

W.L. (BILL) MARR

"My whole career has been dependent more on chance and luck than planning and design, and as I am invited to furnish notes on a rather uneventful life, and looking back on a fading past to the various stages of life to mature age, and even to old age in which I find myself bordering, there is hardly anything worth noting." - Dalgliesh 1890

My birth place was in Bramshott, England, on July 5, 1917. I was born of Canadian parents who were serving overseas in World War I. My father was born in New Brunswick and my mother in Fort Langley. He was the first doctor to establish in the Langley area shortly after the turn of the century. I was raised in Fort Langley and attended primary and secondary school in the Langley area. Later I attended the University of British Columbia from 1936 to the outbreak of World War II. I joined the Canadian Army on September 3, 1939, the day that war was declared, and I was posted to the Wesminister Regiment and moved east with that unit for military training. A transfer to the Royal Canadian Airforce came in June of 1940 then flying training was commenced almost immediately and pilot's wings were received in Saskatoon in the fall of that year. This was followed by further training in Trenton and then a short tour of instructional duty at Moncton, New Brunswick.

I had attempted to join the RAF in 1937, and was almost on my way when mother died. This caused a postponement, and in 1939 father also passed away and the war was about to begin. I joined the Westministers as I had been attending summer camp with them for the previous three years and Col. Williams, the 2 IC, was aware of my various attempts to join both the RCAF and the RAF. It so happened that on the eve of hostilities I spent the night in the armories, and on the following morning, a lovely Sunday morning war was declared. I sat on the steps contemplating my future and even now I remember every detail of that morning. Williams came out and asked me what I intended to do and I said it was still my intent to fly but without a university degree chances of being accepted by the RCAF were practically nil. He suggested that I should sign on with the Westministers and if I still wished to fly, transfer over as had been done in World War I. So I signed on. A call to report to the RCAF came in June of the next year, but getting out was not that easy, and only by rather devious means was I able to report to the recruiting officer in Vancouver a couple of days later.

Last year, when I received my records from the Department of National Defence archives in Ottawa, I did find a letter to the Secretary of the Department of National Defence signed by Brigadier Stockwell, District Commander of Military District No. 11, re Corporal W.L. Marr, which states in part, "It has been definitely ascertained that a misunderstanding occurred. As the soldier in question is now enlisted in the RCAF, and his discharge carried out from the CASF, it is requested that covering authority for his discharge be granted without carrying this case any further. The attention of the officer commanding the unit has been directed to the CASF routine order No. 327 and a recurrence of this nature will not again occur." The discharge of one lowly corporal created quite a stir, still Adolf was only a corporal, we had something

in common.

But to get back to my story, in the spring of 1941 I was reassigned to the Central Flying school at Trenton to take part in the flying training of instructor pilots for the Empire Air Training Plan that was underway all across Canada. I was posted overseas as a Flying officer in the late summer of 1942 and eventually posted to 409 Squadron. I flew with that squadron for eighteen months of wartime operations. These tours of duty were interspersed with periods of training at test and development flying. Shortly after I left the squadron I received the Air Force Cross, for what particular incident I do not know. I returned to Canada shortly after VE day and was taken on staff at Trans Canada Airlines September 4, 1945. The Air Crew Association has been attempting to record some of the incidents of overseas flying for the forth coming book "Critical Moments" and so there are a few amusing events that may be worth recording.

The first I'll call the "Feathered Rabbit Story." I'd been up at 410 Squadron at Drem, near Edinburgh, on some pretext or other. On the way back to our base at Acklington, just north of Newcastle, we were crossing the Cheviot Hills flat out and at near naught feet when there was a slight bump. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a puff of feathers and what appeared to be a hole in the leading edge just outside the prop arc, which in the Beaufighter aircraft was half way out to the wing tip. We taxied the aircraft to its assigned standing and swung around so that it could be pushed back later into its revetment. Nobody was out to receive us because it was probably tea time. However, there were two Irish laborers that usually worked at cutting brush, brambles and grass about the aerodrome. One of these men had a rabbit in his hand that he had snared. The aircraft had a hole in the leading edge of the wing which was about eight by ten inches across. I asked the Irishman for his rabbit, took it, jumped up and tossed it backwards into the hole at the leading edge of the wing.

The navigator and I carried our chutes and helmets into dispersal. The fitter we had was a Canadian lad from Edmonton, who, unfortunately had a harelip, and it wasn't long before he arrived in great excitement. "Thir, thir" he said, "Did you thee your aircraft?" I said "Yes, it's outside where it should be." "No, no" he said, "You've got a wabbit in your wing." I said, "If you keep sneaking over to the pub for a pint in daylight, I'm going to have to have a word with the CO. "No, no, come and thee, come and thee." Well, we and a couple of other crews that were on hand tramped out to see the poor rabbit with his head and ears and little front feet hanging out of this jagged hole in the wing, a pathetic sight indeed. My navigator said, "I knew damn well you were too low." It created quite a hubub and the aircraft was eventually dispatched over to the maintenance hangar. That evening in the Mess the engineer officer came over and said that my rabbit had almost as many black feathers as it had fur. I said, "If it can jump that high it may well have grown feathers." For weeks afterwards the argument raged as to whether a prop from a low flying plane could in fact pick up a rabbit, after all seeing is believing.

There were many incidence in the squadron, however, one stands out after all these years. Our harelip fitter was a favorite and one day, after the previous evening in the pub, my navigator and I went into Newcastle to among other things get some half soles on some badly worn shoes. Joe and I were carrying on as if we had the same affliction as the fitter

and we did it rather well. I went into the first cobbler shop that I came to and said to the cobbler, in a good hare-lip style, "I think I need thome new tholes." He turned them over, looked at them for a moment and said, "I think you need thome new heels too." We'd picked the only harelip cobbler in all of Newcastle.

We had some serious times too. The best part of my first year on operations was in the Beaufighter aircraft. It was the Beaufighter 1C and this aircraft was powered by the Hercules Mark 11 engines. They were 1600 hp units and the aircraft was a real bastard, unstable in the extreme even with the newer dihedral tail plane, cold, hard to see out of, and with minimal single engine performance. But it did have good speed and a tremendous fire power. We had six 303s and four 20mm cannon and whatever else you wished to hang on the aircraft. I could fly it quite adequately as I had come to the squadron from a period as staff instructor at CFS Trenton, but I couldn't hit the broad side of a barndoor with the guns, and typically, it wasn't until after eighteen months in operations that I eventually received my gunnery course and found that there was a lot about operational flying that I did not know as well.

One extremely miserable night, and that winter there were quite a number, to the point that we used the phrase "Dark isn't it?" so many times that it almost became a squadron pass word. And we sometimes used it in the air to identify another pilot on the common frequency or to find a friend in the London blackout. On this particular night we were at 100 feet on patrol over the North Sea. It was a peculiarity of the night fighter radar that if you were low over the water you could see other low flying aircraft with a great clarity. At any rate that is where we were when there was a heavy bang or a thump and it shook the whole aircraft. I moved the throttle back, the gauges were all beyond comprehension. I moved the throttle again and still nothing, nor did it respond to RPM control. The navigator said that the prop wasn't feathered, as a matter of fact he said it several times. So I pushed the button still another time and eventually I realized that the prop had departed. On return to base we found that the whole front face of the engine had disintegrated and departed along with the prop. We suggested another and perhaps larger rabbit but the interest in rabbits was well passed. As I said earlier the Beaufighter aircraft was a bitch on one engine, and this one was no exception.

I'll call this next affair "The affair of the hot asses." It is a rather humorous story. It was on Hogmaney's eve, I forget which year. We were dispatched to Peterhead in Scotland with three Beaufighter aircraft and a small detachment to stand a night patrol - a patrol that had its beginnings with MI-5. A spy had been dropped just south of the town of Peterhead and eventually he was picked up in Edinburgh. It turned out that he was to make contact with others in England and two weeks later, or thereabouts, his radios plus another spy were to be dropped in the marshes just to the south of the town of Peterhead. And this was to be two weeks later on the first or the last hour of the moon period. We were not to interfere with the drop, but we had to get the aircraft on the way back so that there would be a doubt as to whether or not this second spy had arrived. One of our Beaufighters got the Jerry aircraft a week later. Unfortunately, he went down rather spectacularly right at the end of the Peterhead dock. The fighter fired low over the town and dropped shell casings and belt clips right down their main street, no way to please MI-5. Shortly thereafter we packed up and returned to our

base at Colby Grange in the Midlands. But this was not the incident that I chose to recall.

Our dispersal at Peterhead was on the far side of the field and we had only a small detachment. The WCs, water closets, or in more eloquent terms, the outhouse, was typically British, strongly built and rank conscious, officers at one end and airmen at the other sort of thing, stood at a respectable distance at the back of the Nissan hut that served as our ready room, store room, office, etc. The WCs were constructed as a long shed with stalls, no doors, and a board wall in front, with an opening at each end. The receiving portion was the largest cast iron trough that I have ever seen and it ran from one end to the other with a rod running parallel on top of the edges of the stalls that had an arm and a chain in each stall which, when pulled, would rotate the rod and dump the flush in the top end of the trough - above the officers stalls - above the senior NCOs - above the Sergeants - above the Corporals, and, at the opposite end from the airmen stalls, all very British.

On this particular day, after tea, I walked up the path to the WCs with the local Flight Sergeant, a Scotchman based at Peterhead, to find every stall full. Not to be outdone he said, "I'll move these lads", and in a moment he was back with a handful of waste rags that he had dipped in Avgas. He threw this into the top end of the trough, tossed in a match, pulled the chain, down came the flush water, and the whole flaming mass was on its way. The first man shot out with a shout, his pants at his knees, every man leaned forward to see what was up, and the show was on. The Radio City Music Hall Rockettes could not have out performed the synchronization, nor the distance leapt with trousers at the ankle, or the shouting as each leapt in turn. None had time to ascertain the fate that steadily approached his behind from behind. None had time to find out the problem until his own ass was scorched. A motion picture would have been worth a fortune. Needless to say the Flight Sergeant found work to attend to on the far side of the field for the remaining few days that we were at Peterhead.

My first operations trip was in May, 1943, on Beaufighter aircraft with 409 Squadron. I had been on the squadron about three days and they decided I was ready for operations, so that night I was assigned to night state and about 2 A.M. was sent to stand patrol with one other aircraft over the North Sea off Newcastle and under GCI control. The radar control would handle the aircraft, or one of the aircraft, as a fighter, and the other was free to head out to sea for some fifty to sixty miles and then when ready would run towards the coast at any height and any course and the radar controlled fighter would make the intercept. On this particular night I was manoeuvred as the intercepted aircraft when a couple of Jerry intruders showed up, as they did periodically, to wake up the good citizens of New-castle by tossing a bomb into the shipyards. Then they would head for home at a high rate of knots. I was initially given a vector out to sea and told to switch frequency and stand by, which I did. After forty-five minutes or so we were beginning to look for the coast of Denmark coming up and decided that it was time that we showed some local initiative. So we did. We did a 180 degree turn and returned to base. I never did determine if I switched to a blank frequency or if they just felt that it was no place for a sprog and sent me packing. Things often got screwed up on night fighter work.



The Mosquito aircraft was everything that the Beaufighter was not. It had good visibility, it was light on control, comfortable at thirty-five thousand feet, and had a good turn of speed. It did not have the robust strength of the Beau but sufficient for the task. Its strength was that of an eggshell, and we lost aircraft. I was given the task of doing the conversion which went very smoothly and we were operational on the 24th of May, 1944, with twenty-four brand new aircraft. Mine, and one other, was all that remained by November of that year - such was cost of war, of men, and of machines. When a Mosquito cracked up it really cracked. We had a lot of good nights on the Mossies, but then we also had the occasional snafu.

I recall one such night at eighteen thousand feet somewhere south of La Havre. We were given a contact and quickly worked the echo to a visual. This was done in cloud with less than one hundred feet visibility. The trick was to get close. Everything worked perfectly to the point that the navigator and I were able to verify the Bogle which was now almost directly overhead, a Heinkel 177. We eased the power to back away, raised the nose, and lined up in good night fighter fashion. We pushed the tit, nothing. The firesafe switch was at the floor level between us, it had to be in the on position. I dived to check the switch, it was on fire. I raised my head, my oxygen mask snagged on the reflector sight, holding my eyes below the cowling. I heard the navigator say "Christ, you're into him." I tore my head up and in so doing I tore the fittings from the helmet - the mask and all was detached. The whole tail of that 177 filled the sky, it was inches away. Then we hit his slip stream and tumbled to safety. I called GCA and said that I had a complete cannon failure and that I had a 177 with me and for God's sake send in another fighter quickly. We had him at minimum range on the radar set until I heard the other night fighter on the frequency and in a couple of minutes he was close in behind. I advised breaking contact and climbed away, shortly topped the cloud into the moonlight and then turned left for home base. As I did, Christ, there was the other Mosquito, right on the inside of the turn. "Not me" I shouted, and turned on the landing lights. All I got was a "Sorry old boy" in reply. I don't know how it all ended but I am sure the Jerry went all the way back to Germany not knowing that anyone was near him.

I made another contact a few nights later. This time the Jerry was a night fighter. I had him visual against the bright northern sky and identified as a Messerschmidt 210, although I now forget if this in fact was the Messerschmidt type number. I eased back on the power, damn, I'm overtaking, back more but not enough for the engines to show flame, still overtaking, opened the rad flaps, then the gear, anything to kill the speed. Suddenly I realized the problem was that the 210 was cutting his speed. It now became a race to slow down and this was a race that the Mossie was not designed to win. I saw his landing gear break out and I figured it was now decision time. I swung right into him and fired a steady burst as I turned. I never came within a country mile of him. However, probably with the Mossies reputation, and the obviously hostile intent, he decided it was time to go home, or he had business elsewhere. He rolled over and dove. In night fighter work down was always dark and ground returns blanked off practically all the echoes. We went down and had a look around but saw no more of him.

The Mossie was a wonderful aircraft. We worked them high, all the way up to thirty-five, thirty-seven thousand feet, and we worked them low. My very last patrol of the war years was off Dunkirk. At that time there

was a pocket of resistance on the coast that the Canadian troops were unable to close and German aircraft were going in each night and dropping mail, ammunition, supplies, etc. We were detailed, three Mossies at a time, to make a standing patrol out over the water off Dunkirk to prevent the Germans from supplying at night with low level aircraft. Our patrol was at fifty feet.

Looking back it is hard to believe that in those years we flew aircraft at night at fifty feet above the water, but we did. Admittedly we were not on instruments, it was a clear night with a good moon, and we had radio altimeters on board the aircraft. Now the radio altimeter was a three light affair that we would check over the runways prior to our setting course for our patrol rendezvous. We would dial in fifty feet and at fifty the red light would come on. Above fifty feet it would be green to seventy feet and then the amber light would come on indicating we were above the assigned altitude. So the trick was to make every turn a gentle climbing turn. You came out of the turn probably at one hundred and fifty to two hundred feet and then on the straight away you eased down until the amber light winked into green. Then we kept it winking between the green and amber as we flew on the straight away. The airplane was very very stable and this was quite easy to do, particularly if you had any visibility at all. On this very last patrol that I did we had one ship in our sector, and after making about three runs by it I decided to go over and investigate. As we came in close we got the searchlights right in our eyes and then the flak. Obviously it was a British destroyer or a Corvette or some such small vessel, but pretty well armed. He must have thought we were a torpedo bomber coming in on him, he was sure hostile.

When I finally got back to our dispersal at Le Culot, I was somewhat miffed at being shot up again by the Navy, however, Wing Commander Red Summerville said never to mind as I was off to England the next day. When I got back to England I was posted to Cranfield OTU to instruct on Mossies and also on night fighter tactics. After a couple of months of this I was posted to a night fighter leader course and I had a central school gunnery course. Eventually I was posted to special squadron. We were forming up to fly the Hornet, which was a much smaller version of the Mosquito. These had a big deck landing hook underneath them and also HM Navy stamped on the side. Fortunately, shortly after I was posted home on leave and, as some of the boys used to say, peace broke out, and I never went on these carrier borne aircraft that were destined for the Pacific. I arrived in Montreal just after VE day. I called Etta, my wife, and had her meet me in Winnipeg about four days later. Then started a whole new chapter in my life.

But just to go back for a minute. When we were at Acklington, which is up north of Newcastle, on Beaufighter aircraft, the CO was a man by the name of Wendell Reid who became a close friend of mine. I first met him in Trenton before I went overseas and he was one of the reasons that I went on night fighter aircraft. Wendell and I became quite close right up to his death here a couple of years ago. Wendell knew a number of people who were flying for Trans Canada Airlines on the Atlantic Service. He had flown extensively on Transport command having flown Churchill to the Yalta Conference and supplied Malta during the siege. Bob Smith and Lindy Rood, both of whom became my seniors in Trans Canada Airlines, were flying on the Canadian Government Atlantic Service carrying mail, supplies, etc, on Lancastrian aircraft across the ocean to Prestwick. Wendell on one occasion went over to Prestwick with a

Beaufighter, picked up these two gentlemen and brought them to squadron. It fell my lot the following day or the day after to fly them back to Prestwick, which I did in a Beaufighter. I chatted with them there and waited until they took off before I returned to Acklington. I said to Lindy that I would sure like to fly for Trans Canada Airlines when the war was over, and he said they could certainly use me right now and perhaps later on, and he would bring me over an application form, which he did. I dutifully filled it out, and on a subsequent flight he took it back to Canada and filed it in Winnipeg with a man by the name of Perce Rumer who was secretary or such to the Flight Operations Department of Trans Canada Airlines.

When I arrived in Winnipeg, on my way back from overseas, I went out to the field and introduced myself, with my log book under my arm, in uniform, said who I was and I would like to join. The man that was in the office that I was talking to was a man by the name of Mr. Sandgathe. Sandy was the man that hired me and when I told him the above he said I would have to make out an application form. I said that I had one here that was brought in by Lindy Rood. So he called Perce and said have you got an application form and Perce looked around in a drawer and came in with my application form which by now was almost two years old. Sandgathe said all that is required from you is to have a medical, and I said that's fine. So I went down the next day and got a medical, passed it, and then came out to see Sandy again. Sandy said now you must be on a list of officers offered to us by the Airforce. I said well I'm dead in the water, because I had just been assigned to a special squadron in England. I was also forced to sign a document stating that I would not attempt to seek my discharge whilst in Canada, and understood that this was only home leave and not repatriation. Sandy picked the phone up, didn't say anything, just picked the phone up and called across the field to a Flight Lieutenant and said, put Marr's name on that list and drop it off at the office this evening. It was as simple as that. I was on staff with Trans Canada Airlines shortly thereafter and my discharge was taken care of in Vancouver about two months later.

I started on staff with Trans Canada Airlines on September 4, 1945. On that course were three other men who should be in any record of my past. One was Bob McRae, the other was Maurice Belanger, and the third was Jim Grant. These three men, and myself, were all on the same first elementary course in Vancouver, and we were on the first course to get our wings out of Saskatoon. We all went our respective ways during the war years and all came back together on the same TCA course learning to be civilian pilots, rather remarkable. The record should also show that Jimmy Grant, Maury Belanger and myself all went full term with Trans Canada Airlines/Air Canada, and retired at the mandatory retirement age of sixty. To my knowledge Jim is still flying and he must be almost seventy. Maury is in good health and Bob McRae, who lost his licence for medical reasons many years ago, is probably in better health than the three of us put together. Never the less it is quite a history of four old friends who have stuck together all these years.

I had about twenty-five hundred hours of flying when I came to TCA. My first instructor was a man by the name of Rene Giguere. I did my first officer training with him and eventually my initial captains training. Then a man by the name of Brady was the instructor who checked me out as captain on Trans Canada Airlines about twelve or thirteen months later. Of my training flights, the one that stands out the clearest is my first night flying course with Rene Giguere. I think he taxied the Lockheed

out and parked just off the runway, and I went ahead and did all our various pre take off checks, runup and engine checks, etc., all to Trans Canada Airline's standard. Then he called tower for take off clearance and I was cleared to go. I kicked the brakes off, swung out on the runway, lined up, locked the tail wheel, and advanced the throttles up to take off power. All of a sudden Rene reached up and slammed the throttles closed, jumped on the brakes, and the tail bounced up and down, and we came to a sort of juddering stop. I didn't know what was wrong - Rene, I understood, did these things periodically, but I was quite mystified for the moment. And finally Rene said, "You damn fool, you don't know whether there's anything on the runway or not." Well truly I didn't, other than that tower had given me take off clearance, and it took a moment or two before it dawned that what Rene wanted was the landing lights on. And surprisingly, to that time in my career of twenty-five hundred hours, I had never done a night take off with the landing lights on. It was quite amazing, and a great thrill, to go thundering down the runway in a great blaze of lights and see the lights rotate up into the sky with two big beams out in front of you. It was indeed a thrill that I hadn't savoured up until that moment. The landing too was quite a bit different with the landing lights on. After all these years looking back, I don't know now whether I could land an aircraft without the landing lights.

Once my initial training was finished in Winnipeg, I was posted to Vancouver, and flew the Vancouver/Lethbridge route on Lockheed 14s, which were fourteen or eighteen passenger aircraft, for that whole winter and the following summer. It was an interesting route over the mountains. A beautiful route in nice weather. I think we had two transcontinental trips a day when I started, and I think we were up to three transcontinentals a day in the following summer.

I was promoted to captain status in April, 1947. Trans Canada Airlines bought the Vancouver/Victoria run from Canadian Pacific Airlines in about 1947. To operate it they brought three DC-3 aircraft they were using in Eastern Canada on the New York run out to the west coast. I was one of the pilots that was promoted up to captain status to crew this route. I flew the Vancouver/Victoria route until 1951 when I bid to Toronto. During this period they felt that I had done something like ten thousand crossings between Vancouver and Victoria. This is probably a bit of an exaggeration, however, five thousand crossings between Vancouver and Victoria is a lot of flying. It was during this period that I lived in Westminister. The family was young and growing and we worked a schedule that was amongst five pilots. We worked three days on, one day off, and one reserve, and most of the reserve days we had to fly over to Victoria in the morning and hang around all day with a charter and bring it home at night. This was fine as far as the job went, but it wasn't inducive to a good solid family relationship.

Because of the working conditions I felt it was time to do something else, so we left in 1951 and moved to Toronto. I think my time in Toronto was perhaps the happiest time for the Marr family. We had a nice home, the family grew up there. I did have the opportunity, two or three times while in Toronto, of moving back to Vancouver, but rather than disturb sort of a winning combination where wife and family were doing well and everybody was happy, we continued on in Toronto for some seventeen years.

During the seventeen years I flew first the Toronto/Cleveland/

Toronto/Kapuskasung run on DC-3s for about six or seven years. And then as we came into the latter part of the 1950s I went on to the Viscount first, for probably a year and a half, and then the Vanguard. I flew New York/Chicago primarily with trips up through to Montreal, and, eventually, in the winter time they would swing us off and we would run down through the Caribbean. I think the Caribbean trips with the Vanguard were some of the nicest trips that I had in my whole history with the airline. It was wonderful to leave the cold, snowy, Canadian winter to go down to Antigua or Barbados and spend a day or two down there before coming home to the cold and the family. Those were great years.

In 1961 we got our first DC-8s and in the spring of 1962 I was checked out on the DC-8 which I flew for the next number of years primarily on the trans ocean run to London, England and Paris. The DC-8 was a superb aircraft. We were back flying thirty-five, thirty-seven thousand feet, altitudes that I flew in the Mosquito twenty years earlier. It was a great airplane. I flew it for almost sixteen years, and in those sixteen years I think I shut down three engines, which certainly must be a record for dependability. I think of those three engines, one was because somebody forgot to put oil in it, and the other two were equally nonconsequential.

By 1968 both my children had grown up and had left home for Vancouver. My son is a lawyer and my daughter was working with a brokerage firm here in Vancouver. So we decided it was perhaps time to leave Toronto and move back to the west coast, because after all I am a west coaster and this is where I chose to retire. So in 1968 I bid Vancouver, came out to Vancouver, and flew DC-8s from then until my retirement date which was the first of August, 1977.

My one regret was I never flew the Boeing 747. I shouldn't quite say I never flew the 747, I was paid for the 747 for the last two years with the company, and during that time I did get a chance to fly it for a couple of hours one evening on test flying out of Mirabel. Up to my retirement date in August, 1977, I had accumulated a life time total of something in excess of twenty-seven thousand hours. I never kept my log book up to date. Once I was checked out as a captain on the coast run it just seemed to be sort of twelve legs everyday, there didn't seem to be any reason to record it. The company kept good records, and with what the company showed, and with my military time, I have a lifetime total of something over twenty-seven thousand hours.

I spent my entire career with Air Canada as a line captain. I never did any instructing or flight checking, probably because I was never asked. A line captain's job was the finest there was to be had anywhere, and in my time it was at its best. Good aircraft, great men to work with and for, good pay, and time enough off to enjoy what we made. If I had it to do over again there are very few things that I would change, other than perhaps to add a few more months to make it last longer. While I worked with the airline I served in various capacities on a number of committees. I represented Canada at navigational and other meetings in Mexico, Paris, and Madrid. I was also a member of the Canadian Aeronautical Space Institute from 1933-1973, and at one time I served as a Director of the Canadian Airline Pilot's Association. Looking back it would seem that I took more from aviation than I gave back, but the game isn't over yet, and perhaps other fellows like me can still play a part by lending support where we can.



Retirement is always a shock. It is difficult to suddenly apply the parking brake, and step from a position of seniority and prestige to a pension plan. I was fortunate in that I had made a little money in the stock market, so I paid off the mortgage and bought a Cessna 185 on floats. It was a wonderful airplane. I had it for a little over eight years, and in that time put on about nine hundred hours of flying.

Having bought the airplane, the first thing I had to consider was where I was going to keep it. Initially I kept it at Fort Langley but the coal trains rattled right by the hangar and the airplane was black every time I wanted to use it. I was fortunate in that I had a friend of mine who had a business on the Fraser River down in Delta, close to my home, and across the road from the river, he and I built a one aircraft airbase for me. At that time he supplied the logging industry, mainly McMillan Bloedel and Crown Zellerbach, with heavy equipment - A frames, de-watering equipment, yarders, skidders, barge loading equipment, bunks, and other heavy and expensive hardware. Every once in awhile something would break and he would be required to either send a mechanic, or a part, or something, up to one of the logging camps. He felt that if he could use the airplane, even once or twice a year, to sort of make fast response it would justify its keep. Also he liked to fish and so did I, so for the next nine years we declared open warfare on all the trout in British Columbia.

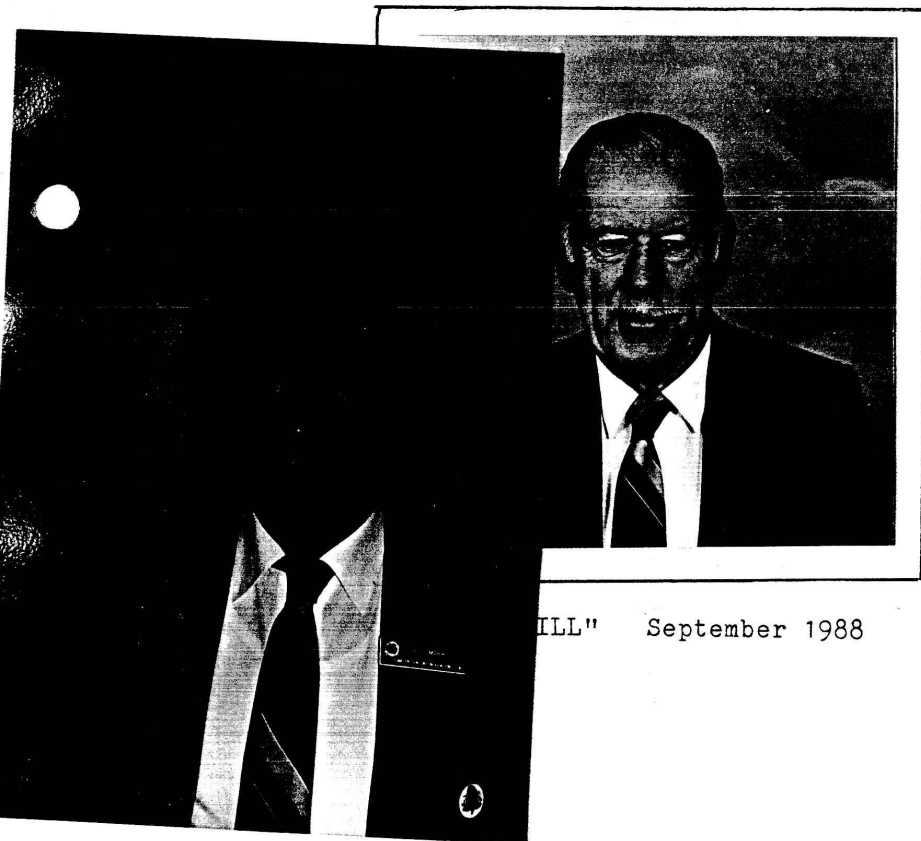
All good things must end. I was in my seventieth year and my friend had sold his business and I was to lose my hangar and docks. I had a year to find other accomodation but I had a wonderful set up. I had my own fuel supply, electrical marine railway to move the aircraft in and out of the hangar, the hangar was heated, and it was going to be hard to replace.

About this time I had another problem. The insurance company kept increasing the cost of insurance. They felt that because I was seventy years of age it was perhaps time that I was doing other things than flying airplanes, and the price of insurance was going to be increased. On top of this the aircraft was now going on ten years old. It had being in and out of the salt water, and although I washed it down well, it was showing corrosion. It was getting near time for an engine overhaul, the prop needed an overhaul, I had a couple of cylinders that were getting low on compression, and all in all, things were starting to add up. This particular day I was down sweeping out the hangar and a chap came in and asked where could he find an airplane. I said that this one wasn't for sale, however, to make a long story short, before the day was out he paid me in cash money what I had paid for the airplane almost eight years before. I've missed the airplane, missed flying, and missed my Air Canada flying, but like everything else there are always other things to do. I still fly the airplane once in a while. I have a grandson now who seems to be taking up the vocation. He's got one hundred and forty-five, one hundred and fifty hours in, working on his commercial. I have flown with him a number of times in light airplanes and he is going to be an excellent pilot, I don't think there is any doubt about that. He is certainly keen and I hope there is still one of us who can carry it on.

When I first went into retirement eleven years ago I used to be asked what I did with my time. I fish when I can and bowl five pins, not well. I don't golf, I don't seem to be able to keep my head down, but there are other things. I have kept my aviation contacts. Shortly after retirement I was with the Abbotsford Air Show Society and served as their President. I also served as the President of the Airforce

Officer's Association of Vancouver. I've been a member of the Quarter Century Club of Aviation, the Air Crew Association, the B.C. Aviation Council, and I have maintained my interest in CALPA(R). In fact, at the last Convention in Edmonton, I was honoured to have been made a Life Member of that Association. Since being retired I have been involved in other ventures, some profitable, and some not so profitable. I was a Director of Silvex Mining Corporation and I served as Director of Western Match Inc., not one of my most profitable ventures. Currently I am a Director of Mikado Resources Limited, a mining corporation that has interests in the West Kootenays.

These various ventures keep me active and get me out of bed in the morning, and they all add up to another chapter in one's life. As you know they have a saying in baseball, "It ain't over 'til it's over." And I guess it is this way in life too, and perhaps ten years from now I will record another chapter in this, my life.



"HILL" September 1988