

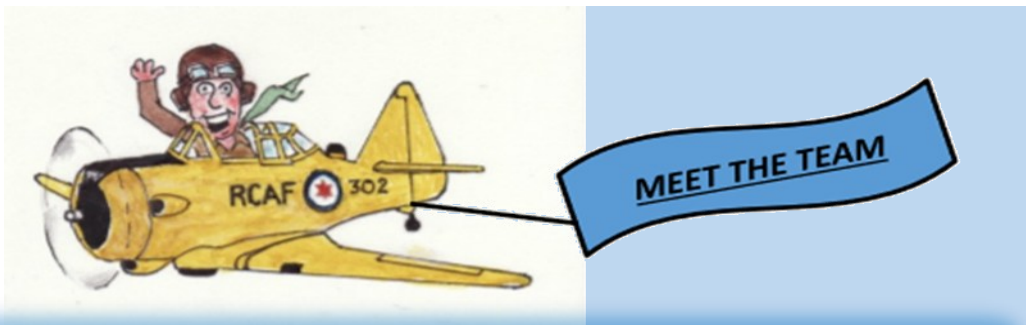
SPIRIT

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)*



Chairperson	Scott D
Honorary Chairperson	Col (Retd) Don M
Immediate Past Chairperson	Michelle G
First Vice Chairperson	Vacant
Second Vice Chairperson	Adriano F
Treasurer	Kenn N
Secretary	Cecilia B
Past Chairs Advisory Council	Pat S
Casino Chairperson	Darlene L
Friends of Col Belcher	Pat S
Membership	Anna L
Newsletter	Bev S/Michelle G
Health and Wellness	Michele H
Sergeant at Arms	Kevin K
Entertainment Chair	Darlene L
Public Relations	Bob W
Cadet Liaison	Kevin K
Advocacy	Scott D
Webmaster/Social Media	Charlee M



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Message from the Chairperson

The last few months before the delayed start of Spring have been an active time for the Wing. First, we had three great presentations at our monthly meetings in February, March and April with Buffalo 9 Brewing founders Kelsey and Lane Gibson, Brad Gordanier of [Polyus Studios](#) Canadian Aviation YouTube Channel, and our own Tim Wall speaking. Sharing their passions with us for Canadian forces-inspired beer, Canadian aviation, and a 70% sized Spitfire aircraft. One of Brad's inspiration for his YouTube channel was our own past Wing member Gary Watson and after presenting in March, stated he is joining the Wing. We also sworn over the last few months two new members, Laryssa Yanchuck and Heather Vanderveer, and we welcome them into our fellowship.

In mid-April a full delegation from 783 (Calgary) Wing attended the RCAFA Alberta Group 2026 AGM in Edmonton. I am grateful for Barb, Keith, Charlie, Brian, and Heather for attending on behalf of the Wing as delegates along with Anna and myself attending in our 783 Wing roles. Michelle, Kenn and Bob attended in their roles within Alberta Group, and Pat was invited to represent the RCAFA Trust to give an update.

Michael Roy, our Alberta Group Chair, and Alberta's representative on the RCAFA National Council, gave updates on implementation of the reforms happening at the National Association. Our National Association is nearing a balanced budget, and the digital magazine (latest edition out [April 1st](#)) appears to be doing well now. The national RCAFA Auction is currently being organized for late-August and September 2026 to raise \$50,000 for the association and planning is still underway (details found in the current issue of Air Force magazine pages 61-62). However more work needs to be done on modernizing our Association's databases, membership recruitment, and other internal procedures along with updating our bylaws, governance and protocol guides, work which is currently underway. Our new National Director is now providing monthly updates on his and National Associations work and the April report can be found on the [National RCAFA web-site](#).

With Red Deer's 703 (Fred Sutherland) Wing not in a position to host the April 2027 Alberta Group AGM, we volunteered to host the AGM next year and will be forming a committee in May to start that work. With May here, the Wing will begin the work

organizing for both September's Battle of Britain Sunday and November's Remembrance Day commemorations. Reminder that our June 6th picnic in the park at Pearce Estate Park and July 5th Stampede Pancake Breakfast, again hosted at Bev Spielman's home in Acadia, is rapidly approaching.

I was invited to attend the Air Cadet Effective Speaking Competition held in Red Deer on May 2. There were 14 competitors from across the province. I have heard about this competition for years due to our Wing members long-standing involvement in the program and I was honoured to be invited to go watch such extraordinary well spoken young cadets and present cheques of \$1500 on behalf of 783 Wing and \$1000 on behalf of RCAF Alberta Group to support the competition. This year 1st place was won by WO1 Cameron Carnegie of 868 Squadron of Fort McMurray, with 2nd place won by Sergeant Roshann Chaudhry of 504 Squadron of Edmonton and 3rd place by Flight Sergeant Saket Pandey of 868 Squadron of Fort McMurray. The quality of the speakers was incredibly high and our own Barb Mann, one of the judges, had very few critical notes. Our mandate as an organization is to support the Air Cadets and I received many sincere thank yous for our Wing and Alberta Group's ongoing support, not just from Air Cadet League volunteers, but from thankful parents and family members. It is truly gratifying and moving to see our Wing's impact in the community and in helping in the growth and mentorship of so many young Canadians.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our upcoming Spring and Summer events.

Per Ardua Ad Astra

Scott Deederly

Chairman

783 (Calgary) Wing

Royal Canadian Air Force Association

Member profile—Scott Deederly

Scott Deederly, the current Chair of 783 (Calgary) Wing RCAFA was born in Port Alberni, Vancouver Island, British Columbia. After two years of the family moving back and forth between Ucluelet and Port Alberni for work, Scott's father took a position with Alberta Treasury Branches and the Deederlys moved to Alberta to further his father Bill's banking career. Scott would be raised in small towns across Alberta, first living in Viking, then Peace River, Grande Prairie, and Carstairs before moving to Fort Macleod where he graduated High School just before the family moved back to Innisfail in Central Alberta. Scott started working Summer jobs in Innisfail, Markerville, Red Deer and Carbon in between attending the University of Alberta in Edmonton. Scott studied History and Political Science at University and was interested in Canadian, British, Central and Eastern European and military history and international relations. Scott was very active in campus life, participating in the governance of the student residence he lived in and joining many clubs and organizations, like the U of A Student's Union campus patrol service Safewalk and the Star Trek, Debate, Progressive Conservative and Model Parliament clubs. Scott's trade is house painting, and worked on many projects during and just after graduating University, to pay for his education.

After graduation, Scott knew he wanted to be in Public Service to Canada and took the Canadian Foreign Service exam, just missing the cut-off to advance forward in the interview process. Before he could challenge the test again to become a diplomat, and while he was considering joining the Reserves, Scott was hired by Bob Mills, the MP for Red Deer to work as a Constituency Assistant in his Red Deer Office and Scott started his career in the Public Service working for the House of Commons eventually for two Members of Parliament. Scott supported constituents with their inquires to the federal government, such as immigration, EI and taxes, but he was also involved in supporting local municipalities in accessing infrastructure funding and worked on many successful applications in Central Alberta. Scott would marry Bryndis Whitson in the Summer 2010 and then would be recruited to work in the Calgary Mayor's Office in November 2010, starting a 13-year career at The City of Calgary, first working in the executive office and then in City Administration in government relations. Scott would get to work on projects like the Airport Tunnel, the start of the Green Line LRT project and support the arrival and settlement of Syrian Refugees in 2015-26. In July 2023, Scott would leave The City for the private sector, joining the government relations and strategic communications firm Global Public Affairs as a senior consultant working on municipal and provincial files for clients.

Scott half-jokingly when asked about how he came to be involved with the RCAFA, says he married into the Air Force. Shortly after meeting Bryndis Whitson, Grant Whitson and Barbara Clifford began involving their future son-in-law in RCAFA and Calgary aviation museum related activities. Though Scott has family ties to the RCAF through his Great Uncle, Ernie Staub, who served as ground crew from the 50s to the 70s before his second career at Time Air / Canadian in Lethbridge. Uncle Ernie would be an influence on Scott while growing-up in Fort Macleod. 783 Wing Chair Randy Fisher asked Scott to become more involved in 2018 and Scott volunteered to be 783 Wing's Director for Advocacy and then later becoming Vice Chair under Chair Michelle Gerwing, then chairing the Battle of Britain and Remembrance Day committees during and after the pandemic before becoming Chair of 783 Wing in June 2025.

Scott is an aspiring writer and gardener, enjoys board and computer games, reading history, and lives with his wife Bryndis in Calgary with their three cats: Felix, Westley and Paisley.

Fred Sutherland of the Dambusters

The Early Years

Fred was born on February 26, 1923. His father Frederick Henry Sutherland was the local doctor in Peace River, Alberta - a small community located 500 kilometres north of Edmonton. His mother Clara Caroline Richards was a nurse from Ontario who came to Peace River for work, and ended up marrying Fred's father.

"It wasn't until after she died that we discovered she was aboriginal," Fred said. "She was a Woodland Cree from Moose Factory, Ontario, who came south to stay with an aunt and take her nurse's training. It was obviously a deep secret because she never said a word about it. I don't know whether she was a full-blooded Cree, or Métis. I don't even know whether she told my father."

The only son in his family, Fred grew up with two sisters, Kathleen and Alma. He dreamed of becoming a bush pilot in Canada's wilderness. He had a girlfriend, pretty little Margaret Baker, who was the daughter of the local bank manager.

At the age of eighteen, before finishing high school, Fred joined the air force in July 1941.

Fred Trains for "Operation Chastise"

Fred trained as an air gunner at Brandon, Manitoba, and arrived in England in spring 1942. He did his operational training at Royal Air Force Cottesmore in Rutland, England, where he "crewed up" with Australian Les Knight as his pilot.

Their first operational unit was Royal Air Force No. 50 Squadron, at Skellingthorpe, Lincolnshire, where they began flying the Lancaster in September 1942.

It is a measure of their skill that this close-knit crew survived twenty-five trips over Europe. At the time, a full tour was thirty operations, and by March 1943 the seven-man crew was looking forward to completing their last five trips. Then they would have a respite before beginning their final tour of twenty additional trips. His crew consisted of: their Australian pilot, Pilot Officer Les Knight; an Australian Wireless Operator, Sergeant Robert Kellow; an English Flight Engineer, Sergeant Raymond Grayston; an English Navigator, Flying Officer Sidney Hobday; an English Bomb Aimer, Flying Officer Edward Johnson; a Canadian Front Gunner, Sergeant Fred Sutherland; and a Canadian Rear Gunner, Sergeant Harry O'Brien.

So they were happy to hear the news: two crews from their squadron had been chosen to participate in a special top-secret project - and in exchange, they would be granted the last five trips in their first tour.

"If you had made it through twenty-five trips, you were doing very well," Fred recalled.

"Our crew was considered one of the best. We volunteered for the special mission because we wanted to stay together."

In total, twenty-one bomber crews were selected from the RAF's No. 5 Group, including Brits, Canadians and other nationalities, to create a new squadron, RAF No. 617.

After the initial excitement, though, reality set in. What was this special mission, and just how risky would it be?

"Everybody was curious. They told us not to try to figure it out, but amongst ourselves, we couldn't help wondering."

They didn't know it yet, but they were about to become famous.

Scientist Barnes Wallis had developed the theoretical concept of a special "bouncing bomb" that would skip over the water like a skipping stone and lodge underwater against the wall of a dam, where it would explode.

But the bomb had to be dropped from an altitude of precisely sixty feet, at an air speed of precisely 390 kilometres per hour, and at a precisely specified distance from the target.

This called for some fancy flying.

Without being told what the ultimate goal was, the crews went to work, dropping dummy bombs on targets. Then they progressed to spinning bombs filled with sand rather than explosives.

"Our crew thought we must be after the U-boat pens," Fred said, referring to the dreaded German submarines. They still had no idea what their target might be.

During their preparations, Fred naturally became acquainted with Guy Gibson, the dashing twenty-four-year-old heroic figure who led the Dambuster raid and is forever immortalized as a war hero.

"We were all impressed with Gibson's flying," Fred said. "Once he found this air strip in a forested area and side-slipped his Lancaster on to a perfect three-point landing on a very short runway."

Although Gibson was an excellent pilot, sometimes he chose not to fly himself. "Our pilot Les Knight was tops. He didn't use bad language, and he didn't drink. So Gibson would get our pilot to fly him down to London whenever he wanted to get lit up." Apparently there were designated drivers, or pilots, in those days as well!

After the raid, Gibson was awarded the Victoria Cross and sent to the United States on a publicity tour, where he charmed adoring audiences. When he returned to Britain, he wrote a book about the raid. Sadly, this brilliant young man was shot down and killed in 1944.

Busting the Dams

The aircrews were informed of their target on that very night - May 16, 1943. Fred remembered thinking that it was a suicide mission; he never expected to survive. "When you go into the target at sixty feet with all the lights on, you've had it."

It was so secret that Fred didn't hear the name of the mission until the briefing: Operation Chastise. The targets were three key dams: the Mohne, the Sorpe, and the Eder. The goal was to knock out hydroelectric power, and reduce the water supply needed by heavy

industry in the Ruhr Valley.

Nineteen Lancasters took off that night, and eight were lost. The first formation attacked the Mohne Dam, and it was successfully breached. The Sorpe Dam was also attacked, but it held out.

The five aircraft still carrying bombs then turned toward the Eder Dam. The Eder Valley was covered by heavy fog, and the surrounding hills made the approach difficult. From his position as nose gunner, lying in a transparent bubble below the pilot's cockpit, Fred must have felt particularly vulnerable.

The first aircraft made six unsuccessful runs. The second dropped a bomb that struck the top of the dam, but the aircraft itself was severely damaged in the blast.

Fred's aircraft released the final bomb at just the precise moment - and it blew the dam wide open!

To this day Fred credits his pilot for this feat. "Jumping over the hill and hitting the right speed and the right height was an act of genius."

As you might imagine, there was much jubilation in the aircraft. "As soon as the dam was hit, the water was going everywhere," Fred recalled. "There was a bridge down below the dam that just disappeared, just disintegrated. The force was terrific. We couldn't believe it. We were just yattering away."

In total, fifty-three of the 133 airmen who participated in the attack were killed - a casualty rate of forty percent. Thirty of the airmen who took part - about one-quarter of the total - were Canadian. Of those thirty Canadians, fourteen were killed, one was taken prisoner, and fifteen returned to base. Fred was one of the lucky fifteen Canadians who returned safely.

Fred Shot Down, Hides in Holland

After the Dambuster raid, RAF No. 617 Squadron was kept intact. Just four months later, on September 15, 1943, Fred's crew set out on an almost identical raid on the Dortmund Emms Canal in Germany.

Their Lancaster was carrying a 12,000-pound bomb. It was a costly operation, with five of the eight aircraft failing to return. Fred's was one of them.

While the low-level Lancaster was searching through the mist for the canal, it struck the tops of some trees. But their excellent pilot Les Knight managed to get the Lancaster across the border into Holland so all six of his crew could bale out before the aircraft crashed. Sadly, Les Knight died in the crash. Five of the seven managed to evade capture, but one was taken prisoner by the Germans.

Fred thought he had been frightened during the Dambuster raid, but now he was terrified. "I've never been so scared in my life. I knew my best method of survival was to stay calm, and I kept telling myself: 'Don't panic! Keep your head!'"

He and his English navigator, Sidney Hobday, found each other after the crash. They remained in hiding for a day or two before being picked up by a Dutch civilian and taken to a camp deep in the woods, where about eight or ten other men were hiding.

All were Dutchmen, evading the Nazi forced labour camps, except for one: a seventeen-year-old Jew named Ed Lessing. "The other guys didn't want him there, because they were afraid it would go harder on them if we were captured, but the Dutch policeman who looked after the camp insisted that he stay." Ed spoke English, and the two boys became friends. Amazingly, they are still friends today. Ed Lessing lives in New York, but he has visited Fred in Rocky Mountain House. He even painted a picture of the two of them titled "A Dark Time in the Woods," and gave it to Fred. It is a very cherished possession.

After a month hiding in the camp, the resistance fighters produced papers for Fred saying that he was a labourer on the Cherbourg Fortifications. They dressed him and Hobday in work clothes and put them on a train from Rotterdam to Paris.

"My seat was at the back of the car, beside the toilet," Fred recalled. "People kept coming up to me and asking if the toilet was free, and I would either nod or shake my head since I couldn't speak any Dutch. The train was full of Germans. It seemed that everyone I looked at was a German." The two Canadians made it to Paris, and were taken in by an elegant old lady named Madame Theresa Viellot. "Every night the three of us sat around and drank a bottle of wine." They were there for another month.

Fred's Happy Homecoming

Fred's flying career was over. Once an airman was rescued by the Resistance, he wasn't allowed to fly again in case he was captured and forced to reveal the identities of his rescuers. In December 1943 Fred sailed for home. He celebrated Christmas on board the ship, then took the train from Halifax to Edmonton. "When I got there, one of our military police stopped me and gave me heck for not having my coat buttoned up properly!"

But standing on the platform were his parents and Margaret, who had driven down from Peace River to meet him. Five hundred kilometres was a long journey in those days, but they couldn't wait another minute.

To the surprise of his parents, Fred and Margaret announced their intention of being married immediately. It's a good thing his parents were present, because Fred was still only twenty years old. Margaret was born on November 21, 1922. Since she had just reached the majority age of twenty-one, she was legally permitted to marry, but Fred needed his father's permission to tie the knot.

The very next day, January 5, 1944, Fred and Margaret were married in an Anglican Church with his parents present.

Fred served as a gunnery instructor in Canada for the rest of the war. After the war he became a forestry inspector for the Government of Alberta and worked in Calgary, Edmonton, and Rocky Mountain House, where he retired.

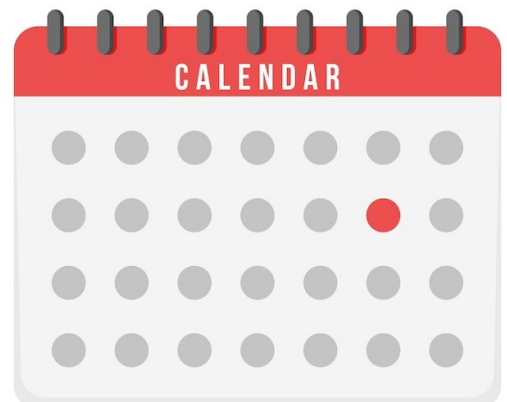
His career meant that he spent much time in the wilderness, where he had some hair-raising encounters with bears. But Fred kept his head, just as he had done during the war. Fred and Margaret remained active well into their 90s.

Upcoming Events

- Sunday, May 10, 2026 – Mother’s Day at The Hangar Flight Museum - Flower-pot painting workshop with a paper airplane bouquet at 11:00 AM and 2:00 PM
- Saturday, May 16, 2026 – Bomber Command Museum’s 40th Anniversary of Nanton Lancaster Society / Night Run - Engine Runs: 4:00 PM & 9:30 PM
- Tuesday, May 26, 2026 – Monthly Meeting in-person and Online via Zoom: 7 PM

Saturday May 30 - Lobsterfest at 702 (Lethbridge) Wing at 174 STUBB ROSS RD, Lethbridge, AB- Last possible day to book is May 16

- Saturday May 30 and Sunday May 31 - Aviation Career Days at The Hangar Flight Museum
- Saturday, June 6, 2026 – Picnic at the Park, Pearce Estates Park at Picnic Spot #1
- Saturday, June 20, 2026 – Open Cockpit Day/National Indigenous Day at the Bomber Command Museum, Nanton - Lancaster and Bristol Hercules Engine Run at 11 AM & 2 PM
- Tuesday, June 23, 2026 – 783 Wing AGM & Monthly Meeting in-person & Online via Zoom: 7 PM
- Wednesday, July 1, 2026 – Canada Day
- Sunday, July 5, 2026 – 783 (Calgary) Wing RCAFA Annual Stampede Breakfast





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