

# Glidepath

The quarterly newsletter of the  
Canadian Museum of Flight



Issue #113  
Summer 2012

## The Firecat Has Landed ...

by Bruce Friesen

On Friday, October 5, a Firecat air tanker aircraft, bearing Conair tail number 64, roared in to land at Langley Airport. It then taxied right up to its new home, the Canadian Museum of Flight with pilots Ray Horton and Bill Findlay both smiling broadly and waving to an enthusiastic, welcoming crowd.

This Firecat aircraft, while on display at the Canadian Museum of Flight, will serve as a wonderful visual reminder of British Columbia's rich history in aerial fire suppression. Langley airport is considered the birthplace of BC's aerial fire suppression methods going back to the days of Skyway Air Services, which was the predecessor to Conair. The rest, as they say, is history. Abbotsford based Conair has since grown to be a world leader in providing innovative firefighting services to national and international customers and has been doing so for over forty years.

The Firecat started its life as a Canadian built CS2F Tracker aircraft and was flown from the deck of the Royal Canadian Navy's HMCS Bonaventure aircraft carrier in its role as an anti-submarine patrol aircraft. In the 1970s, Conair developed the Firecat by modifying and converting many of these former RCN Trackers into a very successful firefighting machine.



**Conair Firecat #64 arrives in style at Langley Airport, strutting her stuff in front of an appreciative audience. [photo: Mike Luedey]**

Firecat #64 has been generously donated to the Canadian Museum of Flight by the Conair Group. The Museum is absolutely delighted with its new acquisition, which fits perfectly with the Museum mission "to bring British Columbia's aviation past into the future". It will serve as the centerpiece to future displays telling the story of aerial fire suppression in the province.

We commend Conair for the community

spirit which led to this substantial corporate donation, and will work

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**Mark your calendars! The Canadian Museum of Flight Octoberfest fundraiser is October 20. Check out Page 7 for more details. Please join us and support your Museum. Be sure to visit our website [www.canadianflight.org](http://www.canadianflight.org) for more news and updates on events.**

## The Firecat Has Landed ... continued from Page 1

hard to maintain and display this aircraft in fitting style. All those who have seen her are overwhelmed by the character and condition displayed by a truly classic aircraft. Thanks go to Bill Findlay, an active volunteer and pilot at the Museum, and Ray Horton, Director of Operations at Conair, for helping make this donation happen, the culmination of 10 years of effort by those two friends and neighbours.



*Firecat #64 as she looked at Abbotsford Airport in September, 2012, after her final fire fighting season. [photo: Malcolm Nason]*



*Pilots Bill Findlay of the CMF and Ray Horton of Conair, acknowledge the enthusiastic reception as the Firecat arrived.*

The Museum plans to maintain the aircraft in operating condition and we hope aviation enthusiasts will be treated to the sights and sounds of two large radial engines starting, running, taxiing far into the future.

Thank you, Bill, Ray and Conair!

## Two More Interesting Acquisitions

### Pietenpol Air Camper CF-BMH

The CMF was delighted to receive by donation this excellent example of a homebuilt aircraft, dating from the heyday of building simple, low cost aircraft in the garage, starting with only a stack of wood and a set of plans.

While the Air Camper design dates back to 1928, the CMF example was completed in 1970, in British Columbia, by Armand Pierre Ranchou and designated by him the AP001. It was first flown from Delta Air Park on April 3, 1971.

CF-BMH has had an active life, by 1999 clocking up almost 430 flight hours, including one major rebuild in 1983.

At that point it was purchased by Mr. Charlie Brown of Ladner. Unfortunately, shortly thereafter an engine failure on takeoff resulted in significant damage to the aircraft. Charlie dedicated himself to complete repair and restoration of the little Air Camper at a very high standard of workmanship. It returned to the active register July 14, 2011 but has not flown since.



*Charlie Brown with the fuselage of Pietenpol Air Camper CF-BMH, at his Ladner home. (inset: varnished wood instrument panel)*

### Wright Cyclone 3350 Radial Engine

Do you want to know how to get attention? Terry Brunner, B. J. McMillan and Bruce Friesen found towing a trailer loaded with a hulking 3000 pound radial engine is one good choice. And why would it not get attention! The Wright Cyclone 3350 is near the pinnacle of aviation piston engine development, and is a mighty impressive piece of machinery.

The CMF was fortunate that, when the museum at CFB Comox decided they had a 3350 surplus to their needs, they thought of us. We own and display a good selection of aircraft engines from very small to large. Now we have "very large" to round out the collection.

The particular engine joining the CMF collection is a Wright R-3350 TC18EA1 Turbo-Compound engine, as fitted to the Canadair CP-107 Argus maritime patrol aircraft in which service it developed 3,700 shp. It is a twin row, 18 cylinder monster displacing 3347 in<sup>3</sup>. Vic, where will it fit?



*The Wright Cyclone R-3350 departs CFB Comox, heading for its new home in Langley.*



## Museum Outreach to the Community —

### The Waco Cabin Goes Walkabout

Outreach.

Just what does that mean for a museum such as the Canadian Museum of Flight?

A museum collects artifacts, restores and arranges them, and then opens its doors to the public, right?

Yes, but, to be a more complete resource to the community, a Museum must also reach out beyond its doors, to engage a broader spectrum of people.

Indeed, the CMF program does include numerous outreach activities. Many are well known, including airshow participation, shopping mall displays, and visits to school classrooms. Less well known are visits to seniors residences.

This past summer, Museum staff and volunteers hit the road on two unique adventures. More accurately, a Museum aircraft soared the skies, because in both cases the CMF's 1937 Waco ACQ-6 Custom Cabin was the star performer.

First, the Waco flew a team to Comox to meet up with Stocky Edwards, one of Canada's most esteemed fighter pilots of World War II. The mission was to conduct a video interview of Stocky, to ensure that the history of this exceptional British Columbia aviator is brought forward into the future.

Bob Smith explains the background, and recounts the expedition, in the story below.

Second, several Museum representatives travelled to Alert Bay and then on to Port McNeill, returning the Waco to communities it served for many years, rekindling memories for many, and giving younger residents a glimpse of the important role aviation played in the earlier days of their community. Bill Findlay tells the story starting on the next page.

Remarkably, after 75 years, the Waco Cabin is still doing exactly what she was designed to do. The old girl continues to carry a load of four adults over long distances, in complete comfort and safety, reaching out.

## The Waco Goes Walkabout — Stocky Edwards

by Bob Smith

**W/C J. F. "Stocky" Edwards, C.M., DFC & Bar, DFM, CD.**

I was asked – "Why interview Stocky Edwards?" It all goes back to several months ago when I mentioned, at our Tuesday morning briefings for us volunteers, that I had had dinner in Comox with Stocky and his wife, Toni, and he is in good health. You may recall they had just found a P-40 in the desert from Stocky's squadron that had been missing for over 65 years. Only one or two knew who he was even though there are pages from his log book on display in the WW II section of our museum. This prompted me to see that his contribution to the Allies' success in winning that war was not forgotten.

I mentioned to our GM, Terry, that I felt a display like we did for C.O.P Smith, DFC, on the Lancaster would be a welcome addition to our Museum. Perhaps we could create a replica cockpit of the aircraft in which Stocky had his greatest success, a P-40 Kittyhawk. I suggested we could consider including an audio/video, again as we did for the Lancaster. Terry was enthusiastic and gave me the green light to set it all up. And, why not use the Waco Cabin to get the crew over to Comox for an interview?

I was off and running.

For the "crew" I selected myself, as I knew Stocky personally and we had a mutual friend in Comox, John Glover, who would help me organize things. I then asked Bill Findlay if

he was interested in being our pilot and he jumped at the opportunity. Mike Luedey, as our audio/video member, and Stan Walter, who was the head honcho behind the Lancaster/Smith display, rounded out the team.

John told me that initially Stocky was not keen on another interview as he had been treated rather shabbily by the media in the past. Basically I gather those media individuals involved didn't know much (or anything) about the African desert campaign and looked upon people like Stocky as "has-beens living in the past". John was my training pilot for our King Air fleet in the DoT and if I ever wanted a pilot for a VIP flight, or something done and done properly, John was the man. He convinced Stocky that the Museum was certainly on his side and that he had my assurance nothing would be shown to

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*Posing in front of the Waco Cabin are the four travellers to Comox, left to right Bill Findlay, Stan Walter, Mike Luedey and article author Bob Smith.*

# The Waco goes Walkabout — Alert Bay Reunion

by Bill Findlay

Saturday, August 4th, 2012 – Departure day from Langley to a northern Vancouver Island destination. Earlier in the year, the Canadian Museum of Flight had been invited to attend a weekend celebration in the community of Alert Bay, located on Cormorant Island. This celebration, amongst other events, would honour long-time area resident, Dr. Jack Pickup. The CMF's beautiful 1937 Waco Cabin AQC-6 would be the catalyst to stimulate the townspeople's memories of Doc Pickup, BC's flying doctor, who had used the float-equipped Waco from 1953 to about 1980. The Doc had parked his aircraft at a special floating dock at the shore just in front of the Alert Bay hospital. The Waco and its surgeon pilot were responsible for saving the lives of many residents of the small mining, logging, and fishing camps and First Nations villages up and down BC's rugged coastal area.

Departure day in Langley was one of those summer mornings that are perfect for flying. Pilots Bill Findlay and Dave Beales, along with maintenance specialist Bob Fowles, were anxious to get the big red '37 Waco started and on its way north. But destination weather would delay their plans. With the sunny weather in Alert Bay comes fog that often lingers over the water areas until late morning. Although the majority of the planned route north was clear and sunny, the decision was made to delay takeoff from Langley so as to arrive in Alert Bay just after 11:30 a.m. Big Red and its crew launched from Langley at 9:45 a.m. for the two hour flight to northern Vancouver Island. The flight plan routing took the Museum travellers over Vancouver harbour, Sechelt, Texada Island, Courtenay, Campbell River, Kelsey Bay, Highway 19 to Port McNeill and then across the few kilometres of water to Jack Pickup Airport, CYAL, at Alert Bay. We touched down at 11:45 a.m., just fifteen minutes after the fog had cleared. The weather forecast had been right on the money.

CMF General Manager Terry Brunner, and his wife Doreen, had driven to Alert Bay a day ahead and were at the airport to



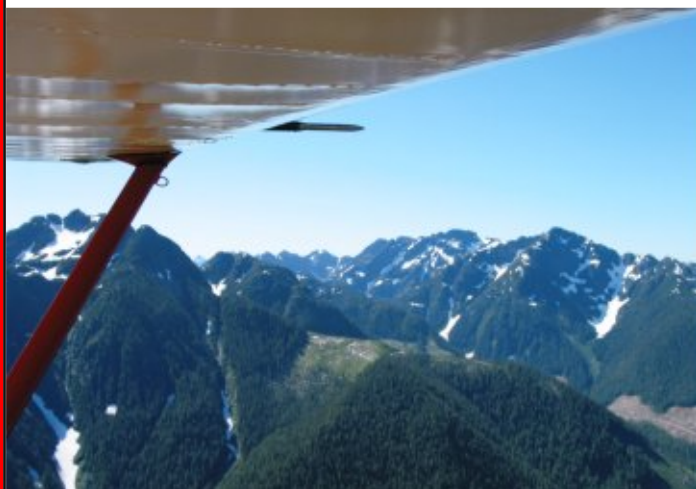
**Waco Cabin CF-CCW at H. J. Pickup Airport, Alert Bay, British Columbia. The plaque reads "H. J. Pickup Airport, Dedicated by Major Popovich and Council, July 13, 1993".**

meet the Waco's crew upon arrival. Accompanying the Brunners on their drive north were former Alert Bay residents Sam and Peggy Hobbs. In the 1950s, Sam had been an RCMP officer in the village and his wife, Peggy, an Operating Room nurse on staff with Dr. Pickup. The Waco crew was also met by the local Mayor, Michael Berry, who welcomed the visiting CMF personnel and their guests.

The Waco was parked on the grass near one end of the runway. This position allowed easy access by the public to view the aircraft inside and out and to talk with the CMF crew. Many interesting stories were shared by local residents, all making reference to events during the many years that Doc Pickup and his trusty Waco floatplane had flown in the area carrying out what we now call Medevac flights.

Overnight accommodation was available just a short distance from where the Waco would spend the night. The crew checked into the fully appointed cabins and then the CMF gang all loaded into Terry's van for a short tour of the village.

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**Dramatic scenery on a glorious day for aviating, on the way to Alert Bay.**



**Alert Bay residents, young and old, checked out the Waco Cabin, contemplating "how it was".**



## Stocky Edwards ... continued from Page 3

the public unless he personally gave his consent. Based on this we set up a date to get together.

The Waco trip up to Comox was a delightful experience in itself. We arrived on our ETA, and John met us with transport. The interview would be conducted in Stocky and his wife Toni's home, a short drive away.

Stocky was as laid back and relaxed as ever, and the 1½ hour time for the interview just melted away. After the formal interview Mike asked for some still pictures of Stocky wearing his medals and some with Toni by his side. All in all, a gracious, warm couple.

When the time came to leave, I invited them both to join us for lunch, but Stocky had an engagement (I believe a golf game) and said he couldn't make it. He did say that I was to take the gang out to lunch and "that was an order". Since he was a Wing Commander which outranked me by several stripes what could I do but comply? Duty Carried Out.

We were a little subdued and quiet over lunch; I think we were all a little in awe, having actually met on a one on one basis with a living legend. A true Canadian hero and probably the last great fighter pilot still with us. He is 91 years young.

The trip back was even more of an experience than the trip up as I got to play with the stick and rudder for part of the cruise. I did notice Bill's hand was never more than 6" away from the controls so that says it all for my piloting skills.

There are many people I should thank now for getting the big ball rolling and I'm sure there will be more in the future but one outstanding thank you goes to the Waco Cabin. Without her this may never have gotten past the dreaming stage. Now that we have Stocky's interview recorded we can take our time and make a proper lasting tribute to him, and by extension all Canadian fighter pilots, for display in our Museum. This mission has just begun. Stay tuned.



**Wing Commander James E. "Stocky" Edwards, DFC, DFM, with his personal Spitfire XVI. Photograph taken near the end of WWII, when he was commanding officer of 127 Wing RCAF. [scan of RCAF official photo PL 45184]**

## A few highlights from Stocky Edwards' service career:\*

"I was sent to the Middle East in November, 1941 ... I was posted to 94 Squadron in the Western Desert near Tobruk, a squadron which soon after converted from Hurricanes to Kittyhawks. I shot down my first Messerschmidt 109 on my first operational sortie."

"When the North African campaign ended in Tunisia in May, 1943 ... I had flown 195 operational sorties, and my score in the air was 13 Me 109s, 1 Macchi 202 and 1 six-engined transport, plus many probables and damaged ... while dive-bombing and ground strafing I claimed 8 enemy aircraft and 200 motor vehicles."

"I returned to ops with 417 RCAF Squadron in December, 1943, in Italy, flying beautiful Spitfire VIIIs ... and managed to shoot down four more enemy fighters."

"In late August [1944] the wing converted to Tempest aircraft to chase V-1 flying bombs."

"My desire to fly the Spitfire on ops was unsurpassed by anyone, and to reach the ultimate position of wing commander flying of an entire RCAF Spitfire wing was the height of a fighter pilot's career."

**\* As told by Stocky, in his Forward to Spitfire II: The Canadians, by Robert Bracken, The Boston Mills Press, 1999.**

## The Memoir and Musings of "Two Cats on a Hot Tin Roof"

by Liz Taylor and Paul Newman

It all began so innocently, with a quick recon to plug three known leaks, that sprung about twenty new ones!

This required another ascent of the "stairway to heaven" for a "wee touch-up".

In spite of all our efforts, it seems to have worked - and we are, for the record books, "retired, undefeated" ('til next time).

Herewith a few fond memories:

- It is lonely at the top. And after we sent out all those invitations!
- Snowroof® my (aunt



**Liz and Paul? Paul and Liz? B. J. McMillan (left) and Jim Beswick, the two "cats on a hot tin roof"**

fanny)! If this is snow, why are my shoes melting?

- I doubt my loyal sidekick (Liz) picked up any new choice epithets, but he sure got a make-up course on all the old classics. I'm guessing the "cuss jar" collected enough five dollar fines to cover expenses!

p.s. "He's Liz; I'm Paul" says article author Jim Beswick.

More seriously, all of us at the Museum of Flight extend Jim Beswick and B. J. McMillan a huge thank-you for a thankless task well done. At a cost of about \$6000 for materials, they completed a refurbishment job estimated at \$60,000.

## Alert Bay Reunion ... continued from Page 4

Sights included the main street of the village, the spot where the old hospital had been located, the boarded-up nurse's residence, the government wharf, and the now dilapidated Residential School. Next, we took in a T'sasala Cultural Group traditional native dance performance in the Big House, a magnificent structure where many traditional native functions are held. After arriving back at the airport, we continued to give tours of the Waco and to hear more great stories from the visitors to our aircraft.



**The community of Alert Bay, home of the 'Namgis First Nation.**

Next on the agenda was an excellent meal prepared by Terry in the "cabin by the Cabin". Well done, Terry. Story-telling was the main event before, during and after dinner, with Sam being crowned the winner of that contest! He had us in stitches for most of the evening.

to Langley. In the meantime, Bill, Dave and Bob were picked up by the Mayor and driven to the Legion for yet another breakfast. Here there was an informal gathering of locals and visitors where more good food and stories were shared. Mayor Berry addressed the group to express his appreciation of the efforts by everyone to attend the weekend event. He was particularly grateful that the Canadian Museum of Flight was able to make available the Waco Cabin to honour Dr. Jack Pickup. The Mayor presented the CMF with a

very generous donation to assist with the operating costs of the Waco. Bill spoke briefly to acknowledge the donation and the hospitality extended by the residents of Alert Bay to the CMF group.

Now it was time to plan for the flight

H. J. Pickup airport for a farewell flyby, circled Cormorant Island as planned, carried out another flyby and then set heading to Port McNeill.

At Port McNeill, we announced our arrival with a flyby and then landed on the narrow 36 foot wide runway. The Waco was marshalled to park adjacent to the fuel pump. The Port McNeill folks had kindly donated a very generous amount of fuel to top up the tanks to help feed the big 330 HP Jacobs engine, a donation for which the Museum is very grateful.

A number of locals had gathered in anticipation of seeing and hearing Pickup's old Waco Cabin once again. They were not disappointed. The two-hour stop gave all those on hand an opportunity to climb aboard the big red bird to see what it looks and feels like sitting in the cockpit. Long-time friend of Jack Pickup, and local Mayor, Gerry Furney, greeted the Waco crew and enjoyed reminiscing about the days when the Waco had last flown in the area.



**The CMF Waco Cabin drew a crowd of interested residents at Port McNeill airport.**



**Peggy and Sam Hobbs, both museum members and previous Alert Bay residents, at the H. J. Pickup airport.**

After a good night's rest in this very quiet community, the Waco crew enjoyed a hearty breakfast in their cabin. The airport was shrouded in fog which would not clear until noon. Terry, Doreen, Sam and Peggy had departed earlier on the ferry to Port McNeill to get a head start on the long drive back

home. But first the Waco was taxied down to the far end of the airport for a photo op near the H.J. Pickup Airport sign.

hand to unveil a plaque set in a granite cairn to officially name the H. J. Pickup Airport.

Finally, at about 12:30 p.m., the fog dissipated and we launched the Waco on the short flight to Port McNeill where fuel was available for the flight home. After takeoff, we came right back to the

This airport, built in the 1960s, was first called the Alert Bay Airport. The Mayor at the time was none other than Dr. Jack Pickup. In 1982, the 2500-foot-long gravel runway was paved and a parking lot added. In 1993, the newly retired Doc Pickup was on

After the obligatory departure flyby, the Waco and crew set off on the journey back home, retracing the route flown the day before. Clear skies and light winds made for excellent flight conditions. Two hours later, the Waco landed in Langley where the ground crew had the gates and hangar doors open and ready to welcome home the weekend travellers. The CMF's 1937 Waco AQC-6 had performed flawlessly for this wonderful flight to its old stomping grounds. It's always good to arrive back home, but that was a very memorable weekend of aviating. Thanks go to all of the Museum's supporters for recognizing the value of 'taking the show on the road' so that many others outside of the Langley area can enjoy the sights and sounds of aircraft from the CMF's flying collection.





# Oktoberfest

**OCTOBER 20, 2012**

**DOORS OPEN AT 5:30 pm**

**LIVE OOMPAH BAND**

**TICKET INCLUDES:**

**FIRST BEER, BRATWURST WITH SAUERKRAUT  
& GERMAN PRETZEL**

**\$40 PER TICKET**

Canadian Museum of Flight

Hangar #3, 5333 216th St

Langley, BC, V2Y 2N3

phone: 604-532-0035



## 99s "Canadian Award in Aviation" presented to Terry Brunner

Our General Manager, Terry Brunner, and the Canadian Museum of Flight, were delighted by a recent honour.

The Ninety-Nines presented Terry with the 2011 Canadian Award in Aviation (CAIA). The 99s Canadian Award in Aviation was established in 1974 to promote aviation throughout Canada. The Award is presented to charitable institutions or organizations whose activities promote, improve or preserve aviation and aeronautics in Canada. The presentation was made by Rayleen Ranger as part of the BC Coast Chapter annual general meeting held at the Museum on September 15.

The Ninety-Nines noted "Mr. Brunner is a dedicated member of the Aviation community as well as the General Manager of the Canadian Museum of Flight. The museum, located in Langley, BC, is the only aviation museum on the mainland of British Columbia and one of the few that actually fly the vintage aircraft. The museum will use the financial award to enhance the education of young people in a project called 'The Kids' Room'".



*Join us to learn more about the Waco AQC-6 Cabin! The next edition of TechTalk will be:*

## Tech Talk - Waco Cabin

**Canadian Museum of Flight  
in the hangar, rain or shine  
October 27  
starting at 9:00 a.m.**

*An in-depth exploration of the Waco Cabin design, construction, operation, and maintenance led by CMF members with years of experience with the type.*

*Two lucky participants will win a flight in the Cabin.*

*Cost: \$25 for CMF Members; \$35 for the general public.*

*To book your place, or for more details, please contact the Museum at 604-532-0035.*

**For more information on Canadian Museum of Flight collections, displays and events, please visit our website at [www.canadianflight.org](http://www.canadianflight.org)**

**Be sure to visit the Museum Facebook page frequently, for news and views.**

# The Canadian Museum of Flight

## Bringing British Columbia's Aviation Past into the Future

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The Honourable Steven L. Point, OBC  
Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia

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### Museum Staff

Terry Brunner  
Douglas Tait  
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### Museum Coordinates

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Telephone | 604 – 532 – 0035  |
| Fax       | 604 – 532 – 0056  |
| e-mail    | tbrunner@telus.net                                      |
| Website   | www.canadianflight.org                                  |
| Address   | Hangar #3<br>5333 – 216th Street<br>Langley, BC V2Y 2N3 |

**Museum Hours:** daily from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

#### **Membership Benefits!**

- **Partnerships!** Members are entitled to visit, free of charge:
  - Flight Museum in Seattle
  - West Coast Rail Museum in Squamish
  - Military Education Centre in Chilliwack
- **Discounts in the Gift Shop** increased from 10% to 15%

#### **Volunteers Welcome!**

*The Canadian Museum of Flight is always looking for new volunteers. We are always in need of history and aviation enthusiasts of all kinds, for aircraft restoration, gift shop operations, facility maintenance, and many other tasks. No experience is necessary. We invite everyone, from young students to retirees, to join the team. If interested, please contact the Museum General Manager, Terry Brunner, at 604-532-0035.*

### Cover Photo

*This dramatic study of the newest addition to the CMF collection, Conair Firecat #64, was taken while the aircraft was working out of Whitehorse, summer of 2011.*

*The Glidepath Newsletter is published quarterly by the Canadian Museum of Flight; Editor Bruce Friesen. Contributions in the form of articles, news items, letters and photos are always welcome, as are comments and suggestions, although no payments are made for manuscripts submitted for publication in the Newsletter.*