

The First 40 Years



A History Of RCAF 441 (Huron) Wing Air Force Association Of Canada

H. Kenneth Mitchell



1 THE SILVER FOX CREST

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H. Kenneth Mitchell

6th Nov 1995

To a long time member - friend.

Best Wishes. Ken.

(H. Kenneth Mitchell)

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Editing and Typesetting by

Evelyn Perdue

R.R.#1 Oro Station

Ontario, L0L 2E0

ge.perdue@sympatico.ca

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Author's Comments

When I started in to write a Wing history, I was faced with a problem in method. First, would I take the approach of names, dates and events as recalled by myself and others, i.e., be purely objective, or, should I take a more personal approach and try to tell it 'as I saw it and participated'. I tried the first and asked two Wing members, and two others, to do an evaluation on the first three chapters

They were unanimous in their evaluation that the objective approach, while 'OK' and 'Factual' did, however, make for dry reading. Inevitably, this would mean readers would start into the text and soon put the book aside as hard to read.

As of penning these words I am taking the other approach. The 'I' and 'Me' approaches are downplayed as much as possible, and I endeavour to give credit to all those concerned with bringing the Wing, as a working unit, into the fifth decade of our history. I received input from many sources and have acknowledged those that have contributed within the text. While I tried for accuracy, remember that memories, across forty years, have a tendency to fail, or worse, distort. So on behalf of myself and all the contributors, please accept these limitations. Every effort has been made to check facts, dates and names for accuracy but I ask in advance - if I 'blow it' here and there, please forgive or, better yet, write the history yourself!

So here we go on the story of:

SILVER FOX
and
the history of
441 (Huron) Wing
R.C.A.F.A.
Barrie, Ontario, Canada



WITH A PROVISIONAL EXECUTIVE, an RCAF Association wing was formed in Barrie on Monday night. Air Vice-Marshal George E. Brookes, Grand President of the Association, and George E. Penfold, president of the Ontario Group, addressed and advised an interested gathering at the Armoury on the work and way of forming a wing. The provisional committee is: "Hank" Partridge, president;

Del Kelly, vice-president; Frank Bourne, secretary-treasurer. Above: "Hank" Partridge, AVM Brookes, and Group Captain West, RCAF, Camp Borden, discuss the work of wing of the association. Lower picture, left to right: George Lunau, G. E. Penfold, Ontario president; Hank Partridge; Frank Bourne; Del Kelly. 1957-58

2 MEETING WITH THE PROVISIONAL EXECUTIVE

L-R GEORGE LUNAU, G.E. PENFOLD (ONTARIO PRES.), HANK PARTRIDGE (PRES.), FRANK BOURNE (SECT/TRES), DEL KELLY (VP)

Prologue

For a Wing of an Association such as ours to come into being, a great deal of leg work has to be done, undertaken by dedicated volunteers whose sole motivation was their past affiliation with the Royal Canadian Air Force during the years immediately preceding and during WW II.



3 DISCUSSING THE WORK OF THE WING

PROVISIONAL EXECUTIVE: HANK PARTRIDGE, AVM BROOKES, AND GROUP CAPTAIN WEST,
RCAF CAMP BORDEN

So it was with our Wing. Hank Partridge and Del Kelly knew about the Association and its structure from Ottawa through Ontario Group (in our case) to Wing level. Working from their wide personal contacts and some known retirees' listings, they started the contacts by telephone and in person where possible. My first contact was a telephone call from Del.

I had known Del as an Air Force veteran who had flown Beauforts in the Far East and as a fellow Branch 147 Royal Canadian Legion (Br.147 R.C.L.) member. His approach to me, and to all the others contacted by Hank and Del, was straightforward. What the Association was, what it stood for and what was being attempted in Barrie. Our questions were varied but, as samples: Why another ex-service club (i.e., leave the Legion)? Another set of dues and commitments? How much? (\$2.00 per year - well that's not much - even at the then dollar value and cost of living). And the ever present opposition to change per se.

My case was fairly typical for that moment of time: R.A.F. from March 1939 to October 1947; Life member of the R.A.F. Association; returned to Canada after serving

in Canada with the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan in 1942 (plus a Canadian wife); in civilian life but missing the Air Force life badly. I had joined the Brantford Air Force Club in 1948 and then was accepted in the R.C.A.F. Primary Reserve in 1950 while living in Brantford.

I, of course, was a pushover! But not so all those contacted, there was no rush to the colours. Putting it bluntly, some had had enough of service life, particularly those not in the early volunteer groups. But enough said "Yes," and from that Group, initial meetings were convened in homes, culminating in what was later identified as our first General Meeting (GM) properly chaired and with minutes recorded. This was held in the rented downstairs meeting hall of Branch 147 R.C.L. then located on Collier Street.

At this meeting it was decided to apply for a Charter, but before this could happen we had to have a number (not already in use) from the Ontario 400-499 grouping. 441 was no problem and had a proud Squadron and war time history, but then a name? I did not hear the debate but it must have been lively! Be that as it may, a name was decided. We were to be 441 (Kempenfeldt¹) Wing, R.C.A.F.A.

Well!

Barrie is located on Kempenfeldt Bay, an arm of Lake Simcoe. Ok, but Kempenfeldt was a Royal Navy Admiral (circa 1700 so I understand)! When there were neither aircraft nor aircraft carriers! Oh well, so be it.

To complete the prologue it would be appropriate to refer to Picture 4. The picture was taken at the end of the above described meeting and all but one person pictured is named on the Charter. I could not be included. Due to a prior commitment (Scouts), I did not arrive at the meeting until the moment of adjournment. I was, however, invited to be in the picture and am proud to be a part of the startup group.

How the Wing developed we will see, but first we have to honour those listed on that long ago Charter. Their dedication to the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Association with its Aims and Objectives started us on the road that some years later led to the naming of our Wing at National Level for the *Wing of the Year Award* for three years in a row. We were and are the *very best*, thanks to them, and they are listed here:

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

Henry E. Partridge

Delmar A. Kelly

Frank Auburn

S.G. Lunau

J.G.L. Foster

F. Kaighen

W. Moore

R.J. Wilcock

Gr.Cpt.F.R.Westham Gardner

W.J.H. Johnston

E. Sawyers

E.T. Smith

G.R. Rodgers

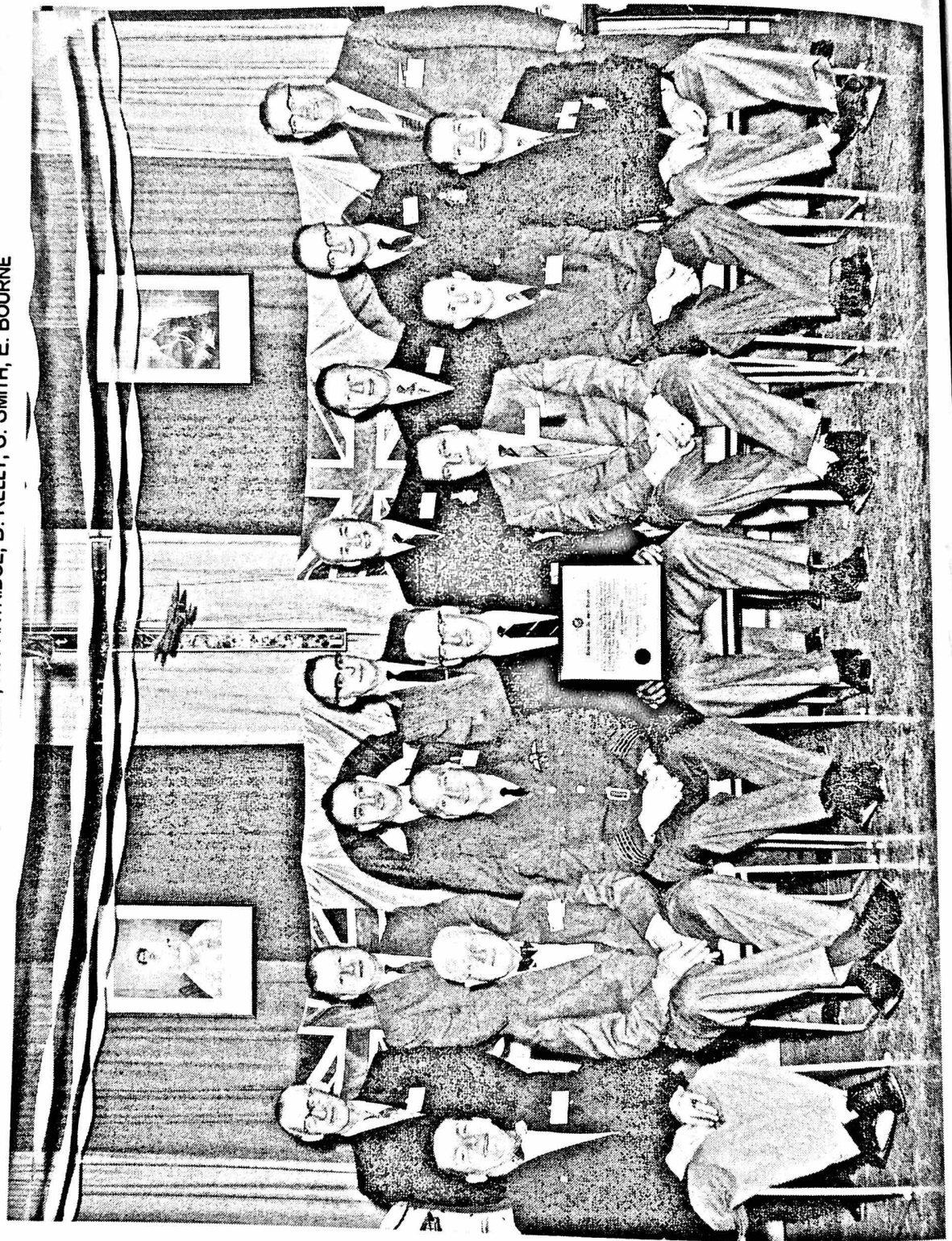
Our Charter Is Dated February 10th, 1958

4 CHARTER MEMBERS FEBRUARY 10, 1958

BACK ROW:

J. FOLLIO SR., J. OATES, W. MOORE, F. KAIGHEN, R. WILCOX, S. BOURNE, K. MITCHELL, L. FOSTER
C. CORKAN, G. RODGERS, G/C F. WEST, H. PARTRIDGE, D. KELLY, S. SMITH, E. BOURNE

FRONT ROW:



Planning Of 441 Wing Started Fall Of 1957

The official opening of the new headquarters of the Royal Canadian Air Force Association, 441 Wing culminates a few years of hard work.

In fact, the progress made by the Wing is exceptional since it was only in the winter of 1959 that it held its Charter Night.

Work towards formation of the association started almost two years previous.

A meeting was called in the fall of 1957 with F-L N. G. Ferguson, who was then Liaison Officer at National Headquarters and several "members at large" of the RCAF Association.

"Hank" Partridge was named chairman of a committee to see if enough ex-Air Force personnel could be found who would be interested in forming a Wing.

Several meetings later resulted in an organizational meeting being called on Feb. 3, 1958. Air Vice-Marshal G. E. Brooke was in attendance, as well as George Penfold, then Ontario president of the Association.

It was decided then to form a Wing with Mr. Partridge, president; Del Kelly, vice-president; and Frank Bourne, secretary-treasurer.

Charter was granted Feb. 15. The Wing took over the sponsorship of the 102 Barrie Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Cadets.

Charter Night at the Legion Hall, Feb. 27, 1959 saw Air Commander J. B. Harvey, AFC, CD, present the charter to the Wing.

Guests at this night included

Mr. and Mrs. Penfold, Mr. and Mrs. Art Leonard, (then Regional vice-president of Central District); and the commanding officers of the three local Air Force stations.

The Charter executive included Mr. Partridge, president; Del Kelly, vice-president; Frank Bourne, secretary; and Sgt. Ernie Smith, treasurer.

In July of '59 the Wing made its headquarters on the third floor of the Caldwell Block, and had its official opening Oct. 17, with then Group Captain F. R. West, Camp Borden, officiating.

The Wing was in that block through presidents Partridge, Kelly and James Lynch.

It was during the time of present president Jack Woodstock's term that the Wing moved to its location at 14 High Street.

CHAPTER 1

Prepare for Take Off

We had to start somewhere and Branch 147 Royal Canadian Legion rented us their downstairs meeting room at their Collier Street quarters (\$7.00 per hour)! We met on a monthly basis for our General Meetings and we began to learn such items as to how to run a meeting in the context we now had, how to induct new members correctly, do the expected paper work for Group and National, make ends meet (which didn't happen at first) and in general try to find our feet.

Strange things did happen, however. Since our wives and girl friends could not join us and could not enter the Legion unescorted, our meetings tended to be short (\$7.00 an hour remember) and so across the road to the friendly and (sadly) now defunct American Hotel. The price was right and, better yet, the faint beginnings of a togetherness and common cause apart from the General Meeting was beginning to show up. It also became apparent that the ladies who joined us for the social time were going to be counted and the group soon began to include them in the plans.

The early Executive meetings, often held at one of the homes, were interesting in the extreme. After all, with dues at two dollars per year, a need to implement the National Aims and Objectives in a *no dough* situation, no home to call our own and income, but for a draw or two - zilch! Everyone had their input, sometimes couched politely and alone, but often not! But we survived and slowly gained membership. In fact we were now able to plan for our long desired Charter Night, but first things first. We needed to have a formal election at a properly constituted meeting and this meeting was convened at the Collier St. location on February 3rd, 1958.

A lot of business was conducted at that meeting and some of it has been given in the Prologue. Also, an election took place and Hank Partridge became our first President with Del Kelly, First Vice, and Frank Bourne, Treasurer. The documentation for a Charter in the Association could now be officially completed and the finished document was forwarded to Ottawa the following day. The meeting closed with the group photograph and the now precedent-setting visit to the American Hotel where the event was properly 'toasted'.

One final vignette from our Charter Night. A news item on the event records that Del Kelly, jointly with brothers Charlie and Don, presented the Wing with a gavel and stand on that occasion and the original is preserved and used in the Wing today. The three brothers all served in the Royal Canadian Air Force.



6 J.B. HARVEY, AFC AND HANK PARTRIDGE, PRESIDENT (FEB. 10/58)

The charter application made a fast track journey and the Ottawa reaction allowed for the convening of a second meeting at Branch 147 Hall on February 23rd 1958. This meeting was our official Charter Night and we had three guests of honour: Air Commodore J. Harvey from R.C.A.F. Trenton, Group Captain F.R. West, Commanding Officer R.C.A.F. Borden and George Penfold, the President of Ontario Group. The ladies catered the event and all in all it was a memorable evening.

Events after that began to progress with the ever-present wish for a home of our own. This became more important as our numbers began to go into the sixty-plus area. Results came when our Second Vice-president, Del Kelly, working with a group and getting meeting approval, located and contracted to rent the top floor of 5 Owen Street. This was a hall previously rented by a Union so the conformation was quite suitable. The premises were the top floor overlooking Memorial Square, with some offices above, and the Caldwell Drug Store on the ground floor. None of this exists now as the Toronto Dominion Bank later moved in and renovated the entire building internally.

When we took over the quarters, we had a minuscule kitchen, an 80' x 40' hall

Prepare for Take Off

with a small bar and serving area and what was originally a front bedroom. This was very useful for executive meetings. It was some move. The Wing members, working together, took over the floor and general clean up. They scrubbed and polished, often on their hands and knees, and, with rough and ready furnishings of folding tables and chairs of various kinds we had our first home - remembered with affection by those still around.

These were Banquet Permit days with the LLBO getting, as always, their pound of flesh, but somehow the bar got stocked and we were in business - all drinks were 25 cents a go, which still provided a slim profit margin. The tradition of the volunteer bar help started and continued with a few breaks into the present 1990's. About now a stormy General Meeting accepted a raise in dues (something had to go to National). So our dues went all the way up to \$4.00 per year. There was opposition, but the motion carried.

We had about \$800 in the bank at that time (overdraft that is) and in a situation like this retrenchment and caution should have been the name of the game. Unfortunately, those two words had been left out of our collective education. Instead, after a presentation at a General Meeting from Squadron Leader Jack Oats D.F.M., the squadron CO, the Wing took over the sponsorship of 102 Moose Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Cadets (one of the oldest in Canada). At that time the Squadron was being supported by cadet parents and they deserve a lot of credit. However, in spite of voiced misgivings the vote went to take over. Now, the Wing was in the business of supporting aviation, civic responsibilities and all that went with the now defined Aims and Objectives of the Association. We now had a definitive cause and our Squadrons' sponsorship has been continuous ever since. For many years now the rate of sponsorship has been averaging six to seven thousand dollars per year.

Across the bridge of time there are memories of both people, too many of whom are no longer with us, but also of happenings. One that I will never forget was Frank Ladoucer, Cec Corkan, Frank Humphries and I manoeuvring the old-fashioned upright piano up the narrow three flights of stairs with three 180 degree changes of course. Don't ask how it was done. It just was!



7 FIRST C/O OF STATION EDGAR
R - L. WESTGARTH-TAYLOR
L - H. CAIL VINNICOMBE (RET. W/C)

Radar Station Edgar personnel started visiting and for a while kept us going with financial turnover until getting back to Base began to be a problem and high authority clamped down on them to a certain extent. When Edgar was deactivated some years later, the Domes, so much parts of the view from #11 North and elsewhere for so long, were removed and the facility became a centre for the developmentally challenged. The units serving there were not forgotten however. In 1994 a committee headed by Leora Westgarth-Taylor unveiled a large plaque at the site. The plaque commemorating R.C.A.F. Station Edgar was erected on September 23rd of that year. It is worth a visit involving a half an hour's drive through scenic country. The plaque, donated by 441 Wing and so identified, commemorated the units involved in the Pine Tree Line Surveillance system (under NORAD) and honours the many dedicated R.C.A.F. personnel who served at Station Edgar and in so many other isolated Stations in Canada.

Back at 5 Owen, we were now having dances and dinners, the catering was mostly done by the Ladies with the food prepared at homes and served from the kitchen stove. Those quarters developed a homey feeling and, thankfully that warmth seems to have followed us in each one of our locations and is apparent today. It must be remembered that surroundings are one thing but *people* engender warmth. It was the policy of welcoming strangers as they came in and making them feel welcome that did

Prepare for Take Off

the trick, and the same facts of life apply in the present day.

One final fond memory; the gloriously mistyped and misspelled minutes labouriously produced for us by our first WAAF member, Mary Ladoucer. Mary, with her irrepressible cockney accent and broad sense of humour, was with us many years until her untimely death in B.C. while on a trip with her husband Frank. Frank was by then one of our Past Presidents. He comes front page center later in this history, as he was our President at the time of the fire.

I would be remiss not to mention of our third President, Jim Lynch. Jim retired as a Squadron Leader after the war and was a teacher by profession, serving in that capacity in many Ontario locations such as Clinton and Aylmer. Jim first came into the Owen Street location one Saturday afternoon with his wife Mildred (Millie to us all). I happened to be on the bar. He ordered and got a couple of beers, reached for his wallet and, wouldn't you know it, he had left it at home! I promptly lent him a five, and we became close friends both through the Wing and as close family and personal friends. 'Jim and Mil' in fact became fast friends to so many others such as: Bernie and Lillian Latimer, Donna and Bill Blogg, Terry and Jack Hamilton, Del and Isabel Kelly, Henry and Vi Hill. The list goes on and on and it becomes evident in retrospect that we were becoming family as well as fellow Association members.

Prior to the move Jim Lynch had taken over from Del Kelly and he, in turn, was succeeded by 'Doc' Woodstock. It was during Doc's term that the move to 14 High Street took place. I have appealed to Past President John Holder, living in Orillia now, and involved with the move, for some information and he has come through with some pertinent facts about the move.

For a time now, hearsay and fact become vague, I was 1st Vice-President and was moved by my Company to Owen Sound and then Orillia. My wife Phyllis and I were given a farewell send off. Much good did it do, for we came back for the Christmas Dance and won the \$100 draw. We remained Wing members and never transferred to either Owen Sound or Orillia Wings (yes both of those Cities had Wings that flourished for a while but eventually went to number plate). That means that I, as your historian, went out of direct touch and was not around in 1962 when the Wing moved to much larger premises, the top floor of 14 High Street, Barrie, over the New Service Cleaners. There is *no truth* in the rumour that we were 'taken to the cleaners'.

Our leaser at 14 High was Peter Sinclair who operated the New Service Cleaners, (according to John Holder). Peter redid the top floor with regard to walls and a central dividing wall in the hall. Frank Ladoucer and Charlie Kelly set up the bar area. John himself, assisted by Gord Ferguson, did an A1 job preparing the floors with Ernie Irvine seeing to paints and carpets. Bob Duncan provided and installed the drapes through his business. Many others provided their help and input as the work progressed.

Thanks to all these efforts, the Wing was highlighted with a special supplement

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Pages 1A to 8A



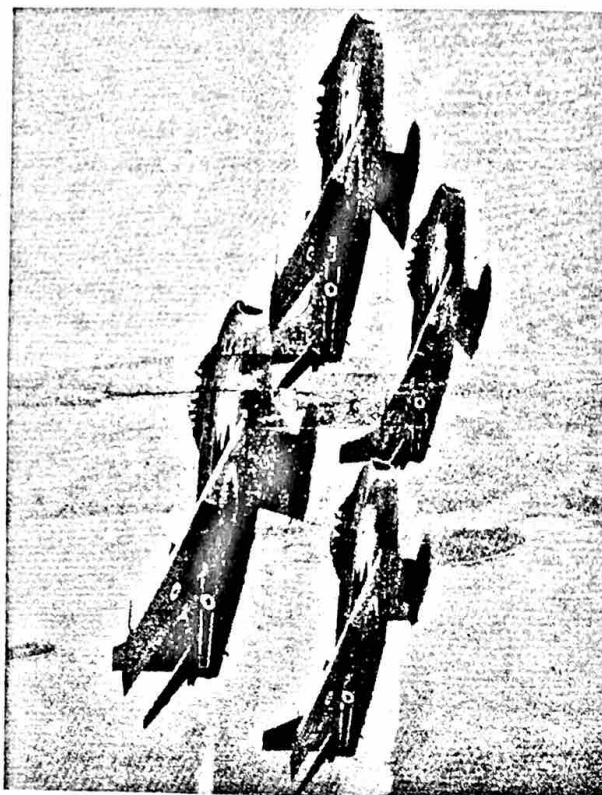
RCAF ASSOCIATION

441 KEMPENFELT WING

HIGH FLIGHT

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of
earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered
wings;
Sunward I've climbed and joined the tum-
bling mirth
Of sun-split clouds - and done a hundred
things
You have not dreamed of - wheeled and
soared and swung,
High in the sunlit silence. Hovering there,
've chased the shouting wind along and
flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up the long delirious burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with
easy grace,
Where never lark, or even eagle, flew:
And, while the silent lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space
Put out my hand and touched the face of
God.

... John Gillespie Magee



GRAND OPENING OF NEW CLUB ROOMS 14 HIGH ST., BARRIE

8 GRAND OPENING BARRIE EXAMINER NOVEMBER 9, 1962

Prepare for Take Off

in the Barrie Examiner (John worked there, which helped). It was a good 'spread' that publicised our Aims and Objectives as well as giving good coverage of the 102 Squadron of the Air Cadets. Much of the material is somewhat time worn, and I have incorporated some here.

14 High Street became our home for the next 15 years and provided many happy memories, friends and events. I realize that, as I go along, some names will have been missed. I apologize, but have included all of whom I and other current Wing members have knowledge or recollection because of some specific event or achievement. And that's enough for Chapter 1.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As president of the Royal Canadian Air Force Association, 441 Kempenfelt Wing, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to say "Thank You" and "Job Well Done" to the members of this association who have worked so hard towards this — the official opening — of our new Wing quarters.

The job hasn't been an easy one, since we have worked to develop our new quarters while trying to continue our valuable work in developing disciplined youth through air cadet work and also with other veteran's organizations.

The effort that has been put forth from all quarters is indeed difficult to put into words — but here now we find ourselves in the finest quarters in the entire area.

Coupled with our new official opening, however, let us reflect on the other achievements of our Wing. First there is our sponsorship of the Barrie Air Cadets, 102 Squadron, which has been a rewarding experience for all of us.

Then each year this Wing has had the satisfying pleasure of giving financial support to a top cadet from the region, chosen to participate in a flying scholarship course. Through this, we have watched many young men complete this challenging course and continue to receive their wings and a flying licence.

In addition, only a few cadets are chosen each year from all of Canada, and yet each of these years our Barrie squadron has been fortunate enough to have cadets who can qualify, thanks to the tireless efforts of our well chosen air cadet officers and staff.

These men have, over the years, given freely of their time and talent to the instruction of the youth of the community we live in. Their only reward is the satisfaction of helping to produce better potential air men, well disciplined youth and lads, who in later years, will be better equipped to meet the demands of the society in which we live.

This Sunday our Wing will be having open house in an effort to bring to the attention of all former RCAF personnel the knowledge that a progressive Wing exists in this area. I respectfully urge all former RCAF personnel who might be interested in regular membership, to come out and visit our new quarters. Take advantage of our modern facilities, renew old friendships and meet new acquaintances.

Speaking from the aims and objects of the RCAF Association, what more could we strive for than "to perpetuate the glorious traditions of the Royal Canadian Air Force while striving for peace, goodwill and friendship among all nations.

The opening of our new quarters may mean the triumph of one of our goals but our job now is to strive for further development of **our community and Wing.**



DR. J. J. WOODSTOCK, D.V.M.
President 441 Kempenfelt Wing,
R.C.A.F. Association.

CHAPTER 2

Pomp, Personalities and Parties

The above title summed up 14 High Street very well in that there was some of the first, lots of the second and certainly no dearth of events to satisfy the party end of things. Let's warm up a few memories for some and tell it how it was for the more recent Wing members.

If you could find a parking spot, which sometimes entailed a bit of a stroll, you were privileged to walk up about sixty stairs to the top floor - *ours* - (by rental courtesy), then left through double doors letting in on a small foyer with doors right and left. The left hand door led into what became a small card room and meeting room for executive meetings etc. with the right hand door (soon removed) giving onto a Games room with the much used dart boards. On the left, as the main hall was entered, a long bar stretched the width of the room measuring about fifty square feet. On from there, a wall partition with a door opening onto a storage area. On the Lake side a long and adequate kitchen was later established and equipped. The hall side of the partition also allowed for a recessed stage, which saw a lot of use as time went by.

The stage was perfect for dance bands, of course, and many were the times that we enjoyed listening to the saxophone as played expertly by George Reid with George Wilson on the double bass, Bill Beckingham on trumpet and various other good musicians as time went by. That orchestra of club members lasted until the long-ago Grey Cup day when the combo was on their way to Camp Borden to play a dance. It was the day of the fog at the Grey Cup game when a spectator interfered with players on a major last few seconds play causing a major decision, and if I remember correctly, a game postponement. That fog, though, spread to Barrie and the two Georges were involved in an accident on Highway 90. George Reid was killed and George Wilson seriously injured.

After that it was mostly D.J.s

We used the stage though for other things - remember the years of the 'clown acts' with Frank Ladoucer, Peter Noy, Frank Tascona, Larry Desjarlais, David Mitchell (my son) and myself all dressing as clowns and having Leora and Clifford (Westy) Westgarth - Taylor's daughter Cathy (age 8) as our fairy princess? And very pretty and delightfully composed she was as she put up with our shenanigans.

The act pulled some delightful spoofs as well as supporting Santa Claus at our well-attended Christmas parties for the children of members. (Now it's grandchildren and our Fairy Princess of those days has a daughter of 17 working part time cashiering at

Pomp, Personalities, and Parties

Zehrs and another of 13. My, how the years slip by)!

By the way, you should have been at the Christmas party when Santa was being badly pestered by a ten-year-old who interfered with his gift distribution to the extent that Santa turned the ten-year-old over his knee and gave him a spanking, (not a very hard one)! This was met by a dead silence, broken by a hearty round of applause in which the youngster's parents joined! Now, thirty odd years later poor old Santa would probably end up in court - but all agreed, the youngster asked for it! However, he really was a nice youngster and behaved beautifully afterwards.

One of our stalwarts at 14 High Street was Sid Justin, fondly remembered by some of us. It was Sid who presented the Wing with our first National Colours and RCAF Ensign at a special dinner. The colours were dedicated by Ex-RCAF Padre Archdeacon Lightbourne.

The Wing needed colours now as, starting with the 10th National Convention attended by two delegates, the Wing has sent delegates to all Ontario Group and National Conventions ever since. We have also paraded our Wing Banner at all conventions since the Banner was presented a little later on by Leora Westgarth-Taylor in memory of her husband, Clifford. As will be noted later, Clifford, known to us all as 'Westy', served as our President before he was taken from us. By now, we had become strong enough in numbers to cease joining our colours and ourselves with the Royal Canadian Legion on November 11th Remembrance Parades and paraded instead as a unit behind our own colours. We also began to attend Remembrance Services at RCAF Borden and now had a regular RCAF Liaison Officer appointed to the Wing. Regular Force personnel also were joining our Wing from Base Borden.

This is a good place to mention the support we have always received from Base Borden and particularly from the Base Commanders, particularly from the RCAF side before the integration of the forces. Happily, since integration, the Base Commanders of whatever Service connection and the senior officers of the Air Command units have continued their support. This chapter has been short but will be fleshed out in subsequent chapters as information, which is already coming in some volume, becomes available.

In the meantime, I am incorporating into the History, at various points, items that reflect on the days as we lived them then. The first of them, entitled Interlude #1, immediately follows this chapter. This interlude was written up many years ago, a few days following the events detailed. It is included without an apology for the simple reason that the events did actually occur and can be corroborated. If you need confirmation talk to Isabel Kelly. *She was there.*

Interlude #1

AKA

The Tenth Annual Convention of the R.C.A.F.A. Toronto 1960. The Royal York Hotel

A momentous occasion for several reasons - for good or other reasons, the two accredited delegates don't remember much about the business conducted, not just because it was a rather long time ago but also due to the fact that they were under the impression (remember everything was new then) that the whole affair was really an excuse for 'meeting and greeting' and having a rather protracted 'bash' starting the first evening. They were encouraged in their thinking by the lead off President's Reception!

It wasn't that bad, of course, but some rather startling things did happen to Del Kelly and Ken Mitchell, the delegates. For example, by mutual agreement we got seats for the opening ceremonies well to the rear of the gathering, neglecting to notice that we were about one yard in front of the percussion section of the RCAF Central Band. We were hemmed in by late comers and for some twenty minutes wished that we had enjoyed a quieter and earlier evening the night before. In all seriousness, however, the opening ceremonies and the singing of the Airman's Prayer created treasured memories. Sammy Sayle was in good voice that day.

The business of the Association was conducted in a formal manner and provided a learning experience not the least part of which was a better understanding of the role and function of an individual Wing in the overall structure of the Association. The delegates' luncheon offered a good opportunity to meet many delegates from across Canada and provided a forum for an exchange of the programs and also problems encountered by other Wings - a good day.

That evening we were joined (without prior warning) by our wives and some fifteen Wing members - all in our room to help us dispense hospitality, which they did with enthusiasm, as well as visiting the Ontario Group and other Group hospitality suites. Much later in the evening they all remembered that drinking and driving did not mix and since they were not checked in and did not have a chance of getting accommodation at that hour - what better place to take refuge than right where they were?

Hospitality Rooms? In those days each Group levied a delegate charge at the convention to stock their special hospitality suites and most Wings that could afford it provided smaller welcomes in their rooms also. These rooms were 'open-house' during certain hours of the convention and of course our own Wing members were welcome with us, together with any drop-ins. The theory was that people would 'make the rounds' with a limited stay to meet and greet and then move onto the next whose delegates were

Interlude #1

hosting likewise. Unfortunately, rising costs of both the conventions themselves, hotel accommodation and travel, have put a severe limit on this type of free wheeling hospitality, and have also put a limit on one or two individuals who 'cruised, not to say abused' the system. They became quite well known for the habit!

Anyway, back to the room. Having dozed off, I awoke about 2.30 a.m. and with bemused eyes took a head count (fifteen) but, (a big but), it should have been sixteen - where was Phyllis (my wife no less)? She did not have a key, may well have forgotten the room number and floor and had obviously crashed another hospitality room somewhere.

About half an hour later I was picketing the elevator rotunda, and was delighted when the elevator finally stopped and out stepped Phyllis - and a house detective! In no way did it seem wise to have the house detective see the contents of our (Del's and my) room. Twelve might have been OK - but sixteen? Phyllis was claimed - "Thanks but that's mine" did the trick and seemingly very annoyed with my happy spouse, I got away with it.

Everyone from Barrie agreed that it (a) was a fine convention and (b) one of which they would not miss another. *Most of them didn't* - in fact, 441 has had a wonderful representation at all conventions since that epic first (and never to be forgotten) 10th in Toronto especially when, in the fullness of time, we started to win awards.

One last memory, believe it or not the delegates were really looking forward to the cenotaph parade in downtown Toronto and with Toronto Wings joining, there would have been more than one thousand on the parade. There was a massed groan when we were informed that the rain had washed the parade right out! (It came down in torrents).

That's enough for this interlude and no excuses. It was all fun!

CHAPTER 3

Presidents, Precedents Plus Personalities

"The Early Years"

A Wing of the Association is not a club room or a building - it's people - and here are some of those stalwarts who helped to make us what we are today. Now, a glance at the early group of Presidents and some of their Wing members.

First a word - the Presidents of 441 Wing have taken office only after a properly run election procedure. At first the election was for one year only but as time went by it became very clear that the entire Wing operation was becoming more complex and was, in fact a business, which is why we became incorporated as a Non Profit organization, and the officers were elected for two year terms. In essence, this incorporation lessened the liability placed on individuals and also meant that no officer or elected individual could benefit financially or otherwise from the operation. Certain expenses were, however, deemed legitimate such as representation at Group and National Conventions which, in themselves, are learning experiences.

In the early years there was no money available for these exercises and the individual footed the bill as did the fraternal delegates through the years. It is a matter of history that our Wing has always been well represented at all meetings of this nature, usually at their own expense.

Our first three presidents were respectively "Hank" Partridge, Del Kelly and Jim Lynch. Each of these has been mentioned earlier but we should spend a few more words appreciating these pioneers. In Hank's case, before becoming our Charter President, a lot of hours were put in. Contacts with ex-service RCAF and RAF persons in the Barrie area were made and as more were contacted the ripples spread and he began to have help from Del Kelly and others. His dedication and hard work came to fruition with the already described Charter Night. Hank served his term as our President and as Immediate Past, then as far as the records available indicate, he worked with the Air Cadet Squadron for two or more years. After that, work and family responsibilities took him out of the main stream and he became an inactive member.

Del Kelly became the next incumbent and did a fine job in the early formative years and came back as President in later years. He remained active on the Board of Directors in various positions for many years and was our editor of The Rattler magazine. Since the first magazine, we have had a continuous communication for ten

Presidents, Precedents, Plus Personalities

months of the year without a break. Our present day 'Future' is the end result and I will be mentioning the various editors such as Ron Osborne as they appear.

Del's years of service and participation became curtailed after a series of family tragedies affected his health and his own physical mobility decreased markedly in his later years until his death. Del was always a forceful, sometimes contentious, leader but was a regular attendee at Conventions and Regional meetings. The Wing and the Association were ever present in his thinking.

Without question, Del Kelly, with his active drive and participation for more than thirty years is a factor in our strength today.

Jim Lynch, Squadron Leader (ret), followed Del to the chair at 5 Owen and, like so many who followed, worked hard to ensure the continuity and development of programs which our then limited funds allowed. Jim worked in many facets of Wing life for years as did his wife Mildred (Millie). He served as secretary for a while and on most of the other committees as needed. The couple were really missed both from a Wing point of view, and, to many of us, from a personal point of view, when he responded to the homing call and he and Millie were seen off from Allandale Station for their return to his beloved Prince Edward Island. Jim and Mildred were very close in their long marriage and when Mildred died, Jim followed her within the year. Some of us are still in touch with their sons, Fred and Paul, and their daughter Gail lives in Barrie.

So, a salute is offered to those three pioneers who placed their mark on our Wing and implemented programs which endure to this day.

During the above terms of office many personalities surfaced, some to serve actively for same years such as the Bourne brothers, Cec Corchan, Wally Whitbread, Phil Sheridan, Jack Heppleston, Henry Hill, Stan Shier and so many others. I know that other active names are missing, however as the records were destroyed in the fire later, they are not replaceable by our memories over so many years. So many members have either moved away from Barrie, left active participation in Wing activities for family and work responsibilities or, regrettably, in many cases have gone from us on their final flight.

Other names surfaced, however, and became interlaced with the fabric of continuance and permanency in the Wing. We will hear more of such 'characters' as Frank Ladoucer, Bob McDonald, 'Doc' Woodstock, Roy Folliott, John Holder, Fred Cross, Clifford Westgarth-Taylor and so many others who will 'fall in' and be counted as the years roll by.

The title of this section mentioned the word 'precedents'. The ones set in those early days were, among other things, the adherence to the National guidelines and the rules of procedure laid down. This has continued and has made for a well run organization. One particular precedent was to become upset in fairly short order however, and was not fully rectified for many years until our Ladies Auxiliary became properly Chartered. At first the ladies were excluded from membership unless qualified

by WD or WAAF status and, further, could only visit the club with a spouse or member friend. (I didn't hear the word 'chauvinism' did I)? However, the ladies could not be ignored when, for instance, Vi Hill, Isabel Kelly, Phyllis Mitchell and others cleaned and polished our 15 Owen club rooms every Wednesday afternoon for many months. They were literally on their hands and knees at times. Catering for our functions also, the food was prepared at the individual homes (at their own expense) taking turns to share the load and serving the delicious meals from the tiny kitchen. They served everything from light hors d'oeuvres to full course meals.

The result of this, of course, was that they could not be ignored. Their participation was needed and vital and they came through in no uncertain way, paving the way for their eventual recognition first to auxiliary membership and much later to full regular member status.

The following chapter will focus the Wing progress through the next four presidents as the pace will begin to pick up with the move (already covered) to our long time nest at 14 High St.

CHAPTER 4

What? More Presidents?

"Yes"!

It's the easiest way of keeping a sequential story line, as the times covered by the various Presidents bring back the events, or some of them, that made our progress an ongoing journey through the years. This chapter will bring us through some of the 14 High Street day prior to the time of the fire, surely a pivotal event in the life of 441 as a Wing, as our actual survival hung in the balance for a short while. More on that later, as it deserves a chapter in itself.

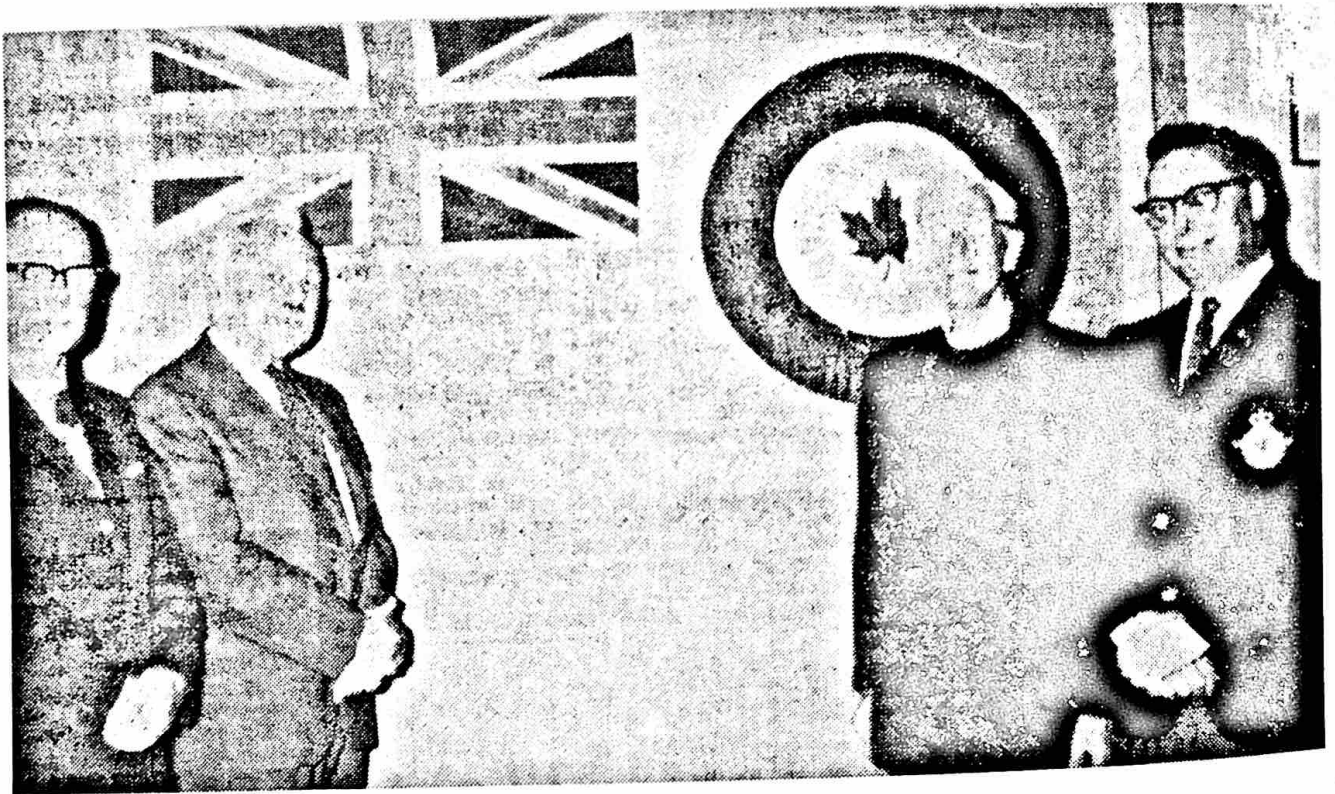
'Doc' Woodstock was, as the name implies, a Veterinarian by profession, whether that was an asset to him as a President is something to which he alone can answer! However, he successfully steered the move from 5 Owen Street to the High Street club rooms with the move being made in February, 1962. During his tenure our membership climbed slowly and by November of that year our membership count stood at seventy eight Regular and an almost equal number of Associates. The input received in the last few weeks indicate that in those far off days we could have purchased the premises for \$20,000 - too bad we didn't, it would be worth a lot more today and would have given us a permanent downtown location. Who said "It's easy to be wise after the event"? Anyway the hard rock decisions were being made such as the domestic necessities of twenty forty- eight inch tables, six thirty inch, one hundred chairs and, get this, *women* could be admitted to the games room! This meant now that the hall was a viable rental place and the rent was set at fifty dollars a rental.

Records show that the official opening was held in November of 1962 by which time John Holder had succeeded to the Presidency as of July 1st of that year.

It has just occurred to me that sometimes the dates, identified as 'year so and so' may seem to present a clash. This is not really so if you keep in mind that our Wing and fiscal year is dated from July 1st to the following June 31st .

There were quite a few 'firsts' in John's term, particularly after the first of the year into 1963. Our colours were dedicated by Archdeacon Lightbourne and in the early months, Hank Partridge was elected Regional Vice President. An idea put into action at that time was to make our monthly GM 'dinner meetings' catered by the Ladies Auxiliary - yes, we officially had one now. The dinner meetings proved to be a draw and attendance picked up. In April, our first Bingo was started and we had an attendance of one hundred and eleven. These bingos became our main source of support for our Air

Cadets as time went by. Although living in Orillia, I was back on the executive and was elected as Delegate for the Peterborough Convention (Group). That year, the assets of the Wing being over \$1400.00, the Salvation Army benefited by a donation of \$500.00. Hard come, easy go! The Peterborough Wing, by the way, were roasting an ox over an open Bar-B-Q pit when we arrived and at the wind down party before we left it was still a delight to see and taste *if* you got served early in the line -otherwise it was underdone (very).



RCAF ENSIGN FLAG RETIRED AT SPECIAL CEREMONY

The RCAF ensign flag was retired and given to Wing 441 for enshrinement at a special ceremony Saturday night during the annual Battle of Britain Ball at the RCAF club rooms, High Street. Archdeacon G. O. Lightbourn, RCAF

chief chaplain overseas officiated at the ceremony while Simcoe North MP Heber Smith addressed the gathering. From

left to right: Ken Mitchell, past president, Mr. Smith, Archdeacon Lightbourn, and president Del Kelly.

10 RCAF ENSIGN FLAG RETIRED

One occurrence that must be recorded from early in 1963 was the start-up planning for Minor Hockey with Del Kelly appointed (volunteering!) as co-ordinator and setting out to get trainers and staff together.

The Executive for the term beginning July 1964 is on hand and I am going to list the many names involved, all of whom did sterling work for the Wing in those early days.

What? More Presidents?

They began to drop away from close affiliation as time went by and are either not known or have receded in memory with our present membership. The list was as follows.

Executive Board

Immediate Past President	John Holder
President	Stan Hammond
1st Vice	Ken Mitchell
2nd Vice	Larry Desjarlais
Treasurer	Stan Shier
Secretary	Doc Woodstock

Board Members:

Jim Lynch, Stu Cameron, Jim Dewar, Merv Wallace,
Everett Shelswell, Clifford Westgarth-Taylor, Dave McClymont

Just to wind up on a happy note - in December 1996 Past President Leora Westgarth-Taylor, assisted by Ken Mitchell, Pat Mitchell, and Dave McClymont (Barrie City Police and David's son) presented Dave McClymont with his 35 year pin at a meeting of residents at 108 Collier Street. Dave is just a babe of 85 years but as feisty as ever and has led the Hymn Sing at Collier Place as a hobby, retiring from this volunteer activity in 1997.

This brings in 1964 and the election put Stan Hammond into the chair. Stan ran the Wing until, for personal and family reasons, he resigned early in the New Year and shortly after moved his business to somewhere in Toronto.

As First Vice, I stepped up to the Presidency as protocol required. Prior to Stan stepping down, the first Cadet Father and Son banquet was held in the Wing and also a move was made to sponsor Minor Hockey in the 14-16 year age range. John Holder and Jim Lynch were our Accredited Delegates to the Ontario Group convention in North Bay and the bulletin chairman had a 'beef' - the mailing went up to .03 cents per copy! (Prohibitive)!

With Stan's resignation effective in May, the Board vacancy of Second Vice was filled by Sam Weller with Larry Desjarlais stepping up to First Vice. This all happened at the time that Station Edgar closed when the Dew Line operations were phased out. The Wing had the opportunity to buy quality lounge tables and settees with matching upholstered chairs at a very good price. The only snag encountered with the very popular 'buy' was that every time the hall was rented, the lounge furniture (all of it) had to be moved out to the storage area to make room for the rental set up. (And brought

back afterwards - about half an hour of heavy lifting for two eager volunteers). Oh well! A free beer afterwards seemed to cushion the shock!

A very popular innovation was a Friday evening "Happy Hour" with a twenty-five cent tab for either beer or liquor. In this enlightened day and age this, of course, is not permitted by law! Too bad!



11 PRESENTATION OF 35 YEAR PIN TO DAVE MCCLYMONT
L-R KEN MITCHELL, DAVE MCCLYMONT,
LEORA WESTGARTH-TAYLOR

What? More Presidents?

In November of that year, 102 Squadron RC(Air)C held a "Wing" parade at the Barrie Armouries and Group Captain Diggle, O.C. RCAF, Camp Borden, presented the Wings to the cadets. This event was followed in the late fall by the start of the Midget Juvenile League Silver Fox first team game at Barrie Arena with myself as President officiating by dropping the puck in the approved manner. (I was not on skates because I did not play hockey and had never been on skates in my life. Obviously just the man for the job)! To wind up the year the New Year's dance was a sell out with the Dinner and Dance set at \$10.00 a couple. (Too expensive, said some - does that sound familiar?)

At the mid-summer election that year, Del Kelly succeeded to the Presidency and almost immediately thereafter he and I were appointed delegates to the convention in Kingston. This was the convention at which Cliff Scott was hit by a car while walking between the meeting hall and his motel. Cliff was quite seriously injured, however came back to take his term as President a couple of years later.

As you all know, Del Kelly died quite recently (1993) and Isabel passed a variety of memorabilia and news items to me for inclusion or in support of this history. One of the items was a 'story'- written by Del, all about the Kingston Convention as it related to the two delegates. It was written very tongue in cheek and has elements of humour that reflect on Del's approach to the finer (!) things of life. I am going to include the article 'as written' as Interlude #2 of this work. I hope that you, the reader, will enjoy it as much as I.

Interlude #2

AKA

Convention Report From the Unconventional DELMAR A.(DEL) KELLY



12 DEL KELLY

Report on the Sixteenth Annual Ontario Convention of the R.C.A.F. Association held on May 21st, 22nd and 23rd and hosted by 416 Wing, Kingston, Ontario. Delegates from your Wing were Ken Mitchell and Del Kelly accompanied by their wives, Phyllis and Isabel.

As the business sessions did not begin until Saturday morning, we decided to leave Friday morning, taking our time and make a pleasant trip of it. Packing some lunch and refreshments in a cooler we proceeded via Orillia, Peterborough, Port Hope stopping at a picnic table (or was it tables) on the way to report ourselves. The weather was beautiful, even the women enjoyed themselves.

Arriving in Kingston about 3:00 p.m., we registered, proceeded to our room and opened a can to toast Wing 441, as a matter of fact, I think we might have opened two cans. Feeling extremely refreshed (Ken had a shower) we decided to visit the Hotel Lounge (we had to let everyone know that Barrie had arrived). While having a drink, Ken decided to purchase a couple of jiggers so that the rye and rum would last longer when we had guests in our quarters (we saved the gin for ourselves). Then dinner in the Hotel Dining Room, where the women embarrassed us to such an extent that we were forced to leave them to pay the bill, Ken with some unfinished business (sleep) and I to the steam baths (male only Friday night). I mean they really embarrassed us, and that's

Interlude #2

difficult. We ordered veal cutlets from a lovely waitress (she winked at Ken), when the plates arrived Ken and I proceeded to do justice. Suddenly Isabel shouts, "this isn't veal cutlets, this is two slices of ham with cheese in between and breaded and I don't like cheese"(and that is a mouthful if you're shouting). Sure enough it was two slices of ham with cheese in between and breaded. Ken said he didn't care and carried on and I got sick.(I don't like ham). Phil decided that the plate wasn't that bad, but she didn't like the principle of the thing and the fun started, exit Ken and Del. For the rest of the story ask Phil or Isabel, they will be glad to fill you in. Later in the evening the President's Reception and entertainment turned out to be quite a Hootnanny especially the entertainment, a blonde and brunette belly dancers (or was it hip dancers) all I am sure of is that it wasn't square dancers, Phil and Isabel later told us that they were in the wash room when the dancers were dressing and the blonde was older than they and also had a sloppy belly held in by a girdle (you could have fooled me).

After the Hootnanny Isabel and I held a Wings at home in our room, while Ken and Phil went to bed. (Ken told me the next morning that the Wings at Home were to be held the next night). Now to serious business, Saturday morning and the business sessions at 8:45. For the benefit of the doubters both Ken and I were on hand for the opening ceremonies. The first period was extremely dull (me too) adoption of minutes of 1964 convention, business arising from the minutes etc. Coffee break at 10 a.m., Ken and I dashed to our rooms to wake the women so they wouldn't miss breakfast. Now you have to realize that Ken and I have a system at these conventions, we make sure that at least one of us is in attendance at the business sessions (generally speaking that is) Ken returned to the meeting and I decided to do a little public relations work in the room of the Schenely Traveller who happens to work for an old friend of mine, John Cochrane by name, anybody remember John. At any rate the salesman's name is Bill or was it Bob and his wife's maiden name was Kelly (wasn't that a coincidence) and we got along extremely well.

And at 12:00 noon we had a beer break before lunch. I missed the beer break because I felt that as your accredited delegate I must remain on the ball at the luncheon, the major and some other people spoke, I think, because at this stage of the game, Ken is tired of business sessions and wants to see Fort Henry without lunch and I am to guide him. (If my English is rather confused don't worry about it, so was I). Now as my mother was born and raised in Kingston and I spent many holidays during my childhood in this city I know my way around, also as my mother was born and raised in Kingston, I have relatives who are buried in the cemetery near Kingston. As Ken is a very nice guy (sometimes) he offers to drive me to the cemetery before we carry on to Fort Henry. It has been sometime since I visited the graves in the cemetery near Kingston, I get lost; to make a long story short (and my wife insists on it) we never did see Fort Henry.

Talking about making a long story short, this is only Saturday afternoon at the convention and I have been writing for two hours.

Also talking about a long story short reminds me of the joke we hear shortly after we arrived back and currently being passed on by the Jim Lyncher as a matter of fact Millie told us the joke with a little assist from Jim. It seems that this family are members of a nudist camp and the father and son are out taking a walk one morning when the son says to the father, "why are some men short and some men tall?" the father being a short man says "son, the short men are smart and the tall men are stupid." Just at this moment they rounded a corner and meet the boys mother talking to a man and the son says "Dad, that man is getting stupider and stupider, (I may have the blue pencil this part, if I do just ask Jim or Millie they will tell you the story). Back to business-Saturday afternoon the guest speakers were The National President R.C.A.F.A. and the National President of the Canadian Legion (I think, I wasn't there). Cocktails at 5:30, Ken and I both left. (They were charging for drinks). At 6:30 p.m. guest speaker, Dr. G.F.G. Stanley RMC and he was good (I wasn't there but I checked it out with those that were so that I could give a comprehensive report on return to my Wing). At 8:00 - 9:30 Wings at Home (Ken was right) so we visited all the other Wings.

At 9:30 (this is Saturday in case you also are lost) annual Ball, at the Lasalle Ball Room, (we left, they are charging for the drinks again).

You must realize the difficulty I am having in compiling this report, I have no notes. This is the fault of someone, I don't know who, probably Gremilens. In planning this trip I took my portable typewriter along so that I could edit our notes and type up a daily report each evening, but on opening my typewriter case the first evening I found that someone or something had removed my typewriter and filled the case with (pardon the expression Rev.) Booze.

Did you ever eat breakfast at 8:00 a.m. on Sunday morning. Well just to prove that we, your accredited delegates were on the job, taking our work seriously, did have breakfast. (If you think that sometimes isn't finished your wrong).

Seriously, Ken and I did show up for the 8:45 business session and on time. Can you visualize this huge room table after table, all empty. On the stage two people are shifting papers here and there, Ken and I sitting all alone in one corner of this huge room, no one else, just Ken and I. Ken moved that the meeting be adjourned, I seconded the motion, the vote was unanimous, two for none against. Ken and I went to our rooms to wake our wives so they wouldn't miss breakfast.

Oh I know what you are thinking, we didn't go back, but we did, and they were going to fine us for being late for the meeting (but we explained that our wives are hard to wake and didn't want breakfast anyway.)

If you think I am dragging this report out to long, I agree with you, I think I'll make a book out of it, but no, on second thought, if I told the truth they wouldn't print it.

Where was I. Oh yes, Sunday, business meeting, pretty dull, know it all, heard it before, business session resumes. Coffee break, business session resumes, can't

Interlude #2

remember, too many coffee breaks.

Parade time 11:30 parade to the Cenotaph, Ken goes on parade, I decide to carry on with my public relations, Ken a bit angry says I am getting to involved in public relations, won't let Ken intimidate me, I'll have my relations where I please. (I may have to blue pencil this remark) anyway I have one person on my side, she says if she had of known she would have stayed back also and also worked on public relations.

12:30 p.m. Luncheon Lasalle Hotel, steak, good, (best meal I have had since I arrived) (only meal I have had since?)

2:00 p.m. business sessions resume, Report National Convention, committees report, nothing new heard it all before, excellent executive, did a good job, don't bring up anything new, nothing to argue about, good, don't feel like arguing, (Ken says that's something new).

Election of new executive, can't remember who was elected, except that I wasn't, will get report from group and let you know (if you care) decided next Ontario Group conventions will be held somewhere in Ontario (not Barrie).

3:30 Coffee break (oh God).

3:45 Business session resume, member of year award, can't remember who got it probably a hell of nice guy like Leon Schedlin will find out on group report. Open discussion, new business, got nothing to say, said it last night in someone's room, angry husband, angry wife (mine that is).

Going to take a look at this report when sober may rewrite and will turn out very dull.

Del