was awarded a Bar to the Military Cross he had gained a month prior.

On 30 November 1917, while flying Brisfit A7288, he ended his career by attacking two German two-seaters protected by a flight of seven Albatros D.Vs. The D.Vs paid dearly for their protective role, as McKeever and Powell destroyed four of them, one of which burned. When Powell's gun failed, McKeever feigned being shot down and dived out the battle. He

leveled off at only 25 feet altitude and, hidden from enemy planes by a shield of fog, hightailed for home. The remaining Germans broke off contact. This epic battle earned the Distinguished Service Order for Captain McKeever.

McKeever would score all 31 of his victories while flying the two-seater fighter, becoming one of the RFC/RAF's leading two-seater fighter pilot ace. All but two of those triumphs were over German Albatros D.V fighters. Seven different gunners/observers shared his victories. One of these, Lieutenant Leslie Powell, became an ace in his own right, with 19 successes, 18 of which were in tandem with McKeever.

McKeever and his gunners's 31-claim tally consisted of 18 destroyed and 13 'out of control'. On 25 January 1918, both pilot and observer were withdrawn from combat and shipped home. Major McKeever joined fellow aces William Bishop and Raymond Collishaw in establishing the Canadian Air Force. McKeever organized No 1 Squadron of the new air force, and served as its commanding officer. The war ended before the new squadron could take its Sopwith Dolphins to battle. Canada's government then dissolved the fledgling air force.

With war's end, McKeever accepted a job managing an airfield at Mineola, New York. Before he could start work, he was involved in an auto accident in his home town of Listowel, Ontario. He broke his leg, complications set in, and he died of cerebral thrombosis on Christmas Day, 1919.

