

Thomas Arthur Stiff, RCAF

Art Stiff was born in Toronto in May 1922, and joined the RCAF in 1942. A member of the Toronto ski team prior to the war, active in both the slalom and jumping disciplines, he had a love of speed and no fear of heights, and went on to become a pilot after enlisting in Toronto.

After doing his basic training at the Exhibition Grounds in Toronto, Art was posted to Number 1 Service Flying Training School at RCAF Station Borden where he received his Wings. After completing his training on Harvards under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP), he was posted to Great Britain. "I couldn't believe the power of the Hurricane. From the 400 horsepower of a Harvard to 1,100-plus horsepower in a Hurricane, well...they were red hot. Powerful, but they were the most relaxing airplane I ever flew."

Towards the end of the Second World War, a group of 50 German Messerschmitt pilots escaped from a POW holding camp in Wales. When their absence was discovered, the authorities did not know which direction the POWs had taken from the camp. Several aircraft were sent up to reconnoiter the areas surrounding the camp. The POWs had stolen a refuelling tug in the Bristol Channel and were heading for a German U-Boat (submarine), which would take them back to Germany. The pilot who saw them was low on fuel so he radioed the coordinates of their location. Art was tasked with relieving him and took over the task of reporting the position of the tug with German POWs as he flew circuits above it and reported its position. He did this until the Royal Navy arrived to apprehend the POW pilots. Through his actions, Art contributed to potentially saving the lives of many Allied Airmen and civilians because the Messerschmitt pilots could not get back to Germany and fly further missions against our troops.

Art was discharged from the RCAF in 1946, and now lives in Barrie, Ont.

VETERAN PROFILE

An ongoing tribute to honour Canada's war veterans



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Flying Officer Thomas Arthur Stiff
Royal Canadian Air Force
10 Group
Fairwood Common South Wales

Flying Officer Thomas Arthur Stiff, 99 years young! We thank you for your service dad. We are so proud of you.

