

Air Force Legend Recognized by 16 Wing - May 18, 2011

By Master Warrant Officer Normand Marion - 16 Wing, CFB Borden
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On Thursday May 5th, a large crowd of serving and retired military personnel gathered inside the Air Annex of the Base Borden Military Museum (Hangar 11), to take part in a special ceremony celebrating the Air Force career and lifetime achievements of Honorary Colonel Robert (Bob) Middlemiss, a decorated Second World War fighter pilot. Among those present to honour the retired RCAF Wing Commander were Brigadier-General David Millar, Colonel Louis Meloche, and the host, Lieutenant-Colonel Terry Wood, 16 Wing Commander.

The main reason behind the ceremony was the unveiling of a museum display honouring HCol Middlemiss. An initiative of the students of the Aerospace Engineering Officers Basic Course at the Canadian Forces School of Aerospace Technology and Engineering, the display features various items donated by HCol Middlemiss including one of his RCAF uniforms, photographs, badges and insignias, as well as replica medals and a large model of the Spitfire he flew during the war.

"Ladies & gentlemen, it is not often that you can say you have been in the presence of a living legend, and yet all of us can make that claim tonight," said LCol Wood to the crowd assembled at the museum. The host described the series of events that took a young, inexperienced Middlemiss from flight training in England to the front lines of an aerial battle over the island of Malta in 1942. "He flew with George "Buzz" Beurling... another famous Canadian hero of the Second World War... [and] participated in the Siege of Malta where he destroyed three aircraft and damaged others" - he was later credited with a fourth. HCol Middlemiss was shot down during the battle for Malta and returned to England to recover from his injuries. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his high "standard of leadership as a section leader and flight commander", and the fact that he had "invariably shown outstanding courage."

HCol Middlemiss soon went back to operational flying and after the war pursued a career in the RCAF, becoming the first exchange officer at the RAF Central Fighter Establishment in England. He flew a variety of early fighter jets including the Vampire, Meteor, and Sabre. As part of the Sabre replacement programme in the late 50s he was selected to carry out evaluation flights on the F-104 Starfighter and the Grumman Super Tiger. He commanded operational squadrons overseas including 421 Squadron (Sabres) in France and 427 Squadron, Canada's first CF-104 squadron stationed at Zweibrucken in Germany. He retired from the RCAF in 1969, but to this day continues to be active within the Air Force community, particularly in his role as honorary colonel of 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron in Petawawa.

LCol Wood concluded his address by thanking all the people who contributed to the development of the museum display and the unveiling ceremony. "I'd especially like to thank the AERE [Aerospace Engineering] students who coordinated the effort in making this event possible. I think it is entirely fitting that these young officers, the future of air power generation, pay homage in this manner to one that has blazed the path for them."

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Honorary Colonel Bob Middlemiss unveils the display dedicated to his Air Force career.



HCol Middlemiss (left) and Lieutenant-Colonel Terry Wood in front of the new "Middlemiss display" at the Air Annex of the Base Borden Military Museum.



HCol Middlemiss, DFC, CD, addresses the crowd that came to honour him.

All photos - credit: Sgt Kev Parle