



## *Royal Canadian Air Force Association RCAF 441 (Huron) Wing Inc. July - August 2022 Newsletter*

Vol 6 Edition 4



### 1. RCAF Association Mission Statement:

The Association is a national not-for-profit aerospace and community- service organization composed of aviation-minded citizens established to remind Canadians of their country's rich aeronautical tradition and history, to support Canada's Air Force, and to support and encourage the civil aviation component within the country.

### 2. Chairman's Message:

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate 441 Wing member Ferguson (Ferg) Mobbs on being appointed as the Vice-Chair of the RCAFA Ontario Group's Board of Directors. His wealth of experience and leadership will be a good addition to it.

As we enter the summer, during which the Wing will not be meeting, I would like to thank our members who have kept the Wing active throughout the two years of the pandemic. We have been one of the most active Wings by continuing to carry out the mandate of the RCAFA by not only supporting aviation related activities and the Air Cadets, but by supporting others in need. Well done and thank you. Per Ardua Ad Astra.

### 3. The Celebration of Life for Robert George "Bob" Coxon – New Date:



RCAFA 441 (Huron) Wing is honoured to host a Celebration of Life for Bob Coxon on Sat, August 27, 2022 from 1-3 pm. It will be held at the Stayner Arena and Community Centre, 269 Regina Street, Stayner. During his 37 years as a member of our Wing, Bob provided outstanding leadership as its President and as a Director. When required, Bob took on many other roles and duties, including being its acting President for a number of years, when required, and was a key organizer of the 2017 RCAFA Ontario Group AGM in Orillia. Everyone is welcome to attend to honour Bob.

### 4. Honours and Awards:

The Wing's Charter and Awards (C&A) Dinner took place on Friday, 27 May at the Royal Canadian Legion Br #147 Barrie. Numerous awards were handed out by our H&A Chair Andrew Galton. A few of our members were unable to attend that evening. As such, two of our members received their long membership pins at the 14 June meeting. Pictured below are Les Ball (30-Year Pin) and Jim Sproul (10-Year Pin). Congratulations to both of these gentlemen.



Les Ball receiving his 30-Year Membership Pin from Wing Chair Bill on 14 June.



Wing Chair Bill presenting Jim Sproul with his 10-year membership pin.

At the C&A Dinner, 441 Wing's prestigious "Member of the Year" award was presented to Murray Conley by our Regional Director. It was recently learned that Murray has now been selected as the Ontario Group's "Member of the Year". The Ontario Group award will be presented to Murray at the Wing meeting on 13 September 2022 at the Barrie Legion by the RCAFA Ontario Group Chair Walter Peckham and the Ontario Group Vice Chair Ferguson Mobbs. Well done Murray for all that you have done and continue to do for our Wing.



Murray Conley leading the Wing's Colour Guard – October 2021

##### 5. Canadian Flags Donated to Ad Astral Place:

The Wing would like to thank MP Doug Shipley and his staff for donating two Canadian flags to Ad Astra place for it to proudly fly on its flag staff.

6. Wing Fund Raisers:

The winners of the draws for the “**\$100-a-Month Draw**” for 2022 were:

January – Michael O’Shea #242;      April – Peter Shaver #141;  
 February – Mark Tobin #237;      May – Robert Rice #109; and  
 March – Michael O’Shea #265;      June – Tobin-Green, #232.

7. Upcoming Wing Activities:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Time</u>
12 July	“\$100-a-Month Draw” for July	N/A
09 Aug	“\$100-a-Month Draw” for August	N/A
13 Aug	Edenvale – Open House	All day
20 Aug	The 2022 Warriors' Day Parade at the Canadian National Exhibition in commemoration of its 100th Anniversary	1030 hrs
27 Aug	Celebration of Life for Bob Coxon – Stayner Community Centre, 269 Regina Street, Stayner	1 – 3 p.m.
12 Sept	Battle of Britain Flag Raising – Barrie City Hall	1000 hrs
13 Sept	Wing Directors’ Hybrid Mtg – In person at the Legion	1800 hrs
13 Sept	Wing Members Hybrid Meeting and in person – Swearing of new Wing Board of Directors members	1900 hrs
11 Oct	Wing Directors’ Hybrid Mtg – In person at the Legion	1800 hrs
11 Oct	Wing Members Hybrid Meeting and in person – Swearing of new Wing Board of Directors members	1900 hrs
13 Oct	Ceremony Honouring AC2 Stanley Peacock at St. James’ Anglican Cemetery, Orillia	1100 hrs

8. 441 (Huron) Wing represented at Borden Air Show

Members of 441 (Huron) Wing RCAFA were on hand to "show the flag" for the RCAF Association during the Canadian Armed Forces Day and Air Show at CFB Borden on the weekend of 18–19 June. A table was set up inside Stedman Building, the legendary aircraft hangar initially built as a home for avionics training on the Avro Arrow. The Wing's table was set among several other RCAF and aviation displays and a few current RCAF aircraft. Located next to a CF-18, around which dozens of children and parents lined-up to get a chance to sit in the cockpit, our table saw a continuous flow of visitors throughout the weekend. Thank you to Randy Rice, Andy Galton, and Peter Levedag for doing their shifts at the table, and to Andrea Sloan for filling in when I had to absent myself. Thanks also to Wally Capsticks and Raywin Raaflaub, who get an "Honourable Mention" for their efforts to make it to the table, but were somehow redirected along their way.

In addition to offering RCAFA promotional literature and aircraft posters (courtesy of 16 Wing Air Reserve Flight), our volunteers also sold RCAF Anniversary pins, both the current pin featuring the CF-18, and some from previous years. Given our proximity to the CF-18, the current RCAF 98<sup>th</sup> Anniversary pin quickly sold out. The runner-up was the RCAF 94<sup>th</sup> Anniversary pin featuring the Avro Arrow, which also sold out quickly. One



can wonder how many buyers of the Arrow pin realized that they were standing inside a hangar that was built specifically for the Arrow program.

All in all, we sold 175 pins over the two days, for a value of \$875. We are now out of the years 2013 (DH-82 Tiger Moth), 2018 (CF-105 Avro Arrow), and 2022 (CF-18 Hornet). Although the current pin is sold out, a small selection of some of the previous years' is still available. We have some left for the years 2016 (Expeditor), 2017 (Curtiss JN-4), 2019 (Sea King), 2020 (Boeing 707), and 2021 (Catalina/Canso). Contact Norm Marion, (705) 686-3941, [norm.marion@amtelecom.net](mailto:norm.marion@amtelecom.net)



9. TIME CAPSULE: "Robert "Buck" McNair, DSO, DFC & Two Bars:  
By Randolph Rice

Most Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) veterans are familiar with the names Bishop, Barker, Mynarski, and Hornell, all of whom were awarded the Victoria Cross and brought glory to the RCAF at war. Very little is written or known of those Air force veterans who survived the war with notable accomplishments. Many of these veterans went on to peace time careers in the RCAF during the Cold War. One of these airmen was Robert Wendell "Buck" McNair. A highly decorated RCAF pilot and an ace.

The post war RCAF was a fraction of its wartime establishment and experience was needed to carry the RCAF through the many challenges the Cold War

presented. This was not easy for the RCAF as it struggled to define its role in the nuclear age.



There were three main areas that the air force would focus on. The mapping of Canada, defence of Canada, and commitments to NATO. To address these areas the RCAF had to increase in size, and as a result of that growth, major recruiting took place in the early fifties. The Pine tree radar stations were established, RCAF squadrons were formed and dedicated to mapping of Canada, and four RCAF fighter wings were operational in Europe. Enter Robert Wendell "Buck" McNair, DSO, DFC and two Bars.

"Buck" McNair was born 15 May 1919, Springfield NS. However, his family moved to North Battleford Saskatchewan during the great depression where he graduated from high school and for a while worked in the provincial forestry department. With the

outbreak of the Second World War, Buck enlisted in the RCAF in June 1940 and graduated as a pilot 24 March 1941, and was posted to RAF 411 Sqn, Digby England. His first encounter with the enemy came on 27 September 1941 while escorting bombers. On 13 October 1941, Buck downed his first ME 109 and damaged two others. In the process he was shot down and parachuted into the English Channel where he was picked up by an RAF rescue boat.

On 2 March 1942, McNair piloted one of seventeen Spitfires launched from British aircraft carrier HMS Beagle to re-enforce Malta. By 22 April, Buck was an ace with five kills. While stationed on Malta, Buck served for a short time alongside fellow Canadians Bob Middlemiss and Buzz Beurling, a fellow ace. Conditions on Malta were hazardous to both men and machines. Daily enemy bombing and strafing added to pilot and ground crew stress. Equipment and parts were in short supply and resupply to the island by ships was constantly menaced by U-Boats. Many damaged aircraft were cannibalized to salvage parts. It was not uncommon for personnel to lose 30 to 40 pounds while suffering from poor diet and bouts of dysentery.

The air war over Malta and the surrounding area was up close and personal with many losses on both sides while struggling for control of the Mediterranean. Buck encountered many close calls and suffered the loss of friends. The impact and nature of their violent death would scar him physically and mentally the rest of his life.

On departure from Malta, Buck rejoined No. 411 Sqn and participated in the air battle over Dieppe 19 August 1942. It was the largest air battle over Europe to date and casualties amongst the allied pilots were high.

So disturbing were the losses, the head of Fighter Command visited the RAF and RCAF units to find out what happened. According to Buck they had been outnumbered more than 3 to 1 by the Luftwaffe - plain and simple as only Buck would respond. After Dieppe, Buck was sent back to Canada on a coast-to-coast Canadian War Bonds drive tour and a long overdue rest with a stop over to his home town of North Battleford where he was given a hero's welcome.

Always anxious to get back to what he knew best and avoid any non-combat duty, Buck returned to air combat and briefly led No. 416 RCAF Sqn before being given command of No. 421 Sqn RCAF. As a Squadron Leader, his expectations were high and he did not suffer fools lightly. All Squadron promotions were approved by him, and he often clashed with higher headquarters over their recommendations. At this point in the war, Buck's Squadron was involved in patrolling, escorting bombers, strafing targets and attempting to draw out German fighters. On 10 July 1943, his Spitfire had engine trouble during a mission and with flames in his cockpit Buck once again exited his aircraft and parachuted into the English Channel where he was rescued. This time however, Buck suffered eye injuries and he was badly burned about his face. With his eyesight damaged, specifically his left eye, Buck had to get closer to the enemy to engage them. This became a handicap and put himself and fellow pilots at risk. He kept his handicap to himself leading others to believe that he was being exceedingly reckless. Nonetheless, in 1943 he brought down four Fw190s and an equal number of Bf 109s, bringing his final total to 16 or 16.5 confirmed kills.

In 1944 McNair was promoted to Wing Commander of 126 Wing at RAF Biggin Hill which meant he no longer flew combat missions at 25 years of age. After six months he was reassigned from operational to administrative duties.

Following the war, Buck stayed in the RCAF, and filled a number of postings. These included RCAF HQ, P Staff 1945-46, AFHQ DOR/ORF, Ottawa 1946-1950, OC Lachine, Training Command 1950-51, RCAF Air Attaché in Tokyo during the Korean War where he was recommended for a Bronze Star by the USA (declined by the RCAF), 1 ADCC, Lac St. Denis 1953-57, OC No. 4(F) Wing, Germany 1957-1961 (which put him in his element), Deputy Commander of NORAD's Duluth sector from 1964-68, and finally the Canadian High Commission, London.

Throughout his service, Buck amassed a total flying time of 4,000 hours flying various aircraft such as North Stars, C47, T33, F86 Sabre, CF 100.

And if you think Buck's courage was solely in the air, you would be mistaken. On 30 December 1953 while flying in a North Star as a crew member in one of the crew rest positions, the North Star crash landed at Vancouver, B.C. The aircraft ended its crash-landing run in an inverted position, and as a result, all

crew and passengers found themselves suspended in mid-air in an upside-down position. In the ensuing confusion, Buck took charge and assisted all passengers in evacuating the aircraft as quickly as possible, Buck knew the ever-present threat of fire. Still not content, Wing Commander McNair remained in the aircraft and personally searched through all the debris to ensure no one was left behind. Only then did he abandon the aircraft. Keep in mind at this point Buck was soaked in fuel from an overturned Herman Nelson heater, fortunately for Buck it did not ignite. Despite knowing from his burns in the war the risk he was taking, Buck's action should not be allowed to detract in any way from the magnitude of his deeds in about the crash site. For his action he was awarded the Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct on 7 August 1954.

While in London, Buck had been suffering with back trouble for some time caused by his time in combat, bale-outs into the channel and the crash of the North Star in 1953. As far back as 1956 he had been treated for spinal damage, having been diagnosed with Mariestumpell, a calcifying of the spinal column. At the time treatment consisted of painful radiation and cobalt in 1956. This in time produced a blood disorder. With this shattering news came the real blow, it was terminal, and he could expect to survive a further two and a half to three years.

Robert Wendell "Buck" McNair beat the odds for some time, however illness forced him into hospital on 3 January 1971, he died on 15 January 1971 of leukemia, age 51 in London, England and was buried at Brookwood Cemetery with full military honours. On 8 June 1990, Buck was inducted into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame.

Lest We Forget.

#### 10. 441 (Huron) Wing – Installation of the New Board of Directors:

In 2021, due to the pandemic, the Wing members agreed that the Board of Directors could stay on for a second year since we were not holding 'in person' meetings. This May, 11 nominations were submitted to the Wing Returning Officer. Jane Coxon for a new Board of Directors. Since the number of nominations aligned with the number of Board positions, there was no requirement to hold a vote to elect them. The new Board was installed at the June 2022 meeting by Les Ball, a former Past Chair of RCAFA Ontario Group.





11. 82<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Britain:

The Battle of Britain Flag Raising is planned to take place at Barrie City Hall on Monday, 12 Sept, 2022 at 1000 hrs. We are also planning to commemorate the 82<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Britain with a ceremony in Barrie's Military Heritage Park on Sunday, 18 Sept 2022. The ceremony is being organized by Murray Conley and will feature the Wing Colour Guard consisting of Murray, Randy Rice, Les Ball, Andrew Galton, and Wally Capsticks along with participation by military personnel from 16 Wing, the RCL #147 Barrie, and local Cadet organizations.

12. Contact Information:

Wing Mailing Address: 401-200 Collier St, Barrie, ON, L4M 1H7

Wing E-Mail Address: [441wing.rcafa@airforce.ca](mailto:441wing.rcafa@airforce.ca)

Telephone: 705-481-1453 (messages only)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/441Wing/>

Website: <https://www.rcaf441wing.com/>

13. 441 Wing Board of Directors (BoD)/ Executive for FY 2022-2023/4:

The RCAFA has encouraged its Wings to align its By-Laws with the Ontario Not-For-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA). With that in mind, and to ensure continuity for the running of the Wing, the Directors met after there meeting to confirm who would take which portfolio and for how long (1 or 2 years as per the Wing By-Laws). The new slate and their term of office is specified below.

POSITION-TIME	NAME	PORTFOLIO(S)
Chairman-2023	Bill Sergeant	Newsletter, H&A Committee Member
Vice Chair-2024	Wally Capsticks	Special Events, H&A Committee Member
Treasurer-2024	Andrea Sloan	Membership Chair / 16 Wing Liaison O
Secretary-2024	Andrew Galton	Honours and Awards Committee Chair
Vice Treas-2023	Michael O'Shea	Fund Raising/Special Projects
Director-2023	Gerry Peppler	RCAFA Ad Astral Project Board Chair
Director-2023	Art Cameron	RCAFA Ad Astral Project BoD Member
Director-2024	Murray Conley	Director of Ceremonies
Director-2024	Joep Dening	Wing Web Master
Director-2023	Norm Marion	Public Relations / FaceBook
Director-2024	Randy Rice	Veterans Groups Liaison
Wing Padre	Rev Doug Crocker	Wing Padre