

SPIRIT

783 (Calgary) Wing Newsletter

**ROYAL CANADIAN
AIR FORCE
ASSOCIATION**



*The Wing meets the last
Tuesday of the month at
7pm in 285 Legion Horton
Road (virtually as well)*



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/Darlene Laroche
Public Relations	Bob Wade
Cadet Liaison	Kevin Knight
Advocacy	Scott Deederly
Webmaster/Social Media	Kent Anderson



CH-148 Cyclone downloaded from [Royal Canadian Air Force aircraft - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/royal-canadian-air-force/aircraft) 30 Dec 2024



Message from the Chairperson

We were all comforted to hear that the RCAFA is moving forward with plans that will allow them to continue as an organization. Although we had plans should they not, I am very glad we did not have to put them into action. I will pass along news in that respect as I hear it from Group. They have created a new website: <https://rcafassociation.site-ym.com/>

We are moving to the end of our 100th anniversary and, although we had a very busy 2024, this year has no events planned. We will start working on our 2025 events in the next few months.

At our Alberta Group meeting, we had a long discussion regarding the way ahead for the RCAFA. Here is a summary:

- The kit shop has been downsized to regalia items and tartan only and is stored in Barrie for the time being;
- The trophies will be on display at NDHQ;
- The magazine will now be digital only. Group is trying to confirm how this will affect the current charges included with membership for the magazine;
- Dean Black has been replaced by Brook Bangsball. Wendy 's replacement has not yet been named;
- Long term Associate Members in other provinces has not yet been addressed by National; and
- They have found financial backers.

This is good news. I will continue to pass along information as I receive it. Happy spring!

Per Ardua Ad Astra

Michelle Gerwing

Chairman

783 (Calgary) Wing

Royal Canadian Air Force Association



Happy Birthday to you! (Mar/Apr)

Whitson, Bryndis	6 Mar
Mann, Keith	8 Mar
Deederly, Scott	10 Mar
Mymko, Muriel	10 Mar
Nikolaisen, Mary Lou	11 Mar
Anderson, Kent	13 Mar
Neale, Carol Ann	13 Mar
Laroche, Darlene	16 mar
Roseneder, Bob	17 Mar
Balych, Maurice	1 Apr
Harvey, Norm	1 Apr
Bristowe, James	5 Apr
Ross, Robert	6 Apr
Lewis, Brian	7 Apr
Morrison, Gerry	11 Apr
Fisher, Randy	12 Apr
Downs, David	23 Apr
Lemon, Tom	25 Apr

History of the RCAF Roundell

In the opening weeks of the First World War an aircraft pilot flying over the lines could expect a volley of rifle fire from either friend or foe on the ground. In an attempt to secure safe passage for pilots flying over friendly lines, at least, the Union Jack in the form of a shield was painted on the underside of British aircraft. Even though authorities advocated a much more blown-up Union Jack later, the plan was dropped because at a distance the St. George's cross in the Union Jack was difficult to distinguish from the German Cross. The Royal Flying Corps then turned to their French allies for inspiration. The French had adopted a roundel based on the tricolor. The RFC and the RNAS took this roundel and re-versed the colours, blue outermost with the centre red. This same roundel has been carried on British aircraft to this date. On 30 November 1921, the Canadian Air Force was presented with the Blue Ensign of the Royal Air Force to fly as their own. Lord Trenchard himself arranged the privilege. The other commonwealth countries also adopted this ensign. The RCAF retained this privilege at its formation on 1 April 1924. This lasted until 5 July 1940 when the RCAF was authorized to introduce the maple leaf into the roundel in place of the red centre. At this time the roundel on the ensign was so revised.

Aircraft flown by RCAF personnel, however, continued to wear the RAF roundel since their aircraft including those built in Canada all came through RAF channels. On 19 January 1946 the suggestion of A/V/M George V. Walsh was accepted officially and RCAF aircraft began to wear their own markings. This roundel is still worn today by aircraft of the RCAF, RCN Fleet Air Arm and Canadian Army. The roundel is a blue ring, surrounding a white area in the centre of which is the red maple leaf.



Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) 100: A Year to Remember

April 1, 2024, marked the Centennial of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) with celebrations going on throughout the year across Canada and internationally. The many activities highlighted the RCAF's history, honoured its contributions, and aimed to inspire Canadians to explore the future of military aviation and aerospace.

Ahead of the Centennial, Canadian Forces Moral and Welfare Services and the RCAF launched RCAF Game Force, the CAF's first official esports program. Open to CAF members and the public, this initiative fostered connection, camaraderie, and teamwork in a virtual space, showcasing the RCAF's adaptability to evolving technologies and interests.

In February, Winterlude in Ottawa featured detailed ice sculptures that told the story of the RCAF, offering visitors an engaging way to learn about the Air Force's contributions over the decades. March introduced Astra, the RCAF's new mascot, chosen through a naming contest that invited participation from members, families, and friends. Astra became a popular figure at Centennial events throughout the year.

A highlight of the Centennial occurred on April 1, when more than 500 landmarks in 26 countries, including the CN Tower, Niagara Falls, and the Canadian National Vimy Memorial, were illuminated in blue to celebrate the RCAF's 100 years of service. This global event symbolized the far-reaching impact and unity of the RCAF. Also in April, Canada Post commemorated the Centennial with a special commemorative envelope, unveiled alongside the Ad Astra Monument at CFB Borden, the birthplace of the RCAF.

In May, the Canadian Tulip Festival embraced the Centennial with a tribute to the RCAF through four custom tulips: Rescue, Flyers, Wings, and Ad Astra, each reflecting parts of its heritage. The festival was the first viewing of the documentary *Wings of Honour* featuring personal stories from veterans and current members, and showcased an augmented reality experience alongside a giant map of the RCAF's history, which will travel to schools across Canada into 2025. The festival concluded with a dazzling 200-drone light show celebrating the RCAF's past and future.

The RCAF Run launched in May, combining virtual and in-person events worldwide to promote unity, resilience, and fitness. A Centennial Ball in June brought together dignitaries, members, and allies, celebrating the RCAF's accomplishments, including achieving a Guinness World Record for the most landmarks illuminated for a single cause.

Summer air shows at CFB Cold Lake, Bagotville, and Trenton featured aerial displays and included Allied teams like the RAF *Red Arrows*, Italian Air Force's *Frecce Tricolori* National Aerobatic Team and the USAF *Thunderbirds*. On Canada Day, a historic flypast of vintage and modern aircraft culminated with a performance by the Snowbirds, highlighting the evolution of the RCAF over 100 years.

Throughout the year, initiatives like the Trees for Heroes campaign and STEM-focused Inspire events highlighted the RCAF's dedication to honouring its past, supporting environmental stewardship, and inspiring the next generation of innovators. These efforts encapsulated the Centennial's spirit of resilience, unity, and innovation.



Biography – LCol (Ret'd) Gordon Todd

My military career commenced when my parents dropped me off at College Militaire Royale de St Jean on 7 Sept 61. We drove through the gates of the campus and I did not leave for the next three months. The hazing and military discipline were a shock to my system but being in great physical shape from work on the farm I was able to relatively easily withstand the physical demands and the large amounts of parade square drill carrying an FN C1 rifle. After the three months of indoctrination life settled down to a routine of classes and physical activity. The academic shock to me was having to learn calculus and not having the benefit of high school trig. After a lot of self study and help from many sources I came to love calculus and found it to be the most elegant of all university disciplines.

During summer of 62 we were taken on a tour of many Air Force bases including four in France and Germany and Churchill on Hudson's Bay. I still remember the fenced squares of rubble in downtown Zweibrucken left from the 2nd world war (when I was posted to 3 Wing near Zweibrucken in 1968 these squares had all been rebuilt) as well as a wonderful weekend in Paris where we saw a performance at the Folies Berger (as a naïve 18 yr old off the farm, this performance blew me away).

During the summer of 63 I started my flight training on Chipmunks at Centralia Ontario. After my first trip I knew I had found my calling even though at one point my instructor accused me of flying the aircraft like I was on the tractor back home.

In Sept of 64 I started my last two years of university at Royal Military College in Kingston and graduated in May 66 with a Degree in Electrical Engineering - the goal I had set for myself in high school.

I continued my flight training at Gimli Manitoba commencing July 66 on the Tutor jet aircraft. This training lasted 9 months and then I completed my training on T-33 jets and was presented my wings by Defence Minister Hellyer in late July 77. Since I finished near the top of my class I was given the aircraft of my choice for operational flying and I had asked for the CF-104 - the hottest aircraft in the RCAF.

I then proceeded to Chatham New Brunswick for three months of training on the F-86 Sabre jet. This aircraft provided lead in training for the CF-104 Starfighter – primarily low level navigation and practice bombing sorties.

After completing the F-86 training I returned home and married my sweetheart Audrey Savage on 23 Dec 1967. A week later we were on our way by car to Cold Lake Alberta where I started the CF-104 conversion course on 4 Jan 1968. During the second week of Jan my appendix exploded and I was in the hospital for a week and couldn't fly for two weeks which put me two weeks behind the rest of the course. However I survived the delay and graduated with the rest of the guys in Jun 68. One of the highlights of the course was on sortie #7 I got to take a clean jet (no tip tanks) up to 35,000 ft and accelerate to Mach 2. I was to do this many times later on but the first one is the most memorable. We graduated as qualified nuclear strike pilots and were destined for RCAF NATO bases in West Germany.

In July Audrey and I arrived in 3 Wing Zweibrücken West Germany where I commenced combat training as a nuclear strike pilot – we used American nuclear weapons on RCAF aircraft with Canadian pilots. After being declared combat ready I would sit alert for 24 hours three times a month with the weapon loaded on the belly of the aircraft. In case of hostilities we had 15 minutes to be airborne to proceed to our preplanned targets in Eastern Europe. This two year posting was very much a honeymoon for Audrey and I. Every available day off we were all over Western Europe in our Alfa Romeo Spyder Veloce sports car.

After two years in Germany, Prime Minister Trudeau cut our CF-104 force from six to three squadrons and I was posted back to Cold Lake as a CF-104 instructor pilot (because of the cut-backs the RCAF had a surfeit of pilots and many of my buddies were sent to the US to train ab initio students in support of the Vietnam war). I passed five enjoyable years on 417 Sqn as an instructor which was marred by one bad day when I had to eject from a CF-104 because the engine failed. In June 1975 I was flying an exercise out of Bermuda in support of our Navy (supersonic at 500 feet over the Bermuda Triangle at night – much fun !!) when I learned that I was to be sent to the US Navy Test Pilot school in Patuxent River Maryland. On the way back to Cold Lake I flew in to Pax River and rented a house. Audrey, who had been with me in Bermuda, arrived home about the same time I did. We quickly packed up the house jumped in our car (with two toddlers) and drove to Maryland.

The Test Pilot course was one year during which I flew about 14 different aircraft types. After course completion in June 76 I was posted back to Cold Lake on the Aeronautical Engineering Test Establishment – essentially Canada's Flight Test authority. I passed four delightful years there and was one of the two test pilots to fly the contenders (F-14, F-15, F-16, YF-17 (prototype for the F-18), Panavia Tornado and the F-1BD (standin for the Mirage 2000)) for the New Fighter Aircraft competition during 1977/78.

In July 80 I was posted on exchange to the Joint F/A-18 Test Force with the US Navy in Patuxent River. I spent three years qualifying the F/A 18 for operational use during which I flew the F/A-18 Hornet, F-4 Phantom and the A-4 Skyhawk. In July 83 I started one year of Staff College and then in July 84 I was posted to my one ground job at the CF-18 Program Office in Ottawa. In Jan 87 I was back in Cold Lake to complete the six month CF-18 conversion course.

After completion of CF-18 conversion in June 87 I was posted to 409 Squadron at 4 Wing in the Rhine Valley near Baden Baden in West Germany. This was very enjoyable for the whole family especially my three sons 16, 13 and 9 years old. The skiing was fantastic and they rode their bikes all over France, Switzerland and Germany. High School Grad ceremony and banquet for my son Robin was held in the Baden Baden casino ball room.

The multirole CF-18 was an ideal aircraft for the European theatre and our three squadrons, although a small force, were a great addition to NATO's bulwark against the Soviet Union. And then the Berlin Wall came down and the world changed. All of a sudden a deterrent was no longer needed and in 94 our bases in Germany were closed and the forces repatriated to Canada. During my posting in Germany I was promoted to LCol and in July 90 was posted back to Cold Lake as the Commanding Officer of 410 Squadron – the CF-18 training squadron.

On 31 July 1990 I took command of 410 Sqn and thus began the best job of my life.

In summer 1992 I commenced a yearlong French Course in Ottawa (my family stayed in Cold Lake) and then returned to Cold Lake as the Wing Operations Office. After a year at this job I retired from the Air Force in July 1994.

It was an honour to fly the F/A 18 (USN and RCAF versions) off and on for 14 years and I am proud that I was part of the selection team that chose such an excellent aircraft for Canada.

In July 94 Audrey and I and my youngest son Jeff moved to Calgary where we had a house built and I went to the University of Calgary to complete a BSc in Computer Science. Just prior to completing my degree I was hired by Computing Devices of Canada (soon to become General Dynamics Canada) as a Systems Engineer. For the first time in my life I was doing real live engineering work. After a few years I was asked to take on a Deputy Program Manager for Engineering position for a large Army Communications Project. I was once again responsible for over 200 personnel – mostly engineers and technologists. I continued in this position until I retired from GD Canada in 2009 at age 65.

The Golden Years

After my second retirement Audrey and I spent a lot of time with my kids and grandchildren all of which live in either Cold Lake or the Calgary area. We travelled quite a bit as well - cruising and going to Arizona for the months of Feb and March most years. I also delivered meals for Meals on Wheels and continue to volunteer at our Air Force Museum of Alberta in Calgary.





We will remember them



Betty Wonnacott

September 11, 1923 Koowerup, Australia

December 19, 2024 Calgary, Alberta

Betty Joan Wonnacott passed away on Thursday, December 19, 2024, at the age of 101 years.

In living memory of Betty Wonnacott, a tree will be planted in the Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area by McInnis & Holloway Funeral Homes, Calgary Crematorium, 3219 4th Street NW, Calgary, AB, T2M 3A6, Telephone: 403-299-0111.



Random trivia

- ◇ A pregnant goldfish is called a twit
- ◇ The first TV commercial didn't air until 1940
- ◇ A duck's quack doesn't echo, and nobody knows why
- ◇ It's physically impossible for pigs to look up into the sky
- ◇ Chihuahuas have the biggest brains in the canine world
- ◇ Lighting can heat the air it passes through to 50,000 degrees
- ◇ Most lipstick contains fish scales
- ◇ The space between your eyebrows is called the "glabella"
- ◇ Jellyfish can sting even when they are dead
- ◇ Dogs can learn up to 165 words
- ◇ Fleas can jump up to 100 times their body length
- ◇ The avocado is a fruit, not a vegetable
- ◇ The unicorn is the national animal of Scotland
- ◇ A chef's hat has 100 pleats

About your body

- ◇ Humans shed 40 pounds of skin over a lifetime
- ◇ You are tallest when you first wake up
- ◇ Fingernails grow faster than toenails
- ◇ Your eyes blink about 20 times a minute (mine definitely do not)
- ◇ You produce about 40,000 litres of spit in your lifetime
- ◇ Eighty percent of the human brain is water (perhaps that explains brain freezes?)
- ◇ The human body contains enough fat to make seven bars of soap (no comment)
- ◇ The femur is the longest and strongest bone in your body
- ◇ You can't taste food without saliva
- ◇ The average human body contains five litres of blood (except when you cut your scalp and swear you bled that much out)
- ◇ The human heart beats more than three billion times in an average lifespan
- ◇ Your left lung is 10% smaller than your right (because your heart takes up the space)
- ◇ Humans are the only species known to blush





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*

If you do, please contact Michele Henderson at michlorr@shaw.ca