

# Wing Mate

Newsletter 408-437 Wing

Royal Canadian Air Force Association of Canada



Boeing P-26 Peashooter

March  2024

## AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION of CANADA MISSION STATEMENT

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

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818 Squadron.....	Jackie Johnston
110 Squadron.....	Cécile Thompson



### Sick and Visiting

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

Barbara can be reached at 416-223-7840.



## March

19th **John Bamlett**

24th **Hassina Heather**

27th **Gordon Peckett**

**General Meetings**  
Sheppard Ave. Legion Building

**Monday 11 March**  
**Speaker: Terry Sleightholm**

# President's Report



Dear Members,

Our next General Meeting is on Monday 11 March. Please make the effort to attend.

Our guest speaker will be Terry Sleightholm.

You may recall that I've been forwarding messages to you from the Regional Executive regarding the Cairn Project for the Centennial Year for the Air Force. Briefly there will be Cairn raised for the Ontario Wings only. It will have all the Wing numbers current and past. This will be a chance to have our units carved in stone. This Wing has donated \$500 in your name; they are still happy to receive individual donations. I've donated and have received a tax receipt. The Cairn will be placed in the Air Park in Trenton on September 28th right after the Ad Astra ceremony.

*If you had enemies, good. At least you stood for something in your life.* Winston Churchill

*Nick Czernkovich*



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# Trenton

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, will officially mark 100 years for the Royal Canadian Air Force. The R.C.A.F, the Town of Trenton (former), the City of Quinte West, and the entire Bay of Quinte region, have been partners for decades.

In 1929, 960 acres of land was purchased by the federal government from the Town of Trenton. During World War 2, Trenton had the largest site of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

The Challenger Fleet of planes for the Prime Minister, Governor General, and the federal government, the CC-130 Hercules, CC-150 Polaris, and CC-177 Globe-master fleets are housed in Trenton. The Joint Rescue Coordination Centre is also stationed in Trenton, covering one million square-kilometres in central Canada.

From delivering supplies to the high Arctic, to airlifting troops, equipment, and humanitarian loads worldwide, 8 Wing/CFB Trenton is the hub of Royal Canadian Air Force air mobility operations in Canada.

In 1959, the R.C.A.F Golden Hawks Aerobatics Team, flying an F-86 Sabre Aircraft, hit the sky. Trenton housed this team in 1960. Now there is a "Golden Hawk" housed outside of the Duncan McDonald Memorial Community Gardens in Trenton.



Trenton Golden Hawks Hockey

818 Toronto Falcon Squadron  
Royal Canadian Air Cadets



110 Black Hawk Squadron  
Royal Canadian Air Cadets



With Jackie Johnston



With Cécile Thompson



**F**ifty years ago, when a new Air Cadet Squadron was established in Scarborough, Sean Pollock was instrumental in getting 444 Wing, the only Scarborough Air Force Association Wing, to sponsor 110 Black Hawk Squadron. A portable was acquired from the Board of Education to be used as headquarters on the grounds of Stephen Leacock Collegiate Institute where it still stands today.

The gym and some classrooms are rented annually to teach the program to our young recruits from 12 to 19 years of age.

444 Wing has supplied members to act on the Squadron Sponsoring Committee (SSC)

Germaine Spence and John Thompson served as Treasurers for many years and Cecile Thompson joined the Committee in 2004.

When the Wing became low on funds, the Squadron, who had by then become self-sustaining through very successful Tag Day weekends twice a year, generously agreed to function without any monetary contribution from its sponsor as long as the Wing continued to staff the SSC.

In 2019, 444 amalgamated with 408/437 Wing. The Presidents ( Cecile Thompson and Nick Czernkovich) agreed on the adoption of 110 along with the Squadron (818) 408/437 Wing already sponsored.

The 444 Wing pennant was taken on parade for the last time in June 2019.

It has since been donated to the Trenton Air Force Museum

## Boeing P-26 "Peashooter"

The Boeing P-26 was the first American production all-metal fighter aircraft and the first pursuit monoplane to enter squadron service with the United States Army Air Corps. Designed and built by Boeing, the prototype first flew in 1932, and was still in use with the U.S. Army Air Corps as late as 1941 in the Philippines. There are two surviving Peashooters, with three reproductions on display.

The production of the Boeing Model 248 began in September 1931, with the US Army Air Corps supplying the engines and the instruments. The open cockpit, fixed landing gear, externally braced wing design was the last such design procured by the USAAC as a fighter. The Model 248 had a high landing speed, which caused a number of accidents. To remedy this, flaps were fitted to reduce the landing speed. The Army Air Corps ordered three prototypes, designated *XP-936*, which first flew on 20 March 1932.

The Boeing *XP-936*'s headrest offered little protection should it flip onto its back, risking injuring the pilot. As a result, production Model 266s (*P-26As*) had a taller headrest installed to provide protection.

Two fighters were completed as *P-26Bs* with fuel-injected Pratt & Whitney R-1340-33 engines, followed by twenty-three *P-26Cs*, with carbureted R-1340-27s and modified fuel systems. Both the Spanish Air Force (one aircraft) and the Republic of China Air Force (eleven a/c) ordered examples of the Boeing *Model 281*, an export version comparable to the *P-26C*, in 1936.

The "Peashooter", as it was known by service pilots, was faster than previous American combat aircraft. Nonetheless, rapid progress in aviation led to it quickly becoming obsolete, with wire-braced wings, fixed landing gear and an open cockpit. The cantilever-wing Dewoitine D.500 flew the same year as the *P-26* and two years afterwards the Soviet *I-16* was flying with retractable landing gear. By 1935, just three

years after the *P-26*, the Curtiss *P-36*, Messerschmitt *Bf 109* and Hawker Hurricane were all flying with enclosed cockpits, retractable landing gear and cantilever wings. However, some *P-26s* remained in service until after the United States entered World War II in December 1941.



Deliveries to USAAC pursuit squadrons began in December 1933 with the last production *P-26C* made in 1936. 22 squadrons flew the Peashooter, with peak service being six squadrons, in 1936. *P-26s* were the frontline fighters of the USAAC until 1938, when Seversky *P-35s* and Curtiss *P-36s* began to replace them. A total of twenty *P-26s* were lost in accidents between 1934 and America's entry into World War II on 7 December 1941.

By December 1941, U.S. fighter strength in the Philippines included 28 *P-26s*, 12 of which were operational with the 6th Pursuit Squadron of the Philippine Army Air Corps. Captain Jesús A. Villamor and his squadron of *P-26s* engaged Japanese Mitsubishi *A6M Zeros* above Zablan and Batangas Fields and, despite being outclassed, Villamor and his squadron claimed four kills, one Mitsubishi *G3M* bomber and three *Zeros*, two by Villamor himself. The *P-26s* were burned to prevent their capture by the advancing Japanese forces on 24 December 1941.

The "peashooter" nickname is believed to devolve from the long forward-facing tubular gunsight at the pilot's position, reminiscent of the child's toy.

The P-26 was a plane both ahead of its time and quickly made obsolete. It was one of the first all-metal monoplanes adopted into military service in 1933 (in comparison, the He 51 and Ki-10 entered service in 1935), making it one of the fastest fighters in the world at the time, but it suffered from poor flight performance and dangerous landing characteristics. As newer fighters entered service around the world, the P-26's advantages diminished and by the time of World War Two, the P-26 was hopelessly obsolete.



Philippine Army Air Corp P-26s engage a Mitsubishi G3M bomber.



(Left) Boeing P-26A of 73rd Attack Squadron



(Right) Boeing P-26A of 95th Attack Squadron



(Left) Boeing P-26A of 34th Attack Squadron



(Right) Boeing P-26A of 94th Pursuit Squadron



(Above) Boeing P-26C of the 17th Pursuit Squadron



73rd Attack Squadron



95th Attack Squadron



34th Attack Squadron



3rd Pursuit Squadron



94th Pursuit Squadron



27th Pursuit Squadron



27th Pursuit Squadron (Alternative Emblem Style)



17th Pursuit Squadron





## Lancaster "J" Johnny 428 Squadron Rear Gunner/Bomb Aimer Bill Cole

**A** memorable and musing might was July 25/26, 1944. The target . . . Stuttgart (ball bearings). Tenth Op.

We arrived on the target without incident but that was when all hell broke loose. The flak was the heaviest we had seen so far, even from the previous night on the same target.

Both nights had 10/10 clouds. It appeared that all guns were focused to form a solid curtain across the target area and we had to fly through it no matter what..

It was a really bumpy ride over the target and we were glad to get those bomb doors closed and to get the hell out of there! On leaving the target, the Navigator gave the Skipper the first leg home and we settled down for the return trip.

After flying the first course for a period, the Nav. questioned the course that the Skipper was flying.. Something was up. The Nav. Thought there was something amiss with their compasses and asked to have the master compass checked. The Wireless Air Gunner went back to check and announced that the rear end of the aircraft was a mess, including the master compass and some bulkheads which had been re-designed just forward of my rear turret. On hearing this, the Nav. Maintained the course we were flying and proceeded to shoot the stars to get our location. Thank God we were in clear skies! It turned out that we were heading for the Atlantic across France instead of the Channel, so we turned right and headed north with the Nav. Checking the stars periodically.

On this trip I had, before leaving dispersal, picked up a 10 lb. practice bomb and smuggled it into my rear turret between my feet, with the idea of dropping it over the target. With all the excitement it slipped my mind, until we were halfway to the Channel. At that time I figured it was time to get rid of it. I got up enough nerve to mention it to the bomb aimer, asking him if he would give me a target. Of course the Skip

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per on hearing this, proceeded to tear a strip off his indispensable rear gunner. (I'm sure that if I could have been jettisoned, he would have pushed the button!) The Skipper asked the bomb aimer to provide the target for me and that I had better hit the damn thing. So, a frustrated rear gunner, wishing to become the first "rear bomb aimer", sits



and waits for the front guy to come up with a suitable target, which he does, as the sun's rays streak across the land of the hero de Gaulle. The target sighted, I'm told to get ready. Reaching out into space, with the pin pulled, white smoke passes under, but no target! Oh, there it is . . . A shed, not an outhouse . . . Damn it! I'm about a quarter mile short.

The front guy is lousy and I told him so. The Skipper says, Okay, we've had our fun, let's settle down and get home and, by the way, you can forget about being a "rear bomb aimer!"

We finally got home, an hour late on fuel fumes, which made the C/O happy . . .no letters to write. But the ground crew were peeved with what we had done to their beautiful baby.



Submitted by Bill's wife, Margaret Cole.



April 2024 marks 100 years of service for the Royal Canadian Air Force as a distinct military element. The Centennial milestone places the RCAF in a unique position to honour its distinct heritage; recognize its tremendous people today; and generate excitement for its bright future. This is an opportunity to fuel internal and external support in the organization that instills pride in Your Air Force, while creating an enduring legacy that propels the institution forward into its next century of service. Canada's Air Force will be showcased in a past, present and future context, with a focus on highlighting contributions to national safety and security, international peace and global stability.



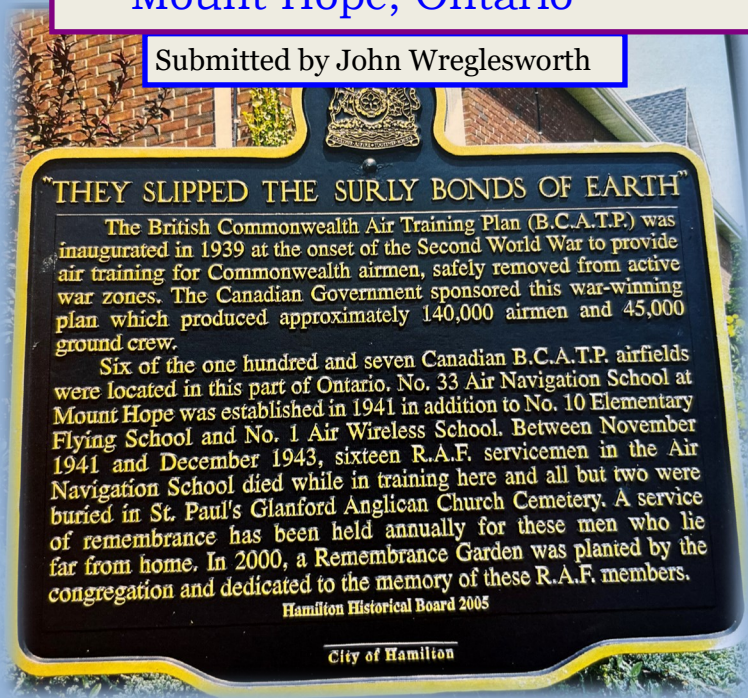
The RCAF 2024 Team are curating a year-long program that includes International, National and Regional events, such as the RCAF Run, RCAF Gala, Legends of the Sky, and allied air demonstration team participation in Air Shows across Canada, as well as activities to Inspire future generations of Canadians through STEM initiatives, such as the RCAF Gaming Tournament.

The RCAF Centennial is an opportunity to showcase Air Force personnel and their accomplishments, demonstrate air and space power, enhance the reputation of the RCAF, and proudly honour its distinguished history and heritage.



## Mount Hope, Ontario

Submitted by John Wreglesworth



# REMEMBER THEM



# TODAY AND EVERY DAY



# 1930s Biplanes



1. Curtiss BF2 Goshawk
2. Beechcraft Model 17
3. Polikarpov I-16
4. Hawker Hart
5. Fairey Swordfish
6. Grumman F3F
7. Vickers Vildebeest
8. Armstrong Whitworth Siskin
9. Gloster Gladiator
10. Polikarpov PO-2