

# 434 Niagara BULLETIN



Vol. 25 no 2 Nov-Dec, 2022

## General Meetings

3rd Saturday of each month at

Welland Optimist Club, 38 Patterson Ave., Welland, ON L3B 2C4

until further notice. Due to present Covid restrictions future meeting dates will be  
advised by email and telephone.

***We proudly promote the glorious tradition of the RCAF***  
**434 Wing Board of Directors**  
**2020-2021**

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Port Colborne	Branch 56	Hall	905-834-9512
Fort Erie	Branch 71	Hall	905-871-8682
Fonthill	Branch 613	Hall	905-892-6293

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**Royal Canadian Air Force Association of Canada**

# Chairman's Report November 2022

Unfortunately our General meeting scheduled for November 19<sup>th</sup> had to be cancelled due to the bad weather. We were hoping to announce that our Christmas luncheon tickets were available but as it turned out that was not to be, however, Secretary George is planning to send out a memo regarding this as we would need to have numbers to give to the Legion so if you are interested in attending please respond to George's reminder. Time is running out so if you are planning to attend please respond ASAP. Without your attendance we will have to cancel for this year.

Our pocket planner fundraiser is doing very well and we only have 9 left to sell please consider this item as we would like to sell out they make a great stocking stuffer for Christmas, remember you can have a name on the front and an aircraft of your choice (provided it is available) on the back.

A decision at the Board meeting of November 5<sup>th</sup> saw us decided to make a donation to each of Branch 56 and Branch 613 RCL. This decision has still to be brought before the general membership for approval but with the cancellation of our general meeting November 19<sup>th</sup> we will have to deal with it at our next scheduled meeting.

As noted in the minutes of the Board meeting November 5<sup>th</sup> the RCAFA decided at the recent AGM held in Hamilton to give Life Membership to all members in good standing 90 years of age and over free of charge, we need to look at who in our Wing fits this category and submit those names to Ottawa, once names have been submitted they will do whatever is required from there.

In reviewing member Birthday months I have found that many are missing. If you haven't already done so, can you please email me with just the Month, no year or day this way we can ensure that none is left out?

Given that we all have been dealing with COVID for some time now, it has been difficult to say the least to acquire speakers for our general meetings. So I am appealing to the membership, if you know of someone that would be willing to give us a presentation for those occasions or if you yourself have some that might be of interest to the membership and would be willing to share it please let someone on the Board know. In the absence of a speaker we have been showing a film, this becomes a difficult decision because we all have different interests so knowing what to show comes down to one person deciding for all, please give this some consideration.

It has been relatively quiet with not very much happening so I am sure you will find this report to be rather short

Now that we have had a taste of winter, please stay safe. & I hope to see you all December 10<sup>th</sup> Christmas luncheon.

**I wish you all a Happy Holiday Season**

**Bill Heron (Chairman)**

*Per Ardua Ad Astra*



## Remembrance Day 2022

Remembrance Day ceremonies were held throughout the Niagara Peninsula. Due to inclement weather, the ceremony in Port Colborne was held indoors at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 56. 434 Niagara Wing members attending were Rod Lee, Jeanette Lee, Julie Sheppard and Jim Hutchinson.

### Port Colborne



Ceremony attendees at Port Colborne



Directors Rod Lee and Jeanette Lee with 434 Niagara Wing wreath



434 Niagara Wing wreath laid by Rod Lee

### Wainfleet



Cenotaph, Wainfleet Ontario



Representing 434 Niagara Wing at Wainfleet Ceremony, 434 members Mike Mascitelli and Debbie Wilkes-Whitehall



Todd and Adriana Keefer. Todd is an Afgan Vet who served in the US Air Force as a firefighter.



## Remembrance Day 2022



Adriana Keefer  
laying UN/NATO  
wreath at Wainfleet  
Cenotaph



Mike Mascitelli and  
son Michael at  
ceremony

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## Turn To Busan Memorial Ceremony 2022

The ceremony is held on November 11th in Busan, South Korea each year to pay tribute to the U.N. Veterans of the Korean War. The ceremony was born out of a suggestion from Vincent Courtenay, a Canadian Veteran of the Korean War. The Ceremony has been held every year since 2007 at the U.N. Memorial Cemetery in Busan, where 376 Canadians are buried. On June 22, 2022, Korean War Veteran Soldat John Joseph Jean Robert Cormier was interred in the Canadian section with a full military ceremony. Originally from Moncton, NB and more recently residing in the Veteran's Wing of Sunnybrook Hospital, it was his wish to be laid to rest at the UN Cemetery, making 377 Canadians at rest.



UN Memorial Cemetery, Busan

Canadian section of UN Memorial Cemetery, Busan. The statute is an unarmed Canadian soldier holding a young Korean girl and guiding a Korean boy.





## Turn To Busan Memorial Ceremony 2022 continued



Dignitaries attending Busan Ceremony. South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo in center, U.N. Command Deputy Commander Lt. Gen Andrew Harrison, second from left.



Prime Minister Han Duck-soo pays tribute to the U.N. Veterans of the Korean War at the U.N. Memorial Cemetery.



Air Show for the ceremony by the Black Eagles, the Korean Air Force's famous aerobatic team.



U.N Command Deputy Commander Lt. General Andrew Harrison delivers eulogy at the Memorial Cemetery.



Attendees at this Year's ceremony



Attendees at Memorial Ceremony

## In The News

### UK Lacks Pilots for F-35 jets– Defense Secretary

The military is struggling to operate its F-35 fighters due to a training crisis, Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said on November 1, 2022. The UK has over two dozen of the warplanes. Speaking to the House of Lords, Wallace admitted that manning all of the F-35s presents “*quite a challenge*.” Explaining the reasons, he noted that flight training has been plagued by delays, with pilots waiting up to eight years before meeting the requirements to operate the sophisticated fighters instead of the target time of two to three years.

*“Our pilot pipeline is not in a place I would want it to be,”* he said.

According to Wallace, another factor is that the F-35s are relatively new.

In total, the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy plan to operate 138 5th-generation F-35B short takeoff/vertical landing aircraft. However, the UK has so far purchased only 27 of the aircraft in the joint US-led program.

The UK announced its intention to buy F-35s as early as in 2006.

In early August, Sky News reported that more than two years ago, the defense secretary instructed Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston, who heads the Royal Air Force, to “*fix chronic problems*” with flight training and treat the issue as “*his only priority*.”

At the time, the outlet noted that the Air Force was concerned by a “*damaging drain*” of qualified pilots who opted for more lucrative jobs in industry over staying and training new recruits.

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### A Fish Tale

There has been a great deal of chatter coming from Toronto regarding Will Sampson who hooked a 43 inch Muskie in Toronto Harbour. For conservationists this was a significant moment and offers hope for the future for the environment. In the dynamic Niagara Peninsula, home of 434 Niagara Wing, Muskie are no stranger to 434 Director Rod Lee. All Muskie shown were returned to the water after having their picture taken.





# Thunderiver Bike Fest

Held on September 30th and October 1st, hosted by Merritville Speedway in Thorold, Ontario, the event featured a wide variety of family activities, games, vendor booths, live bands and raffle draws. The event benefitted the following charities:

Pathstone Mental Health for Children

Niagara Area Children's Assistance Program

Full Circle Rescue

Niagara Distress Centre

Community Living

Operation: Leave the Streets Behind

434 Niagara Wing was able to participate through The Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 56 donating booth space for the sale of our Kit Shop items.

*"The two day event went well with sales . Great thanks to Veterans of Canada for donating their tent space to us and branch 56 ." Rod Lee, Kit Shop Chairman*



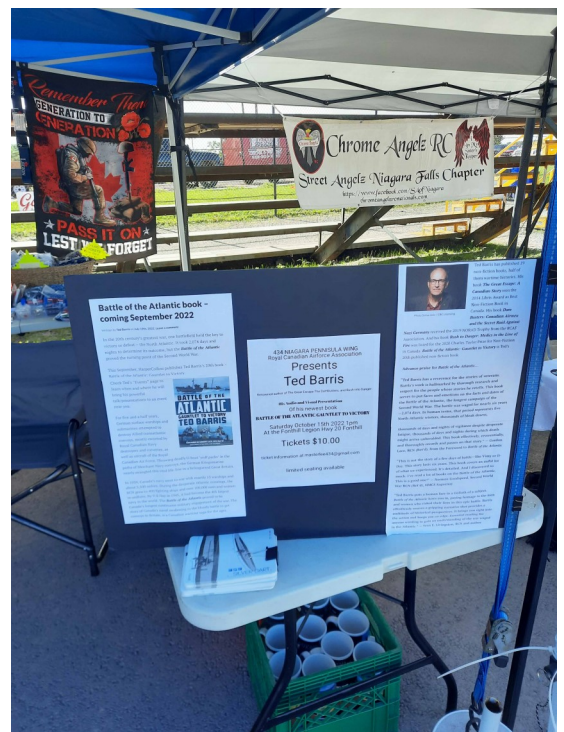
Treasurer Julie Shephard and Kit Shop Chairman Rod Lee staffed the booth



Kit Shop Items for Sale



Tickets for sale for Flag Draw



Tickets for sale for Ted Barris Presentation



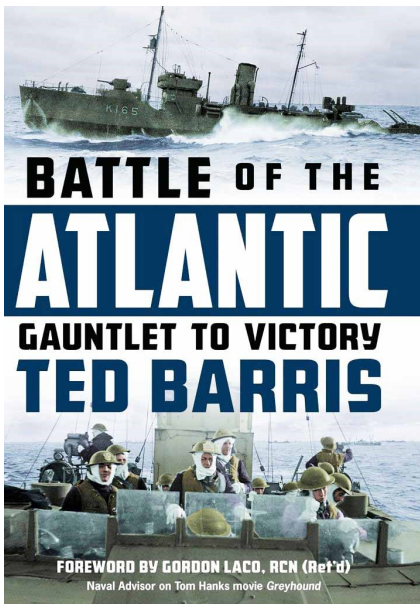
## Thunderriver Bike Fest continued



Booth shared with Branch 56 RCL



### Ted Barris Presentation: Battle of the Atlantic



An enthusiastic crowd gathered on October 15, 2022 at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 613, Fonthill for a presentation sponsored by 434 Niagara Wing with Ted Barris speaking on his new book, *Battle of the Atlantic Gauntlet to Victory*. Having lost the battle for air supremacy, Nazi Germany turned to the seas to cut off supplies to a beleaguered Great Britain. Canada's Merchant Navy carried essential equipment, fuel, goods and personnel to Great Britain. They faced deadly storms in the North Atlantic and wolf packs of German submarines that preyed on the merchant ships causing heavy losses and high mortality rates. To help protect merchant ships, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) supplied air escorts and the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) organized merchant ships into convoys that were accompanied by armed naval escorts. The battle waged on for five and one half years, from September 1939 to May 1945 when Germany surrendered. It was the longest continual battle of WW2. His recent publication chronicles events of the battle.

In his fascinating presentation, Ted Barris told stories of his searches to obtain accurate information for his book. In this sense his book is an archive of the thinking and events of the period along with the important role played by Canadians in the war effort. Listening to Ted Barris always leaves us proud to be Canadians.

## Is Canada's Procurement Procedure for Fighter Jets Fair?

Canada, a country that at one point had the ability to design and build the most advanced fighter jet in the world, now through the Public Services and Procurement Canada Agency, appears set to purchase 88 single engine F-35 fighter jets. The F-35 is expensive to purchase, expensive to operate and at present Canada does not have enough pilots with the specialized training to operate the F-35. Is the procurement procedure fair? Procurement Canada says yes it is and yet many major aircraft manufactures say no, it is not fair.

**Dassault Aviation** (Rafale fighter jet) of France declined to bid on supplying fighter jets in the Canadian competition. Eric Trappier, Chairman and CEO of Dassault Aviation, testifying before the French National Defense and Armed Forces Commission on May 22, 2019 gave the following explanation of why Dassault would not bid in the Canadian competition, referring to Canada being a member of the Five Eyes network (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States).



*"I come to Canada. Let's be clear: it is impossible to sell the Rafale to member countries of the Five Eyes network, not because it is not interoperable – it is just as much as others and has proven it – but because this network has set itself rules that they refuse to communicate to us and which aim to ensure that its members work together. Added to Canada is the question of the North American Aerospace Defense Command, NORAD. So we asked questions before taking a position. Ultimately, Dassault's position was taken by France which, in consultation with the company, estimated that given this constraint, we could not commit."*

*"I had added an additional element: if the Canadians really want to buy a combat plane other than the F-35 or any other American plane, will they abandon the F-35 program? However, it has been confirmed on several occasions that they remain involved in this program. In other words, they paid part of what the Americans asked of them, in return for which they benefited from a few jobs and contracts between Lockheed and Canadian companies. In short, I think Canada will buy an American aircraft – at worst the F-35, at best the F-18, or vice versa. Why then waste time, money and energy, the State also having to be largely mobilized, if the rules of the game are loaded? You know my principle, which applies to Belgium as well as to Canada:"*

**Saab of Sweden** (Gripen-C fighter jet) has voiced opposition to Canada's decision to purchase the F-35. While the decision is not yet final, the Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) agency has moved to negotiate the final terms of delivery with Lockheed,



including price per tail number, delivery schedule and so-called "economic benefits", jargon for domestic jobs that will be created under the programme.



## **Is Canada's Procurement Procedure for Fighter Jets Fair?** continued

Speaking during a committee hearing on air defence procurement in Ottawa's House of Commons on 29 September, 2022, Saab Canada president Simon Carroll argued that those details were meant to be finalised in each competitor's official bid, according to the government's original request for proposal (RFP). "There should be no negotiation on these critical elements," Carroll argues to Members of Parliament.

"These elements of the bidder's response were to be committed to and then evaluated as part of the competitive process," he added.

While some MPs appeared sympathetic, others pushed Saab on whether or not it was fair to claim the Gripen offers equivalent capability to the stealthy F-35. Bloc Quebecois MP Julie Vignola notes that the Committee on Government Operations and Estimates has been told "the F-35 was preferred because it was a fifth-generation aircraft and the Gripen is a fourth-generation aircraft which has limited abilities against the Russian air force". "So I would like to hear from you about the operational capacities. What are the advantages of the Gripen over the F-35?", Vignola asks of Saab's team.

Patrick Palmer, Saab Canada's executive vice-president, responded, arguing the generational distinction was more of a surface level comparison than a substantive difference. "Gripen is designed to be credible, relevant, and state of the art for the life of the programme," Palmer said. He went on to dismiss the fifth-generation label as essentially a branding gimmick. "The notion of fourth-generation is actually more of a marketing term than anything else," Palmer claims. "We've gone away from generations and looked at it as a generation-less fighter," he added. The concept of generations in fighter aircraft development has loosely existed since the 1990s. Although the classifications are not official in any way, fourth-generation aircraft generally include jet-powered platforms with fly-by-wire controls, a head-up display and the ability to perform both air-to-air and air-to-ground missions. Fifth-generation fighters build on those technologies, while adding stealthy and low-observable designs, improved flight performance and an array of highly-advanced sensor systems that can be networked to other friendly aircraft. Saab says the Gripen is designed as a highly-flexible platform that can be quickly and easily upgraded with new sensors, radars and software as needs arise.

For its part, the PSPC says it is committed to meeting the RCAF's requirements for a new fighter, while also generating "high-value jobs in Canada", and creating growth in the country's domestic aerospace and defence sectors.. a PSPC statement notes that the current negotiations with Lockheed are part of the "finalisation phase" laid out in the government's bid solicitation. "During this phase, the top-ranked bidder must successfully demonstrate that a resulting contract would meet all of Canada's requirements and outcomes, including value for money, flexibility, protection against risks, and performance and delivery assurances, as well as high-value economic benefits for Canada's aerospace and defence industry," the PSPC explains.

"This competitive procurement process ensures that we are selecting the right fighter, at the right price, with the right benefits for the Canadian economy," an agency representative adds. The procurement body also notes that the entire decision process has been overseen by an unnamed "independent third-party" to ensure fair treatment of all bids.

**Airbus Defence and Space, in partnership with the British government**, withdrew its Eurofighter Typhoon from the competition in August, 2019 for two reasons.

The first relates to a requirement that bidders show how they plan to ensure their planes can integrate with the top-secret Canada-U.S. intelligence network known as "Two Eyes," which is used to co-ordinate the defence of North America.

Meeting the requirement continues to place "too significant of a cost" on non-U.S. aircraft, said Airbus, which would have been required to show how it planned to integrate the Typhoon into the Two-Eyes system **without knowing the system's full technical details.**



**Eurofighter Typhoon**

The second factor was the government's decision to change a long standing policy that requires bidders on military contracts to legally commit to invest as much money in Canadian products and operations as they get out of the contracts they win. With the new process, bidders can instead establish "industrial targets," lay out a plan for achieving those targets and sign non-binding agreements promising to make all efforts to achieve them. Such bids do suffer penalties when the bids are scored but are no longer rejected outright.

In its statement, Airbus said the new approach "does not sufficiently value the binding commitments the Typhoon Canada package was willing to make, and which were one of its major points of focus."

Despite its decision to withdraw, Airbus expressed appreciation to the public servants organizing the competition for their "commitment to transparency throughout the last two years as well as the thoroughly professional nature of the competition."

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## How Much Does the F-35 Cost

Canada is planning to purchase the F-35A and while the Public Services and Procurement Canada Agency will not give any estimate, the following estimates are available from the United States.

The F-35's price per unit, including ancillary costs like depot maintenance, ground support equipment, and spare parts is US \$110.3 million per F-35A, US \$135.8 million per F-35B, and US \$117.3 million per F-35C. Those totals do not include the nearly US \$1.3 trillion in life cycle costs to operate and sustain the aircraft over its 66-year life cycle, making it the most expensive weapons system in U.S. history.

A 2021 Government Accountability Office report said there is a **widening gap** between projected life cycle costs for the F-35 and what the services say they can afford. In 2018 the Air Force determined it could spend \$4.1 million per year per F-35A, when the real operating cost is closer to \$7.1 million. The Marine Corps and Navy similarly underestimated their costs, meaning all three services face multi-million dollar budget shortfalls each year that will grow with each new F-35 added to the force.



# The Last Flight



The RCAF Ensign which Russ so proudly flew at his residence, now at half mast.

## **Russell Mudry** July 9, 1938—September 28, 2022

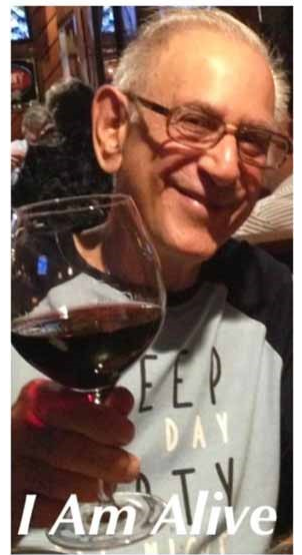
An RCAF Ensign draped the coffin of the former 434 Niagara Wing member during his funeral service in St Catharines on October 2, 2022. Russell passed away suddenly in St Catharines on Wednesday, September 28, 2022.

Russell joined the Air Cadets as a youth at the RCAF Station on Avenue Road in Toronto. From there he enlisted in the RCAF and served in Canada during the Korean War.

Russell was known for his deep commitment to the RCAF for most of his life, from the Air Cadets, to being a member of the RCAF, to completing many years in the RCAFA.



He embraced all life gave him with a passion for cooking, wine, good friends and running.



## ***Birthdays***

### **November**

**John Bruneau**  
**Chuck Leguerrier**



### **December**

**Don Feduck**  
**Dan Carr**  
**Bill Heron**

# Canada's Remarkable Fighter Pilots

**Air Commodore Leonard Birchall CM; OBE; DFC; CD\*\*\*\*; Order of Ontario; OC**



**Air Commander Leonard Birchall**

Birchall was called the “**Savior of Ceylon**” by Winston Churchill

Leonard Birchall was born in St Catharines, July 6, 1915. He attended the St Catharines Collegiate and then the RMC and after graduation in June 1937 he was commissioned in the Royal Canadian Air Force. By 1939 he was a flying boat pilot with 5 Bomber Reconnaissance Squadron flying anti submarine and convoy patrols from Dartmouth, NS. In May 1940 he managed to virtually single-handedly capture an Italian merchant ship in the Gulf of St Lawrence by making a low pass over it, feigning an attack, which caused the captain to panic and run his ship into a sandbank. Birchall landed nearby and waited patiently for the Royal Canadian Navy to get there, whereupon they arrested the Italian seamen, giving Canada her first Italian POW's. In 1941 he served briefly as a staff office with 2 Training Command in Winnipeg, Manitoba.. He was then posted to Trans-Atlantic Ferry Command in Bermuda.

In 1941 he joined 413 Squadron which was equipped with Catalina flying boats in the Shetland Islands. The squadron was transferred to Ceylon in early 1942 with Birchall, who was a Squadron Leader and Deputy Commander, flying one of the lead aircraft. Canadians played a significant role in the war against the Japanese. More than 7,500 Canadian flyers served in the China-Burma-India theatre of war in the Pacific.

Arriving at Lake Koggala, south of Galle, Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, on April 2, 1942, he and his crew were given a 24-hour rest. The crew of nine then took off in the pre-dawn hours of April 4 to carry out an all-day patrol southeast of Ceylon in search of submarines and ships.



**Leonard Birchall in Catalina**

Near the end of their patrol, 500 miles south of Ceylon they sighted the Japanese Navy fleet streaming toward Ceylon preparatory to launching a surprise attack on Colombo, Ceylon, similar to the attack this fleet had carried out on Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941.

Birchall didn't have much time to act, for not only had he spotted the Japanese, but they had also spotted him. Despite the imminent danger, Birchall flew closer in order to gather details about how many ships and aircraft he could see.



# Canada's Remarkable Fighter Pilots, continued

## Air Commodore Leonard Birchall CM; OBE; DFC; CD\*\*\*\*; Order of Ontario; OC

Birchall recited to his radio man, "four battleships, five carriers, many cruisers and destroyers, and the speed and course, heading for Ceylon." The radio operator managed to get three messages off to Colombo, Ceylon. Japanese fighters launched from the Japanese aircraft carriers shot the Catalina down in flames. Then, as the crew struggled in the water, Japanese planes strafed them. Only Birchall and five of his crew survived, three of them were wounded. They were taken aboard a Japanese destroyer and held prisoner. Their signal gave the Allies time to make preparations to protect Ceylon against the impending air attacks which took place during the following days.

The result was that British Far East naval fleet was able to avoid destruction. The Allies were also able to defend the island of Ceylon, inflicting severe losses on the Japanese naval aircraft. For this particular action, Birchall was **awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross** and the title of "**Saviour of Ceylon**".



Catalina at mooring in the Lagoon at Kogalla

Back Row (L - R): Sgt. T.C. Kelly, W/O G.C. Onyette, F/Sgt R.G. Shaw, P/O G.H. Bayly, P/O G. Vivian, P/O E.T. Loomer, **S/Ldr L.J. Birchall**, P/O T.A. Steckland, P/O E.H. Walsh, P/O A. Vineberg, Sgt B.A. Robertson.  
Front Row (L - R): LAC G Setterfield, AC1 R.I. Haugen, Sgt B.C. Callaway, W/O W.F. Johnson, F/Sgt H. Burt-Gerrano, W/O G. Chelsey, F/Sgt G. Low, Sgt C. Kensit, Sgt P. Garroway, F/Sgt W. Robertson, Sgt F.W. Ferris, LAC L.T. Sawyer

Group photo taken at Pembroke Dock. Aircraft belongs to Birchall. "The aircraft is my aircraft "G" for George, with the crest on the side, just below the cockpit window"

As soon as Birchall was brought on board the Japanese destroyer *Isokaza*, he was singled out as the senior officer and brutally interrogated. Despite being beaten and tortured, Birchall repeatedly denied that he had sent out any messages before his plane was destroyed. The Japanese eventually believed him and went ahead with their attack – but they found the Allied defenders prepared for them, and their raid was a failure.

Birchall and the other five surviving members of the crew were taken to Japan and placed in prisoner-of-war camps

# Canada's Remarkable Fighter Pilots, continued

## Air Commodore Leonard Birchall CM; OBE; DFC; CD\*\*\*\*; Order of Ontario; OC

Birchall was then transferred to mainland Japan, where he was incarcerated at Yokohama. He was placed in an interrogation camp, in which he was subject to solitary confinement and daily beatings. In this camp – in which no speaking (except when answering questions) was allowed – Birchall spent 6 grueling months.

After this, he was transferred to a POW work camp that had been erected in a baseball stadium. The conditions in the camp were harsh; rations were scarce, and the prisoners were basically on a starvation diet. Beatings were commonplace, and everyone, regardless of their physical condition, was forced to work. He immediately began to earn the respect of the other prisoners by arranging a system in the camp whereby he and the officers displayed the food that had been dished out to them, and if any enlisted man thought that the officers had been given better food, or more food, he was free to exchange his rations with the officer's.

Despite the risk of severe punishment, he also argued with the guards and demanded better treatment and rations for his men. If a guard was beating a particularly weak prisoner, Birchall and the other officers would step in and take a beating from the guards on that prisoner's behalf. On one occasion, a guard refused to stop beating a particularly sick prisoner, so Birchall intervened, as he always did – but this time he used his fists. For attacking a guard, he was tortured to within an inch of his life, but even after this, he again led his fellow prisoners in a strike, refusing to work until the guards agreed not to beat and mistreat very ill men. For this, though, Birchall was sent to a severe discipline camp in Tokyo, where he was subjected to more brutality. Even then the Japanese couldn't break his spirit, and he continued to inspire his fellow POWs. After this he was sent to a camp in the mountains outside Tokyo.

After three and a half years of imprisonment, Birchall was finally freed by Allied troops after the Japanese surrender. In the POW camps at which he had been imprisoned, he had succeeded in boosting morale, improving treatment of the prisoners, and making things more efficient to the point that the death rate of some camps dropped from over 30% to around 2%. Birchall kept detailed diaries of his time in the Japanese POW camps, and these were used as evidence in post-war trials. He was awarded a **Distinguished Flying Cross** for his actions in Ceylon, and made an officer of the Order of the British Empire for his actions in the POW camps.

Leonard Birchall retired from the RCAF in 1967, and then worked at York University, Ontario, until 1982 and moved to Kingston, Ontario. He continued his work with the military and also became involved in local volunteer work. In recognition of his outstanding contributions, not only in the military but also in Ontario and Canada as a whole, in April of 1989 Birchall was awarded **The Order of Ontario**. On April 21, 1996, Air Commodore Birchall completed sixty-two years service with the Canadian Armed Forces and was the only member of the Canadian Forces ever to receive the fifth bar to the **Canadian Forces Decoration**.

He passed away September 11, 2004 at Kingston at the age of 89.



Birchall Pavilion, Royal Military College of Canada Photo by Victoriaedwards CC BY -SA 3.0



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