

434 Niagara

BULLETIN

Vol. 23 no 3 Jan - Feb, 2021



General Meetings

3rd Thursday of each month at

Branch 4 RC Legion

383 Morningstar Avenue Welland ON

We proudly promote the glorious tradition of the RCAF

434 Wing Board of Directors

2020-2021

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Chairman – Bill Heron | H - 289-820-8712 |
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| 2nd Vice Chairman - Norm Sonnenberg..... | H - 905-834-6722 |
| Secretary Treasurer - George Groff..... | H - 905-734-4948 |
| Membership Chair - Jeanette Lee..... | C - 905-359-3531 |
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| Kit Shop Chairman - Rod Lee..... | C - 905-359-1975 |
| | C - 289-686-8636 |
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| Honourary Director – F/L Tom Vance..... | H - 905-834-8155 |
| Wing Padre - Rev John Cathcart..... | H - 905-384-4660 |

COMMITTEES

Air - Cadets Capt - Julie Sheppard
Audio Visual - Rod Lee
Phone Committee - Jeanette & George
Programs - George & Board
Sick/Visitation - Jeanette Lee
Publicity - Board

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGIONS

| | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Welland | Branch 4 | Office | 905-734-3611 |
| | | Canteen | 905-734-6601 |
| Port Colborne | Branch 56 | Hall | 905-834-9512 |
| Fort Erie | Branch 71 | Hall | 905-871-8682 |
| Fonthill | Branch 613 | Hall | 905-892-6293 |

Published by

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Royal Canadian Air Force Association of Canada

Secretary/Treasurers' Report

Our finances are holding with our two small fundraising projects. The Christmas cards sold out netting the Wing \$277.26 but the Pocket Calendars still have 24 more to be sold. So far the Wing has netted \$ 301.14 but if we can sell the remaining 24 calendars the Wing will make another \$120.00. Let's try and do that OK? They will be available at our Christmas luncheon on Saturday, December 19 from 2:00 to 4:00 PM.

We are considering our next fundraising project with Big Red Markets. You sell food packages, collect the money up front, we pick up the food, sort it and have the customer pick it up the same day at a pre-arranged drop off point. We make \$10.00 a box.

We have been given permission from the Welland Optimist Club to hold our meetings at their club on 34 Patterson Avenue for the months of January, February and March subject to their renting the hall out that day, have their own program, or the Branch 4 Legion opens up.

Also for these winter months we will be meeting on the first and third Saturdays of the month at 2:00 PM. in the afternoon. This should help your with driving conditions during the daylight hours. The Board Meetings for the months of January, February and March will be the 9th, 6th and 6th respectively and because we are now into code red in the Niagara Region, the General Meetings are suspended until further notice.

We have sent a letter to the Welland Legion, Branch 4 requesting for the rental of their upper hall on Saturday, October 23, 2021 at 1:00 pm to 4:00 PM. We ask that no bingo or band be playing downstairs as it interferes with the speaker' Ted Barris.

Everyone have a very merry Christmas and a Happy, Safe Healthy New Year!!!!

George Groff

From Welfare and Membership Chair, Janette Lee and Kit Shop Chairman, Rod Lee:

Due to virus restrictions being observed we have no activity to report.

We send our best wishes for everyone to be safe and have a merry christmas as best as they can .

Chairman's Report December 2020



Time sure does roll right on by and here we are nearing the end of another year.

To say this year has been abnormal would be an understatement and I'm sure I don't have to elaborate I hope all are taking note and practising the advice given by the medical professionals along with the guidelines set out by Government. But good news is on the horizon with the approval of a vaccine for COVID19. When I think back to the war years in the UK and what was imposed on the public for the better good it could be used as a good lesson for what we are going through albeit nothing (as yet) has been imposed. In any event, after all said and done it remains up to the individual to do what needs to be done for the safety of all as was the case then.

We managed to have a General meeting in November at which time I showed a slide show of the memorial given by the local people of Perwez in Belgium in remembrance of the crew of KB815 SE-K which crashed close to the town while returning from an operation March 15/1945.

Thanks to George in arranging the use of the Optimist Club hall for these meetings as the Legion is still out of bounds for many. We held a Board meeting at the beginning of December and managed to work our way through items of business.

As reported in my last report we reviewed the By-Laws and they are now in possession of our Regional Director for further consideration.



To George Groff, Rod Lee on receiving their 15 year pins and also to Brian Heikkila and yours truly for 10 years



Go out to Chuck Leguerrier who celebrated his 90th birthday in November and to Dan Carr for December, and also to Jeanette Lee, Deborah –Wilkes Whitehall, and Brian Heikkila for January.

Anyone still wishing to purchase pocket planners there are still some available.

Christmas will be upon us soon and it will be different for many this year, but we will make the best of it and hope that this time next year all will have improved perhaps even somewhat normal.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a Happy and Prosperous 2021.

Bill Heron, Chairman

Women in Air Combat in WW2

While women in the USA and Britain were trying to persuade their governments to at least let them ferry military aircraft, which seemed to be a major mental step to accept for the western allies, women in Russia such as fighter pilot Lydia Litviak, double 5 star Ace and later Hero of the Soviet Union (see 434 Niagara Nov-Dec 2019), were showing their tremendous skills and capability as combat pilots.

Factors leading to Women in Air Combat

It should be noted that contrary to much writing, the Soviet Union was not short of fighter pilots for WW2. That is not an explanation of how women were accepted as fighter pilots but we can look at factors that did pave the way for women:

The Russian Revolution created a government which gave the right to boys and girls to have an equal education and a generation of girls grew up believing that they were as good as men and they were as capable as men of defending their country in time of war. The law did not require women to be placed on the military reserve list. If they chose to join the military, they did so as a volunteer.

Beginning in 1932 military training was built into the secondary school curriculum. From the age of eight both boys and girls studied military history, talked with veterans, and learned to use bows and arrows which was a precursor to rifle training they would receive at age 13. Outside of school both boys and girls had to join a fitness or defense program in clubs sponsored by the Communist League of Youth (Komosol) which would be similar to belonging to the Scouts. These clubs also provided military training and the availability of flight training. By 1935 there were around 150 flying clubs that provided free flight training to any teenager who was a Komosol member. The theory was good, but girls often found in approaching a flying club they would be turned away. Girls who were determined to fly would be persistent, knowing that eventually the flying club would have to accept them because they had equal rights by law.

Another aspect of gender equality in education in the USSR was that teenage girls could study subjects such as engineering, biology, chemistry, etc. alongside their male counterparts. As will be seen, these studies opened up doors for women in aviation. In contrast, girls in the western world around 1930 were studying home economics, learning skills such as sewing and cooking.

Marina Raskova

Marina Mikhaylovna Raskova (nee Malinina) (March 28, 1912 – January 4, 1943). Unlike most of the Soviet airwomen, had no early ambition to be a pilot. From the age of six she aspired to be an opera singer and she attended the Pushkin School of Music in Moscow. At 15 an inner ear infection along with paratyphoid ended her singing career. In 1919 her father was killed after being struck by a motorcycle which left her mother to support the family. Marina decided to study chemistry with a view to obtaining immediate employment upon graduation to help support her family. In 1929 she graduated and was sent by her school to Butyrskiy Aniline Dye Plant as an apprentice. Six months later she was promoted to laboratory technician. She married Sergey Raskov an engineer at the plant and in 1930 she gave birth to a daughter Tatyana (Tanya). Marina left work to look after their daughter.

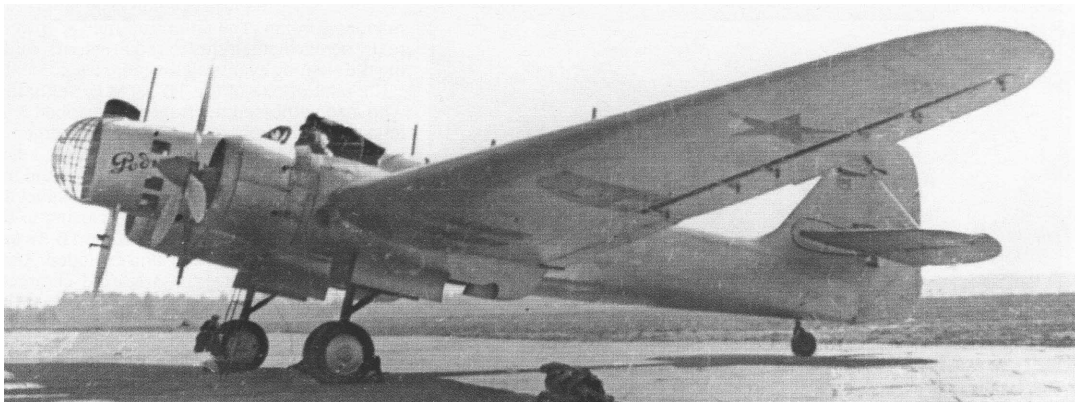


Marina Raskova, Hero of the Soviet Union

In October 1931 Marina was offered a position as a draughtswoman in the Aeronautical Navigation Laboratory of the N. Ye Zhukovskiy Air Force Engineering Academy. By the end of the year she was promoted to teaching and laboratory assistant working with the academy instructor and director, Aleksandr Belyakov who became her mentor. She drafted drawings of new flight instruments and prepared them for testing and together with a technician, installed them in aircraft. She also became an extramural student at the Aviation Institute in Leningrad and studied mathematics, physics, geometry and mechanical engineering. Marina's mother retired in 1932 and was able to look after Tanya while Marina was pursuing her new career. Air navigation became the new focus of Marina's life.

The 1920's and 1930's were referred to as the golden age of flight. Planes could provide swift transport over long distances, perform daring stunts, perform dramatic rescues, explore new territory and serve in war. Between 1929 and 1939 the world's great powers were in a race for air supremacy. In the USSR, Stalin encouraged ambitious designers, pilots and engineers to create an industry that was exemplary to the world. One of the goals of his second Five Year Plan was to increase the number of civil air routes across the USSR covering extreme distances and connecting far-flung corners of the country.

In 1933 Marina flew with her supervisor, Aleksandr Belyakov as navigator on a flight expedition sponsored by the Zhukovsky Academy to select landing sites for passenger airports in the Crimea, Caucasus and the Sea of Azov areas. In 1934 Marina graduated from the Air Navigation Department of the Leningrad Institute of Civil Aviation Engineers. She was the first woman in the USSR to become a professional air navigator. She also became the first female lecturer for the Zhukovsky Air Force Engineering Academy. Her employer, Zhukovsky Air Force Engineering Academy also paid for flying lessons for her in 1934 at the Central Flying Club in Tushino, outside of Moscow which she completed in 1935 and obtained her pilot's license.



Rodina—Tupolev Ant 37

Record setting flights were one way to rally support for aviation and gain support from the government. Marina teamed up with another experienced pilot, Valentina Grizodubova and in October 1937 they set women's long-distance flight record together. In 1938 Marina as navigator, teamed up with pilot Polina Osipenko and her copilot Vera Lomako to set another long-distance record. All three were awarded the Soviet Union's Order of Lenin honour for their flight. As if this was not enough, Valentina Grizodubova asked Marina to be her navigator along with Polina Osipenko on another record-breaking flight. Valentina planned to fly in a straight line, non-stop flight across the entire continent of the USSR from Moscow to Komsomolsk-on-Amur at the very eastern edge of Siberia covering 6500 kilometres (4038 miles) which would set another women's long distance record. The government would cover all expenses. Such a flight would be a political statement to Germany that Soviet bombers would have no trouble reaching the heart of Germany if war broke out. On September 24, 1938 the three women took off from Moscow in a Tupolev designed converted bomber which they had named the Rodina (Motherland).



**Valentina Grizodubova,
Hero of the Soviet Union**

The dramatic flight of the Rodina is well known history throughout the world. Having flown about 6000 kilometres (3728 miles) their fuel gauge indicated they were out of fuel (It is believed the mechanics in Moscow failed to top up the fuel tanks after testing the engines before take off). They would have to crash land the aircraft in a subarctic landscape of coniferous forest. Marina being in a separate compartment in the very nose would have to parachute out for her own safety before they attempted the crash landing. Marina made her first parachute jump and landed safely, albeit in a tree. She was without her emergency kit and had no food. For 10 days Marina made her way through the snow forest eating berries, birch leaves and whatever she could find until she came upon the Rodina which they had managed to land in one piece. Fifty aircraft and thousands of people had joined in a search for the aircraft and after locating it, parachuted supplies to the two crew members. Marina showed up one day later to everyone's relief. The women's long-distance flight record previously held by British pilot Elizabeth Lyon was broken by 2,000 kilometres (1,200 miles).



**Polina Osipenko, Hero
of the Soviet Union**

The Soviet press began a love affair with Marina Raskova, Polina Osipenko and Valentina Grizodubova that made the three women household names and put their photographs into the hands of every admiring Soviet schoolgirl. Young Lidia Litviak carried newspaper articles and photos of the three women in her notebook. Marina and Polina were given their second Order of Lenin Award and all three were given the Gold Star of Hero of the Soviet Union. They were the first women to receive the nation's highest honour. Marina as an air navigator and a mother was now world famous. Women aviators throughout the nation adored her. All over the USSR young women were taking to the skies and trying to join the Red Army so they could be like their hero, Marina Raskova. By 1939 one in every three or four pilots was a woman.

Operation Barbarossa

June 22, 1941 saw the German invasion of Russia, "Operation Barbarossa." All over the country patriotic young people rushed to military bases and recruitment centres to volunteer to fight. Because military recruitment was only a requirement for men, the USSR had no system in place to allow thousands of women to sign up for active duty. Flying schools had trained thousands of women but there was no procedure for these women to move on to military flying schools. Even Marina Raskova and Lidia Litviak were turned down when they first applied to fight. Thousands of women across the USSR sent letters to Marina asking her to help them go to war for the motherland.

It is not clear how it came about but Marina approached Stalin with the idea of forming a women's aviation unit as part of the Soviet Air Force and she even volunteered to lead it herself. Stalin liked the idea of forming aviation units for women. On October 8, 1941 the Peoples Commissariat of Defense issued an order to form a combat group of female aviators including commanders, pilots, navigators, mechanics, armourers and ground staff to be created and led by Marina Raskova to be known as the 122nd Composite Air Group.

An order was made for women pilots from civil aviation and Osoaviakhim (Soviet defense organization) to report to a meeting point in Moscow at the Zhukovsky Academy. About one thousand women showed up in Moscow in response to the call. Meanwhile German troops had broken through the Russian defense line and were headed to Moscow so the women had to be transported to Engels for training. Training from civilians to soldiers was abrupt, a three year military flight training program was crammed into six months.

On December 9, 1941, Marina began the formation of three all women aviation units. First was the 586th Fighter Aviation Regiment with Tamara Kazarinova as commander, the second was the 587th Bomber Aviation Regiment with Marina herself as commander and the third was the 588th Night Bomber Aviation Regiment with Yevdokia Bershanskaya as commander.

The Aircraft

For the 587th dive bomber regiment, Marina ordered the brand new **Petlyakov Pe-2 dive bomber and fighter**. They were so new the regiment would have to wait six months before they would start coming off the assembly line. The 588th Night Bomber regiment would fly the **Polikarpov Po-2** biplanes which were readily available and which most pilots in the 122nd had learned to fly in. Marina ordered 24 of the new **Yak-1s** for the 586th Fighter regiment. They were fast, easy to fly and repair and could stand up to German aircraft. A problem arose at the Saratov Factory where they were built which was near Engels where the women were stationed. The technicians refused to build aircraft which would go to the women first when men on the front line needed them. Marina sent a group of her pilots from the 586th, including Lydia Litviak, to the Saratov factory to meet the technicians. After their meeting the technicians put extra effort into meeting Marina's order.



Yevdokia became the only woman to remain in command of a women's regiment for the entire war and her regiment would become the only Soviet military regiment of the war to remain made up entirely of women. She was the only woman to be awarded the Order of Suvorov for outstanding military leadership.

Yevdokia Bershanskaya, Commander of the 588th Night Bomber Aviation Regiment



Lydia Litviak, 2x Ace fighter pilot and Hero of the Soviet Union by her Yak-1



Petlyakov Pe-2, the Dive Bomber flown by the 587th Bomber Aviation Regiment under Commander Marina Raskova



Fighter pilots of the 586th Fighter Aviation Regiment with one of their new Yak-1 Aircraft in background

By the end of the war Marina's 588th Night Bomber Regiment had flown over 30,000 sorties, dropped 23,000 tons of bombs and her three regiments produced 30 Heroes of the Soviet Union. Lydia Litviak originally of the 586th Fighter Aviation Regiment still holds the world record for more documented kills than any other female pilot in history. The USSR became the first nation in the world and the only nation in WW2 to allow women to fly and kill in combat. Canada became the first nation to allow women to fly in a combat role since WW2.

In the News

Canadian ITPS Purchasing Korean FA-50 Combat Jets

The **International Test Pilots School (ITPS)** located in London, Ontario, has entered into an agreement to acquire 8 –12 South Korean FA-50 twin seat combat jets. The FA-50 is a supersonic advance trainer and light combat fighter developed by Korean Aerospace Industries with Lockheed Martin. The FA-50 was designed for combat and has been employed extensively by the Iraqi Air Force and the Phillipines Air Force. Its low operational costs and easy maintenance allow it to be used as a cost effective trainer. ITPS will employ the FA-50 for tactical and adversary training in mock battles.



ITPS clients have included Airbus, the Indonesian Air Force, the Royal Thai Air Force and the Pakistani Air Force.

Boeing F-15EX, a generation 4 fighter

In December 2019, the US Congress enacted the 2020 National Defence Authorisation Act, giving the USAF \$1.1bn to acquire the first eight F-15EX generation 4 aircraft. The USAF FY2021 budget request has set aside \$1.6 bn to purchase an additional 12 F-15EX fighter jets. The purchase of generation 4 jets reflects a growing trend in countries to purchase upgraded generation 4 aircraft which are often designated as generation 4+ or 4++



The USAF plans to use the generation 4 fighters to carry a large number of missiles in support of the F-35. The F-15EX can follow behind an F-35 and bring the firepower to destroy threats the F-35 detects. The F-15EX is a two seat jet with fly-by-wire controls and has a high payload capacity which allows it to carry and launch hypersonic missiles at standoff distances.

Indonesia to purchase Rafale jets

Indonesia and France are close to a purchase agreement for 48 Rafale jets. Indonesia turned down an offer from the USA to purchase F-16 jets. A deal to purchase 12 Russian Su-35 jets has been stuck for two years.

Dassault currently has orders from Greece, India, Egypt and Qatar for the purchase of Rafale jets.



In the News

Russian Ministry of Defense to receive first mass produced Su-57 fifth generation stealth jets

Ten Su-57 aircraft have already been delivered to the MoD as a trial group. The first mass produced Su-57's should be delivered starting in December. They will probably be powered by the AL-41 FP engines derived from the Su-35.

Subsequent models will use a second stage engine with greater thrust over current fifth generation engines which would classify it as a 5+ generation engine. The initial order is for 76 Su-57 aircraft.



Su-57 In Production

A Near Miss times Five

March 31/1945 – Target Hamburg

Main Briefing 02.30 hours and we learn that our target is to be the Blohm & Voss shipyards where new types of U-Boats were being built.

The briefing Officer told us that there would be no enemy aircraft as aircraft from Fighter Command would be utilized to strafe German airfields thus preventing enemy fighters from taking off. In the event that some did get away, we would have mid and high level fighter escort.

After completing the external aircraft checks on KB801 SE-S (*our aircraft for this Op*) I climbed aboard. As Flight Engineer, I had the responsibility of the many on board pre-flight checks this would ensure the aircraft was as safe as possible and ready to fly, this completed, and it was time to start up the 4 Merlin XX engines.

All was in order and off we went round the perimeter track and taxi to the end of the runway to wait our turn to take-off, green light, we were on our way Navigator set course for Reading (*the turning point for the gaggles*). We continued our climb; we had been assigned to the third wave which consisted of about 150 aircraft.

The outward leg to the target was uneventful and we were on course to Hamburg. The first two waves had already bombed by the time we got there, but we were (*the third wave*) behind time. The lead bomber of our gaggle believing that he was too early did a dog leg to kill 15 minutes (*of course the whole gaggle followed him*) and we were so late that the fighter escorts, now short of fuel headed for home.

Suddenly our Rear Gunner warned the Skipper that numerous enemy aircraft were approach at high speed from dead astern this was confirmed by our Wireless Operator using Fishpond radar. The Rear Gunner informed that the enemy fighters were flying in pairs making corkscrew evasive action very difficult.

Attack #1

A pair of ME262'S our total all up weight was 72,000lbs, carrying fuel, a 14,000lb bomb load and crew, suddenly changing direction (*corkscrew*) would be difficult I looked out, all I could see was sky then from nowhere, I saw the 2 fighters go by

(*Wow were they fast*). Between the guns from the Mid-Upper and the Rear gunner firing at the same time at whatever evasive action that was going on the whole aircraft shook. (*if anyone ever tells you that they were not scared ,they're either a liar or they were never under enemy fire*).

Attack #2

A second pair of ME262"s attacked us and the Skipper was called on again to take evasive action and once more we went through all that has been previously mentioned but still much better than being shot out of the sky. Between the first and second attacks the Rear Gunner shouts over the intercom "I got one" confirmed by pieces falling off the fighter, on fire and the pilot seen to bail out "I got one too, he's smoking" came from the Mid-Upper gunner.

All around us there was the same type of action and we could see that some of the bombers were not so fortunate.

Attack #3

This time by a single ,ME262 during this,, through perseverance and determination, we managed thanks to our Bomb Aimer to drop our bombs on the submarine pens as our bombs dropped from the bomb bay our pilot increased speed and put our aircraft into a slight dive to gain airspeed made his turn and we set course for England. After a total of 6 hours ad 50 minutes of flying time we landed at home base, scared, tired and shaken.

We headed to interrogation and one by one gave an account of what they saw, heard, did enemy aircraft seen, how many, what type and so on.

It was later confirmed by intelligence, that the Luftwaffe did in fact dispatch 60 fighters that night, As a result of his initial sighting our Rear Gunner was dubbed "Hawkeye"

Our gunners were credited as follows Rear Gunner credited with one enemy aircraft destroyed and the Mid-Upper Gunner credited with one enemy aircraft damaged (*only because nobody seen it hit the ground*) after all we had been through who had time to see if it hit the ground.

The 3 separate attacks by ME262 enemy aircraft are timed as follows.

Over the primary target at 0905 hours first attack occurred at 0904 hours, second attack at 0907 hours and the third attack at 0910 hours. So we can see that this aircraft was attacked was attacked on three separate occasions in a matter of 6 minutes by a total of 5 enemy aircraft. This is also reflected in the Combat Reports of the Squadron.

Above account given by Bill Baluk (now deceased)

431 Squadron RCAF

He was the Flight Engineer on this aircraft on this operation.

Origin of Our Exhortation Verse

We all repeat the verse but do you know its origin?

For the Fallen

Poem by Robert Laurence Binyon (1869-1943), published in *The Times* newspaper on 21 September 1914.

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

Binyon wrote his poem in September 1914 a few weeks after the outbreak of WW1 after the British Expeditionary Force suffered casualties in its first encounters of the war. In 1939 he indicated that he wrote stanza four first.

Letter from 434 RCAFA Member Brian Howard

Brian Howard

St Catharines L2N4V2

Open letter to all

I wish to sincerely thank all members who were part of, or who participated on a very special day, Saturday September 5th at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum Hamilton.

On that day I took a very special flight in the Avro Lancaster, this was due to Capt. Mario and Capt. Tammy Palumbo, who opened a "Go Fund me Page", and raised sufficient funds to cover the expenses for this memorable flight.

This was also a very memorable day for me due to the many friends who were present to wish me well and a speedy recovery. CIC members, local squadron staff, sponsoring committee members, former and current cadets and parents. It would be remiss if I did not also mention, members of the Air Force Association 434 (Peninsula Wing), and the Royal Niagara Military Institute.

Thank you all for your donations and best wishes.

Air Cadet League of Canada OPC,

Royal Niagara Military Inst. c/o 25 Timber Lane St Catharines L2N 7R7

434 Wing Air Force Association c/o Branch 4 Royal Canadian Legion

383 Morningstar Ave Welland ON.

Niagara area Squadrons

Ontario Cadet Glider Flying Sites.



December

Dan Carr

January

Janette Lee

Deborah Wilkes-Whitehall

Brian Heikkela

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