

SPIRIT

783 (Calgary) Wing Newsletter

**ROYAL CANADIAN
AIR FORCE
ASSOCIATION**



***Wing Meets the last Tuesday
of each month at 7pm
285 Legion Horton Road
(virtual version also available)***



MEET THE TEAM

Chairperson	Michelle Gerwing
Honorary Chairperson	Col (Retd) Don Matthews
Immediate Past Chairperson	Rob Caswell
First Vice Chairperson	Scott Deederly
Second Vice Chairperson	Adriano Fisco
Treasurer	Kenn Nixon
Secretary	Cecilia Brugma
Past Chairs Advisory Council	Pat Sulek
Casino Chairperson	Darlene Laroche
Friends of Col Belcher	Pat Sulek
Membership	Anna Lewis
Newsletter	Bev Spielman/Michelle Gerwing
Health and Wellness	Michele Henderson
Sergeant at Arms	Kevin Knight
Entertainment Chair	Muriel Mymko
Public Relations	Bob Wade
Military Museum Liaison	Bob Wade
Cadet Liaison	Kevin Knight
Advocacy	Scott Deederly
Webmaster/Social Media	Kent Anderson





Message from the Chairperson

Well the celebrations have begun and went well. If this is any indication of the remaining events, we will be doing a great job celebrating the RCAF's anniversary. The Mess Dinner at the Hangar Flight Museum on 22 March was the biggest I have seen and a wonderful way to connect with "old" friends. Our celebrations started with the 80th anniversary and opening of the Great Escape exhibit at the Air Force Museum. There was a great showing for the event and it was a hit with all who attended. We then moved onto 1 April and opened the RCAF exhibit in the Founders' Gallery telling of the human experience of the Air Force. If you have not had time to see it, drop by; it is worth it! We then moved onto City Hall where the Mayor of Calgary proclaimed 1 Apr Air Force Day in Calgary and raised the Air Force flag for the day. Both events were well attended and I thank so many members for taking the time to partake. It was heartwarming.

Our last big event was the Annual General Meeting of the Alberta Group of the RCAFA held in Lethbridge on the 21 Apr. Scott, Kenn, Bev, Pat, and I attended the meetings on behalf of the Wing. Lots of business was completed and the dinner was delicious and fun. The bonus event was a Harvard fly-past!

Per Ardua Ad Astra

Michelle Gerwing

Chairman

783 (Calgary) Wing

Royal Canadian Air Force Association

Member Profile:

Growing Up Military During the Cold War

by Michèle Henderson

For me, growing up as an “air force brat” during the Cold War was certainly an interesting life, which I would not trade for anything. It was very different from that of my friends whose parents had followed a path unrelated to the military.

I was too young to remember my first two places of residence. I was born in Nova Scotia in 1955 as my father, a Flying Officer then Flight Lieutenant, was stationed at CFB Greenwood. My mother had since retired from her role as a radio operator, as was the requirement for married women at that time. My dad was the navigator on Lancaster aircraft, working in maritime patrol of Canadian waters.

In 1957 we were posted to Biloxi, Mississippi, as my dad took training in Electronic Warfare with the US Air Force. It was a true eye-opener for my parents, as they witnessed various aspects of segregation, integration and the beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement in the south. Alas, I was too young to remember this.

My memories of military life began after we were posted to Montréal. My dad continued training and working within Electronic Warfare at CFB St. Hubert from 1958 to 1963. My best memory is of an air show that I attended with my dad when I was about 5 years old. He drew my attention to a Volkswagen Beetle that was parked, somewhere, and also drew my attention to the announcement that we heard three or four times...“Will the owner of the red Volkswagen please remove your vehicle...”. Well, no one did. Imagine that. Then, incredibly, a huge helicopter came along, picked up the car and flew off with it! My eyes must have been as big as saucers! My dad was an amateur photographer (and a very good one) and he filmed the whole sequence, then created a home movie which he titled, “And then the whirlybird picked up the little car...”. I watched it many times.

From Montréal we were posted to RAF North Coates in Lincolnshire, England, from 1963-1965, and my dad’s work focus became the Bloodhound missile. We lived on the RAF base, the only Canadians there. We were treated very nicely by everyone. I recall going with my mother to buy groceries at the NAAFI (Navy Army Air Force Institute...a way more interesting name than Safeway or Superstore). I was getting older and becoming a bit more adventurous. There were small air raid shelters on the base, and my friends and I would climb down the ladder into the creepy darkness, stopping just short of the floor which was covered in a few inches of water! We weren’t supposed to be in there, we knew, but we went anyway! (A good question would be....why wasn’t the hatch locked??) It was too creepy to stay down there for long, so after about 30 seconds, whoever had climbed down would come flying up the ladder and into the sunlight once more (with appropriate screams).

I also recall breaking my ankle in the base playground, doing something my mother had told me NOT to do. A very nice man in a uniform just like my dad's carried me to the medical clinic. (My parents had gone Christmas shopping and left us with a babysitter....) And, another thing I was not supposed to do...my friends and I would walk down to the North Sea, which had scary dead jellyfish on the beach. I can still see the huge Royal Navy ships just offshore.

I remember asking my dad if I could go with him to see where he worked. He said no, he couldn't take me there, because he worked in a room with walls made of steel, and wasn't allowed to open the door unless he recognized the person on the other side of the small window. He had explained his high-level security position effectively to a 9-year-old, because although I didn't really know what he did, I understood that his work must be very serious.

In 1965 we were posted to CFB North Bay, Ontario, where my dad worked with Bomarc missiles until his retirement in 1968. Because we lived off the base, I have fewer military memories, and also had fewer friends from military families.

Sometimes people ask me to explain the worst and best things about growing up in the military. The worst thing? Moving every few years. You just get established in a place, you love your school and your friends, and then you have to move again. The best thing? Moving every few years. I was always "the new kid". I was always forced to adapt to new places and learn how to handle unfamiliar situations. I don't regret it one bit.

I have friends who complain every now and then about airplanes flying over their houses, causing "horrendous noise". I, on the other hand, have always loved seeing planes taking off or coming in for a landing, whether over my house or elsewhere. Even now I sometimes catch myself stopping and watching. It must be genetic.

People say I look like my dad. Here we are, both at age 19. My brother Mark was 14.





We will remember them



Donald Norrie: 25 May, 1934—26 March 2024

Donald Norrie of Calgary, AB, passed away on Tuesday, March 26, 2024, at the age of 89 years.

Donald was born in Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton, AB, on May 25, 1934. He was the eldest of three children born to Malcolm Norrie and Helena Gossen. Brother of predeceased John Edward (Marilyn) of Leslieville, AB, and sister of Beverly Elizabeth (Marvin) Bird of Stony Plain, AB. Donald spent his formative years in Edmonton, AB, before moving to Lacombe, AB, with his family in 1948.

In 1950, he enlisted in the Canadian Army (Special Forces) for the Korean War. After his discharge from the army, he worked as a linesman for the Alberta Government Telephones until 1953, when he decided to make the military a career and enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force as a Munitions and Weapons Technician. Don had many postings and received numerous promotions during his career while serving in Canada, the Middle East, and Europe. One of his postings during the Cold War, took him to #2 Fighter Wing in Grostenquin, France, in 1955. There he met and married the former Ruby May Jackson of Creston, BC, in March of 1957. Donald retired as a Lieutenant Colonel after 35 years of service.

Donald was an active volunteer in the community and contributed for many years as a director with the Air Force Museum of Alberta. He was an active writer and storyteller with many of his articles being published in the Air Force Magazine. Donald was predeceased by his dear wife Ruby in 2018. Don was a loving son, husband, father, and grandfather and will be forever remembered by his three children, Gordon (Susan), Brian (Kathy) and Susan (Mark); six grandchildren, Brett, Malcolm, Ruby, Mack, Christian, and Ashleigh; two step-grandchildren, Nick and Molly; his two great-grandchildren, Isla and Eva; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, extended family, and dear friends.





We will remember them



James (Jim) Third 22 March, 1933—1 March 2024

Jim Third, beloved husband of Grace Helen Kasper, of Calgary, AB, passed away on Friday, March 1, 2024, at the age of 90 years.

Jim was born in Vegreville, AB, on March 22, 1933, and studied at the University of Alberta in the Faculty of Commerce. In 1955, he was posted to the RCAF Air Division Headquarters in Metz, France, and his fiancée Grace flew over from Edmonton, AB, to meet him shortly thereafter. They married in Germany that same year.

They lived in the Black Forest spa city of Baden-Baden, Germany, for the next eighteen months, and in 1957, he was selected as the supply officer to open an RCAF Air Weapons Unit in Sardinia, Italy. His time in Europe must surely have inspired his lifelong passion for fine wines!

In 1965, he left National Defence with the rank of Squadron Leader/Major. He was awarded both the Special Service Medal with NATO bar and the Canadian Forces Decoration for twelve years of service.

Jim joined the Federal Government Department of Defence Production (DDP) as a production officer in the Electrical and Electronics Branch, negotiating contracts for communications systems with Canadian and U.S. military agencies, the Canadian Department of Industry, and the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

In 1969, Jim was appointed to the Unemployment Insurance Commission, becoming the Ontario Regional Director of Operations East in April 1975. He retired from Government in 1986, after 31 years. Jim was fiercely proud of his decades of public service and was warmly admired by all those he worked with. In retirement, he continued to serve the community as Director of the 702-Wing Air Force Association of Canada, and as Director of the Lethbridge United Services Institute. He was also a member of the 787 Calgary wing.

Jim is survived by daughter Jean (Bill) of New York City, USA; son Jim of Vancouver, BC, and son Tom (Christy) of Toronto, ON; grandchildren Madeline of New Jersey, USA, Sarah, and Laura of Vancouver, BC; also extended family Lorraine (Harold), Marian (Murray), Rob (Alexa). In his later years, his dearest companion Sandra, and her children Roger, and Tanis were a source of immeasurable love and inspiration in his life. Jim was predeceased by his wife, Grace, in 2017, after 61 years of marriage.



The Great Escape Exhibit Opening



The Great Escape Exhibit at TMM: this exhibit, for which we donated funds, opened on 24 Mar, the 80th anniversary of the Great Escape. Many of you may have watched the movie by the same name. This exhibit turned out extremely well and was a hit with those who attended the opening, including the sons of two different POWs who were at the Stalag Luft III. It is well worth the visit if you have time. Below is the MP for Calgary-Elbow, Samir Kayande, on the trolley used in the tunnel. If you wish to know more about the escape, please see: [‘The Great Escape’: The Audacious Real Story of the WWII Prison Break | HISTORY](#)



The opening of the Air Force Exhibit at TMM on 1 Apr



PEOPLE OF CANADA'S AIR FORCE

100 YEARS



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Founders' Gallery



1 April opening of the Founders' Gallery exhibit and the Air Force flag raising at City Hall



The outing at the casino for those who could attend.





Program for 2024

Air Force Museum Society of Alberta and 783(Calgary) Wing

Royal Canadian Air Force Association

Here is a summary of the events still under consideration for 2024:

Date	Event	Comments
Jul 5	Happy Hour	Another fundraising opportunity
Jul 5 - 14	Calgary Stampede 5 Jul 24 Flypast	CF-18 to kick off
	Presence at the TMM display on the grounds	TBD
	Stampede Float in the parade	
Jul 6 and 7	Spruce Meadows display of the Tiger Moth	Possibly have the RCAF band for the military day. Possible flypast CF-18
Aug 24 and 25	TMM Summer Skirmish	Air Force Display
11 Aug	UN Peacekeeper Day at Peacekeeper and Buffalo Park	Possible flypast over the Buffalo Park during wreath laying
15 Sep 24	Battle of Britain at TMM	Possibly a fly past – 408 Sqn
Fall 24	Stampeders Game at McMahon Stadium	Fly past or kickoff
19 or 26 Oct 24	Mess Dinner at the Blackfoot Inn	Lt Gov, RCAF VIP and RCAF Band
11 Nov 24	Remembrance Day at Genesis Centre	RCAF VIP and British Counsel

The Quilt of Valour Presentation



Quilts were presented to:

Al Sedden

Michelle Gerwing

Moe Hanberg

The rest of the Wing with
their quilts: Muriel, Moe, Al,
Michelle, Kenn, Bob, and
Norm



Friendly Reminders

From your Membership Director:

Please contact Anna Lewis, our Director of Membership, if you change any contact info at bandalewis@shaw.ca



From your Health and Wellness Director

All Wing members already receive birthday cards. Do you know of anyone in our membership who would appreciate receiving a card of congratulations, or perhaps a card to raise their spirits? Greetings could be sent for many reasons, such as:

- a “milestone” birthday*
- best wishes for someone in hospital or convalescing at home*
- bereavement on the passing of a Wing member*
- retirement*
- graduation*
- marriage*
- a special wedding anniversary*
- receiving recognition and/or winning an award*

All members are encouraged to contact Michèle Henderson at michlorr@shaw.ca at any time during the year with the person’s name, the event, and the date on which it is to be recognized.