

427 LION SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

PATRONS

G/CAPT. (RET) DUDLEY BURNSIDE DSO OBE DFC & BAR

L/GEN. (RET) DONALD MCNAUGHTON CMM CD

HON/COL. (M/GEN. (RET) ROBERT CHISHOLM CMM CD

Newsletter

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LION SQUADRON — 55th ANNIVERSARY

They were not called Lions in the early days, but it is a matter of record that 427 Squadron first saw the light of day on November 7, 1942 at a place called Croft in the northern reaches of Yorkshire. Until the formation of the new Canadian Bomber Group in the New Year, 427 Squadron was attached to 4 Group. The Commanding Officer named to lead this fledgling Unit was W/C Dudley Burnside, a Permanent Force RAF officer who had arrived back in Britain after several year's service in the Far East. Initially the squadron was equipped with the Mk III Wellington, affectionately known as the *Wimpy*.

In those days, Croft was a single-squadron station, a satellite of Middleton-St. George where two established RCAF squadrons were already based. One of these was No. 419 (Moose) Squadron, and pilot Lou Fellner, of London, Ontario by way of Weyburn Saskatchewan, whose crew was the very first at Croft, remembers the ten pilots and many of the crew members who were transferred from 419 to 427 to form the nucleus of the new squadron. Most of the crews were rookies and their numbers were gradually strengthened with a goodly number of experienced types posted to Croft from other RAF and RCAF sources, both ground crew and aircrew.

In the beginning there was a shortage of everything at Croft except mud and the favourite item in stores was, "boots rubber, airman, for the use of." Speaking of shortages, at one point there was only one typewriter on the squadron and the C/O nick-named his new unit the *Typewriter Squadron*. The name stuck for a while until somebody thought the name should be something strong and fierce, and the Lion Squadron name was chosen. Lucky for us or we might have been flying aircraft called Remington, Underwood or Smith-Corona.

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A Message From The Chairman

With this mailing we have included our first Membership List for the 427 Lion Squadron Association. This is another way that we can all keep in touch. We have also published in this issue of ROAR the names and addresses of those Lions who have agreed to represent us across the country and overseas. This way, wartime and post-war Lions can always keep in touch and perhaps arrange the occasional *Gathering of the Lions* in their own region as well as a national one. These events will be announced in ROAR as they occur, so be sure to give us lots of lead-time. Our next newsletter will be published in June of 1998, so please send in your suggestions and ideas. In the meantime, have a very Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year . . . A.L. d'Eon

Membership Notes

Our Association now has 125 Life Members and 101 Charter members, and still growing. Amendments will be made annually, so please notify us if you make any address changes. The cost of producing and mailing this issue of ROAR is \$460. The membership List will add \$198.00 with this mailing. Our current bank balance will ensure at least nine more ROARs, but with added memberships and annual renewals, the Lions should be able to ROAR for many years to come. So lets all get out and do some recruiting. Our 1998 Membership Renewal form and return envelope is provided for your convenience.

Thanks for your support, and I wish you all a Merry Festive Season, and a Happy New Year. . . Stan Miller, Treasurer & Membership Chairman

427 Lion Squadron

427 Lion Squadron has a proud history. By organizing our members, past and present, into a formal Association in the Spring of 1996, the intent was to help to ensure that the achievements, traditions and memories of this famous squadron are maintained and perpetuated. Listed below and on the next page are the names of those you may contact with your ideas and suggestions. Keep in touch.

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• *Let the Lions Roar* •

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There was bags of training and hard work to bring a new squadron up to snuff or at least to the point where it could become operational. But things didn't always go according to plan. Roy Inkster tells about his posting from a radar training unit in Britain to Croft. He and fellow RAF mechanics, Bud James, Jim Cameron and Bill McKim, ended up at Croft, Leicestershire instead of Croft, Yorkshire. It was only when they asked the stationmaster for directions to the airfield (there was none) that they knew there had been a foul-up in their travel orders back at the training unit. The four radar mechanics unsnarled the red tape and arrived in Yorkshire without further delay to begin working on Gee, an air-borne electronic navigational aid.

Under Dudley Burnside's leadership, aided by Danny McCann, Station Admin Officer and Jay (Chazz) Chasanoff, a super Adjutant, together with a great effort by all ranks, the Squadron reached operational status on December 1, 1942. The first operation, albeit three aircraft on a mining operation, was flown two weeks later.

On New Year's Day 1943, 427 Squadron, along with other RCAF bomber squadrons overseas, became a member of No. 6 (RCAF) Group in RAF Bomber Command. There were still plenty of growing pains ahead but nonetheless it was a noteworthy achievement that so much was accomplished in a matter of weeks. It is indeed a tribute to the quality



Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

It is part of Lion Squadron's history that Lana Turner was the number one star in the popularity poll and Sgt Eric Johnson proudly printed the name of the gorgeous blonde on the nose of *London's Revenge*. The question is sometimes asked— "Who were the others? According to information in the MGM file in 1982, the surviving stars at the time were: Lana Turner, Kathryn Grayson, Donna Reed, Ann Southern, Ann Miller, Ester Williams, Lucille Ball and Greer Garson. We also know from memory that the list included Hedy Lamarr, Judy Garland, and Spencer Tracy. If there are readers out there who remember the others we'd like to hear from you.

Nostalgia

"Is trying to recapture the feeling of the good old daze."

We Shall Remember Them

*W. Harold Halbert
Keld Lysholm*

*Joseph Gordon Holmes
Jules Lambert*

Dean Wright

Dean Wright was born in the Eastern Ontario town of Spencerville. He joined the RCAF and trained as an aero-engine technician. He serviced Hallys at Leeming in the winter of 1944-45. Dean remained in the Permanent Force where his specialty was meteorology. Upon retirement, he ran a very successful consulting business which he continued to operate until shortly before his death, at age 71, in June of this year. Dean was a Life Member of our 427 Squadron Association and was front and centre at all gatherings of Lions whether it be at Petawawa or the Allied Air Forces reunions. His artistic and technical talents were invaluable. Dean served us well and his untimely departure has left a gap in our ranks.

We extend our sincere sympathy to his wife and family.

Remember Me

Shortly after noon on the 8th of January 1943, Wellington ZL-A overshot the runway while attempting to land at Middleton-St. George and became the first aircraft under 6 Group authority involved in a flying accident. It ended up with its starboard wing overlapping a railway line. Sgt W.E. Harwood's crew appear to have escaped unharmed, but one person died and another was injured, after a train ploughed into the wreckage.

The first Sqn aircraft to fail to return from operations was Wellington III ZL-G on 15-16 January, 1943. S/Ldr M.A.L. Williams, P/Os E.R. Charlesworth and A.R. Eckton; Sgts H.D. Munro and W.H. Pates (all RAF) are buried in Guidel Cemetery, Holland.

On 21-22 January, F/Lt D.A. Shead & Sgts W.J. Oram (both RAF), and Sgts G.R. Hoyt, M. Patrick and J.L. Sparling (all RCAF) made up the crew of Wellington ZL-R which was lost without trace, thus becoming the Sqn's second operational casualty.

The same mystery surrounds the fate of the Sqn's third loss, an all-Canadian crew comprised of: P/O C.J. Bennett, P/O H.B. Kent, Sgts W.W. Wallace, L.W. Phillips and C.J. Smith. Wellington BK389 ZL-L, disappeared after taking off on the night of 30 January for operations against Oldenburg, Germany.

Detailed for *Gardening* operations, Wellington III ZL-D crashed into the Cleveland Hills, NNW of Helmsley, Yorkshire on the night of 12-13 February. Sgt O. Adlam, P/O B. Dunn, and Sgts A.C. Clifford, W.C.I. Jelly and W. Ball, all RAF, made up the 4th sacrificed crew.

On the night of 26 February 1943, Sgt W.E. Harwood's crew took off from Croft at 18:50 hrs, to bomb Cologne. Their new charge, Wellington ZL-F, crashed near Vleut, Holland, at 21:34 hrs, having been intercepted and shot down by a Venlo based night-fighter of I./NJG 1, flown by Ofw Kause, making it the Sqn's fifth operational loss. Sadly, there were no survivors. Two Canadian members of the crew, Sgt O.H. Skelton and Sgt T.C. Smith are buried in Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, while a third RCAF crew member, Sgt C.F. Leach, rests in his hometown of Newton, Massachusetts, USA.

427 Squadron's New Lion Tamer

The following is a profile of LCol J. J. G. D. (Dan) Guertin who assumed command of the Squadron on June 11, 1997. Lieutenant-Colonel Guertin completed pilot training in Moose Jaw in September 1978 and was posted to 443 Anti-Submarine Warfare Squadron (ASW) in Shearwater, Nova Scotia, where he flew the *Sea King* helicopter until June 1983. He was then transferred to 450 Transport Helicopter Squadron in Ottawa to fly the *Chinook* helicopter as a line pilot and a Flight Commander until June 1986. Following this, he was posted to 10 Tactical Air Group Headquarters in St-Hubert, Quebec. He was assigned to the position of *Chinook's* Standards Officer and after his promotion to major, was assigned as the Group Standards Officer (SO HELS).

Upon graduation from Canadian Forces Command and Staff College in Toronto in June 1992, he was posted once again to 450 Composite Helicopter Squadron as Flight Commander and then Deputy Commanding Officer. In August 1994, he was posted to 10 Tactical Air Group Headquarters where he became responsible for the implementation of the CH 146 *Griffon* into the Group. In the fall of 1996, Lieutenant-Colonel Guertin was promoted to his present rank and served as Senior Staff Officer, Plans, Doctrine and Requirements. Lieutenant-Colonel Guertin is married to Michele Carpentier. They have two sons, Alexandre and Nicolas.

Lion Landmarks CF 104 Era

March 16, 1962 — W/C P.B. St. Louis formally handed over No. 427 Squadron to W/C R.G. Middlemiss marking the end of the Sabre era. The Lion Squadron was the first in the Air Division to be equipped with the CF-104 *Starfighter* and operations began as an Attack Squadron in mid-January 1963.

May 30, 1968 — After twenty-five years to the month, the Lion Squadron met with MGM. Film Corporation in London for an official hand-over ceremony of a film depicting MGM's adoption of 427 Squadron in 1943. The CF-104 Squadron was on deployment in England at the time, and fifteen aircrew members attended the ceremony.

June 30, 1970 — The official hand-over of Squadron records to the Base Commander took place in the 4 Wing Arena at Solingen, West Germany, thus marking the end of the CF-104 era and the closing of 427 Squadron. Many Lions from the Sabre era and early 104 years were in attendance.

The 427's crest was not inactive for long. The Squadron was re-established on January 1, 1971 as a Tactical Helicopter Squadron and has seen continuous service ever since.

Report From Petawawa

In addition to his pilot's duties, Captain G.A. (Geoff) Mackenzie is the new Public Information Officer. Geoff will provide ROAR with regular news items and happenings from 427 Tac Hel Sqn CFB Petawawa. Here is the first report dated Oct 6, 1997.

Conversion to the new CH-146 *Griffon* is going smoothly. Aircrew and groundcrew have been going through conversion courses at the Bell-Textron plant in Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, as well as 403 Sqn in Gagetown, NB; 438 Sqn in St-Hubert, PQ, and 400 Sqn in Borden, Ont. Our Standards cell here has been busy completing conversion training for those coming back from Texas who have been receiving abbreviated courses. We are close to completing our conversion training of the Squadron as a whole. The last two of our pilots begin training in St-Hubert on the 20th of October. The last group of flight engineers to train will be heading to Texas soon afterward.

Currently we have 13 of the *Griffons* in our inventory, with 6 remaining to be delivered. Our serviceability rate seems to be hovering (no pun intended) around the 40% range for now; some days are better, some days are worse. This is not unexpected as everyone here is getting used to the new systems, and the aircraft themselves need a bit of a breaking-in period.

Other happenings: as I mentioned above, we have just held our annual *Family Day* this past Saturday (the 4th). The weather cooperated for the most part, with low cloud early in the morning but clearing to a beautiful, warm, sunny day by late morning. Approximately 450 people went for helicopter rides, with some 700 visiting the Squadron.

You probably remember from the *Gathering* last year that we had a new hangar under construction. We've moved into it now and have started work on yet another larger one. This last is more for storage and maintenance of aircraft than for office space.

Of course, as you are aware, this year's *Gathering of the Lion's* will be held on the 7th and 8th of November. Plans are well underway, and I think a tentative schedule of events will be issued shortly. Lots of food and drink once more.

I think that about sums up the goings-on at 427 Squadron. Primarily, we are concentrating on getting comfortable with the new aircraft, learning all the new hi-tech systems on board. This will be our main focus throughout the winter, with our Op-Eval some time late next Spring.

Hunters

While hunting, Joe and Moe got lost in the woods. "Not to worry," Joe said, "All we have to do is shoot into the air three times and someone will find us." They shot in the air three times but no one came. After a while they tried it again. Still no luck! When they decided to try once more, Moe said: "It better work this time, we're down to our last three arrows."

From Leeming To Büchenwald

Ed Carter-Edwards served on 427 Squadron as a Wireless Air Gunner and was based at Leeming in 1944. He was one of a group of captured airmen placed in the custody of the Gestapo. This is an account of that dreadful experience and a joyous reunion a half century later. (as told to a West Lincoln Review reporter in 1996).

For most, Remembrance Day is a time of the year to look to the past—a time to remember the Canadian men and women who served, fought and in many cases sacrificed their lives in wars this century. But for some who survived the horror of war, such as Ed Carter-Edwards of Smithville, a look to the past can bring back some terrible memories. Times that might be better forgotten if possible. Yet the prisoner of war (POW) survivor has been willing to relive those memories over and over throughout the years. Why? Because it brings those horrors into the light for all to see.

He has loaned his memories and knowledge of life in a concentration camp to an international film and still takes part in conferences discussing the despicable acts which took place there. However, his involvement in those activities led to a new chapter in his story in the past year.

The story of how this WW II Airman survived being shot down so many years ago is, as one might expect, an exciting one. But incredibly, it took another turn just one year ago for Carter-Edwards when he was contacted by a voice from the past.

The Smithville man received a letter from Mme Françoise Dujardin. He wasn't sure at first what a letter from France could mean. But after reading Dujardin's letter explaining her search for an Allied airman shot down near her childhood home in France a half-century ago, the light went on for the former POW. "Those incidents are so strong in my memory I thought 'It can't be anyone but me.'"

They wrote to each other, talked on the phone, and early last month, Carter-Edwards travelled back to France. It wasn't the first time he found himself in the country. At the age of 20, he was one of a crew of six men who had to abandon a burning plane over it.

But, it was the first time Carter-Edwards had seen Dujardin in the 52 years after her family took the airman in when he needed help after reaching the ground. As a girl of 18, Dujardin kept herself warm with Carter-Edwards' flight jacket the winter he found himself in France hiding from the German army.

He wasn't there for long, no more than a few days, but Carter-Edwards, now 72, recalls quite a bit about that time. And when Dujardin took him back to the house where her family lived at that time, in the small town of Solaires, he was overcome to see the home. It was a difficult trip down memory lane. "I didn't feel as bad seeing the house as I did seeing her", Carter-Edwards said. "I felt pretty emotional when I saw her because it was her and her mother that risked their lives for me, taking me in."

Also overwhelming was being allowed into the house by the current owners, and seeing once again the home that welcomed him in a dark moment of his life. The emotional rollercoaster continued when Dujardin took him to her home, now in Viroflay outside of Paris. "She arranged a special evening for me," he explained. "The deputy mayor and 65 citizens were there and presented me with a medal and an honorarium."

"Through an interpreter, I gave them a brief resume of my experience, of how I was shot down and what happened afterwards."

Those experiences began when his plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire on his 22nd bombing mission. It was a nasty run-in with the German forces that eventually led him to the Büchenwald concentration camp. During his recent trip he also attended an International meeting at the camp, which he had returned to once before in making the documentary, *The Lucky One*.

The recent trip brought back the memories even stronger as he recalled being caught by the Gestapo. Threatened at gunpoint several times by the dangerous German soldiers, Carter-Edwards thought at times that it was all over. "They took away our identification as airmen and said we were spies and saboteurs and were to be executed," he recalls.

"We were all beaten up badly and I was put in front of this big German officer who



A Bricklayer's Lament

What can we say for the poor fellow who is said to have handed this letter to his employer?

"... I needed to lift some bricks so I rigged a pulley at the top of the building and hoisted up some barrels of bricks. When I was finished there were extra bricks left so I hoisted the barrel back up again and secured the line at the bottom. I then filled the barrel with bricks and climbed down and cast-off the line. Unfortunately, the barrel of bricks was heavier than I was and, before I knew what happened, the barrel started down, jerking me off the ground. I hung on and halfway up met the barrel coming down and received a severe blow to my shoulder. I then continued to the top, thus banging my head against the beam. In the meantime, the barrel hit the ground and the bricks spilled out. I was now heavier than the barrel. Halfway down, I met the barrel coming up and this resulted in severe injured to my shins. When I hit the bottom I landed on the bricks.

At this point, I think I lost my presence of mind because I let go of the line and the barrel started down again. . . I respectfully request sick leave."

Leeming Memorial

On June 19th, 1993, at a ceremony outside the church of St. John The Baptist in Leeming village, North Yorkshire, England, the Bishop of Knaresborough dedicated a special memorial to the Canadian and Commonwealth airmen and airwomen who served at RAF Leeming during WW II. The unveiling of the memorial was performed by Group Captain Dudley Burnside DSO OBE DFC & Bar, 427 Squadron's first Commanding Officer, first Honorary Colonel, and patron of our Association. He was assisted by Steve Puskas, DFC, 429 Squadron, Don Pettys MiD, 408 Squadron. Our patron for this event was former Leeming Base Commander L/General A. Chester Hull CMM DFC CD. The RCAF Padre was Rev. Derek Salter, 427 Squadron. Members of 405, 408, 419, 427, 429 and others participated at this unveiling.

Should any of you be planning a vacation in Britain, we invite you to travel to Leeming in the Vale of York, to visit the Base and the Leeming Memorial. They will certainly make you welcome. For more information, contact our Chairman.



Gone For A Burton

The popular expression, *Gone For A Burton*, meaning someone was shot down or killed in action, referred originally to the Royal Air Force department which handled postings for Wireless Operators in Great Britain. This department was situated above *Burton's Menswear* tailoring shops in Liverpool, England. Anyone who failed Wireless Ops course was posted back there — only to be rejected for aircrew. Let's face it, it was a posting worse than death.

Now That's Performance!

The CF-104 single-seat, all-weather *Strike and Reconnaissance* fighter was flown by 427 Squadron during the 1962-70 period. Maximum Speed—1320 mph at 40,000 feet (Mach 2.0). Initial Climb — 5,000 ft/min. Combat Ceiling — 55,000 ft.

Retired

An elderly farm couple sat in their rocking chairs in front of the fireplace one cold wintry night. "The years are passing us by, Sarah," said the old man. "Yes," she agreed. "We're getting older," he said, "and pretty soon one of us will be left alone." Sarah replied, "That's right and when that happens, I'm moving to California."

Peter Elsee

Peter Elsee, a Londoner, was shot down on August 13, 1945 and ditched while operating against the Japanese in Sumatra. His Liberator aircraft may well have been the last to be lost in action during the entire Pacific war. Hostilities ended next day. Peter was flown out to Singapore by Lady Mountbatten. What is the connection with 427 Squadron?

Peter flew 20 trips with the Lion Squadron from Leeming on his first tour in the summer of 1943 after transferring from 420 Sqn. After the war, Peter Elsee emigrated to Canada and now resides in Oakville, Ontario. Best of all, he is a life member of our 427 Squadron Association. The complete account of his operational career in the Royal Air Force is a fascinating story.



Paul Benson

Paul Benson of Calgary has just signed on to be our Regional Representative for Alberta. Paul is a transplanted Easterner but we know he will do Albertans proud. In his letter of acceptance he enclosed a clipping from the Halifax Chronicle Herald. Space does not permit printing the article in its entirety.

The story line describes Paul's reunion with Don Buckler of Bear River NS, whom he hadn't seen since the war's end 52 years ago. The Lion Squadron Halifax was attacked by night fighters over Stuttgart. Benson's guns in the rear turret had jammed while Buckler in the mid-upper held off the fighters long enough that the entire crew could exit the mortally wounded Hally. The two air gunners were POW's for 15 months and split up in England, returning home on different ships. Organized reunions, like Squadron Associations, are great for getting in touch and staying in touch.

The New Plane

Two pilots were discussing the merits of a new twin-engine prop-driven plane undergoing service trials prior to acceptance into the RAF. The fellow who had yet to fly the machine asked: "What does it handle like?" "Oh, not so bad," was the answer. "Quite nice in fact." "How about asymmetric? How does it handle on one engine?" "Ah, that's when it gets a bit tricky," replied the other pilot. "Lose one engine, and the other engine immediately takes you to the scene of the crash."

Astra Stones

Visitors to the RCAF Memorial Museum at CFB Trenton will have seen the gray granite Stones edging the Air Park Walkways. There are now more than 2200 Stones in place bearing the names and home towns of persons who have served or are serving in any of Canada's Air Forces. On the individual Ad Astra Stone, the year of birth and year of death are inscribed after the person's demise upon a written request to the Museum.

The Donation for each *Ad Astra Stone* including Inscription and Installation is \$125.⁰⁰, valid for 1997, payable to the RCAF Memorial Museum. A receipt for tax purposes will be issued. Proceeds will be used to help fund Museum expansion, which is a multi-million dollar project. The *Ad Astra* program started in early 1996 and has been successful beyond all expectations.

On October 4, 1997 an inter-denominational service of dedication and remembrance was held at the Museum with more than 2500 in attendance. There were Air Force Association Wings from Eastern Ontario and Montreal as well as a Colour Party representing many of the Air Cadet Squadrons in the area. Other Air Force veterans, family members and friends were present in large numbers.

It is not the purpose of this article to report on the entire Dedication Ceremony. However, mention should be made of the fine address by Stewart Logan DFC, CD. As President of the Air Force Association of Canada, he reminded the audience that due to the drastic reduction in government funding in recent years, the Air Force is not much better off in terms of numbers, in relation to population, than it was in 1939. He said that this situation is unacceptable and puts us as a nation in a dangerous position. He emphasized the need for a well-equipped, compact Air Force and the measures that should be taken in this direction as soon as the deficit permits. "We own nothing less to those whose names are memorialized in the Air Park", he said.

The speaker paid tribute to the serving members of the Armed Forces who continue to perform their tasks in a professional manner with reduced resources.

Prior to the service and afterwards, the large crowd had the opportunity to locate the memorial stone of a relative, an Air Force comrade or a former hometown friend. The Museum and the Halifax Restoration annex received hundreds of visitors and what a thrill it was for first-time viewers. It is little wonder that Col. M.J. Dumais, in his opening remarks, described the RCAF Memorial Museum as, *the Crown Jewel* of 8 Wing.

For further information regarding eligibility, criteria or application to register, please contact: RCAF Memorial Museum, 8 Wing, Trenton, Box 1000 Stn Forces, Astra ON. KOK 3W0. Tel: (613) 965-2140 or (613) 965-2208. Fax (613) 965-7352.

Pilot Officer Prune

The bone-headed goofs of Pilot Officer Prune, the war-time cartoon character, were well known to air and ground crews. Prune never did anything right and seemingly couldn't care less. His monumental foul ups, as shown in the training manual Tee Emm, dramatically demonstrated how not to do things.

Pilot Officer Prune was the brainchild of Bill Hooper, who recently passed away. Trained as an air gunner, Hooper spent time in the early war years on a fighter base — nobody seems to know why he was there. In any case he possessed considerable skill as a cartoonist and, while doodling, came up with the Prune character. In the course of time, the bulbous nose, the beady eyes, the round face, the polka dot scarf made him instantly recognizable. The cartoons and accompanying caption depicted mistakes he had seen pilots make or ones he had heard about. He called the first batch, *Forget-Me-Nots for Fighter Pilots*.

Pilot Officer Percy Prune first appeared in Tee Emm on April 1, 1941 (an appropriate date) and thus began the series which continued throughout the war. P/O Prune quickly became a popular feature of the training magazine and whether it was landing down wind or having to land at a strange airfield and taxi to the control tower to find his whereabouts, it was something any pilot could relate to.

Later on, Pilot Officer Prune (he never got promoted) became a bomber pilot and his crew included an assortment of characters from all parts of the Commonwealth: *F/O Freddy Fixe*, a Canadian navigator; *Sgt Straddle*, a New Zealand B/A; *Sgt Backtune*, a Scottish WAG; and his gunner was *Willy Winde*, an Australian. Their aircraft was serviced by *AC Plonk*, and *Ernie the erk* was their armourer.

P/O Prune's war record was distinguished — he destroyed so many aircraft — the problem was they were all British fighters, bombers or training aircraft. His frequent mistakes and errors in the cockpit entitled him and all similarly inclined aircrew to become a companion in the *Most Highly Derogatory Order of the Irremovable Finger*.

Percy Prune was still flying in the closing days of the war, and he and his crew continued to make bonehead errors up to the very end. Just before bombing a Russian ammunition dump by mistake, Freddy Fixe had given Prune a 90 degree "turn left" off course, a 90 degree "turn right," then a 90 degree "turn right again," and then a "90 degree left," on to their original course.

At the Court of Inquiry, navigator Fixe explained that he had to go around his coffee mug which was on his map. Within 24 hours Pilot Officer Prune was discharged from the service.

Things

It's the little things that annoy us; we can sit on a mountain, but not on a tack.

War Story

by Fred Chappell

The time came to join the service like most everyone else. I, for one, preferred the Air Force so tried for Aircrew. I was washed out almost right away due to eyesight and being slightly colour blind.

Therefore, in 1940, I chose ground crew and became an Airframe Mechanic, eventually arriving overseas, joining 417 RCAF Squadron 2 weeks before it became such.

I served in England and Scotland working on Hurricanes from 1941. Then off to the Middle East in 1942 for maintenance on Spitfires, serving also in Malta, Sicily, and Italy when I was sent back to Tunis (North Africa) and on to an RAF camp in Algiers.

Before I left Scotland for the Middle East in 1942, I heard from home that my brother, Clifford, had already gone to the Middle East, so on arrival I tried to locate him to no avail. I was not able to trace him, even though 458 Squadron went there, because he, for some reason, had moved to 37 RAF Squadron. Unknowingly, we were both on the same aerodrome in Deversoir, Egypt. He was still on Wellingtons bombing targets ahead of us as we moved up. I could see the Wellington's far off across the field but had no idea he was there.

It was on one of those bombing runs when Clifford was shot down, some 170 miles south of Tobruk. After some 15 days traveling nights he reached Bug Bug on the Mediterranean coast. Just a short distance from there, he and Chris Hare were spotted and taken prisoner by the Italians who turned them over to the Germans. They were sent to a POW camp in Italy where he remained for 15 months.

He and thousands of POW's escaped during the big rebellion of the Italians against Germans when no one seemed to be in charge of anything. Clifford, along with Chris Hare, Ed Patrick, G. Middlemass, Stan Brooks, and Buzz Derek escaped from Sulmowa Italy in 1943. Along the way back to our lines they joined up with some New Zealanders who saved Clifford and Chris from falling off a mountain earlier during a heavy fog. After five weeks of traveling through the mountains they reached our lines.

The most surprising event for me happened in Algiers, far away from the war front, in an RAF camp in Algiers while awaiting my return to England. On Oct. 25, 1943, I was called to report to the Canadian Embassy immediately. I asked the Service Police what they wanted me for and all they would say is get dressed and report to the gate at once which I did, where transportation was awaiting me.

Upon arrival, I was told to go down a long hallway and knock on the door of the last room on the left. A gruff voice said, "Come in" and then told me to sit down.

Here in front of me was an Air Commodore with his cap on down over his face and busy in paperwork. I could not see his face, as he asked me where I'd been; how I liked the Middle East, etc. All he had to do was check my records. So all the time I'm thinking,

what's the real reason he wants to see me, of all people. Why would such a high ranking officer hide his face? I knew something was wrong which got me to thinking that he was not what he appeared to be. Well, after a while, his voice changed so I listened closely and then said, "You're no Air Commodore, your my younger brother Clifford." Imagine what might have happened if I had been wrong?

Then, and only then, did he raise his head and sure enough it was him. You could have knocked me over with a feather, I was so surprised and joyful to see him again. I asked him where he got the uniform as he was only a Ft Lieutenant. He stated that he had borrowed it. Needless to say, we sat there for a very long time catching up and going over our travels.

The last time Clifford and I got together was at 458 Australian Squadron at Holme on Spalding Moor, England. Clifford was flying as a Navigator-Bombardier on Wellington's with his long-lasting friend and pilot Chris Hare. After we had seen each other again, and said our good-byes, Clifford was off back to England and home, while I returned to England at the end of 1943 to join up with 427 RCAF Lion Squadron, working on Halifaxes at Base Maintenance in Leeming, Yorkshire, before returning home in 1945.

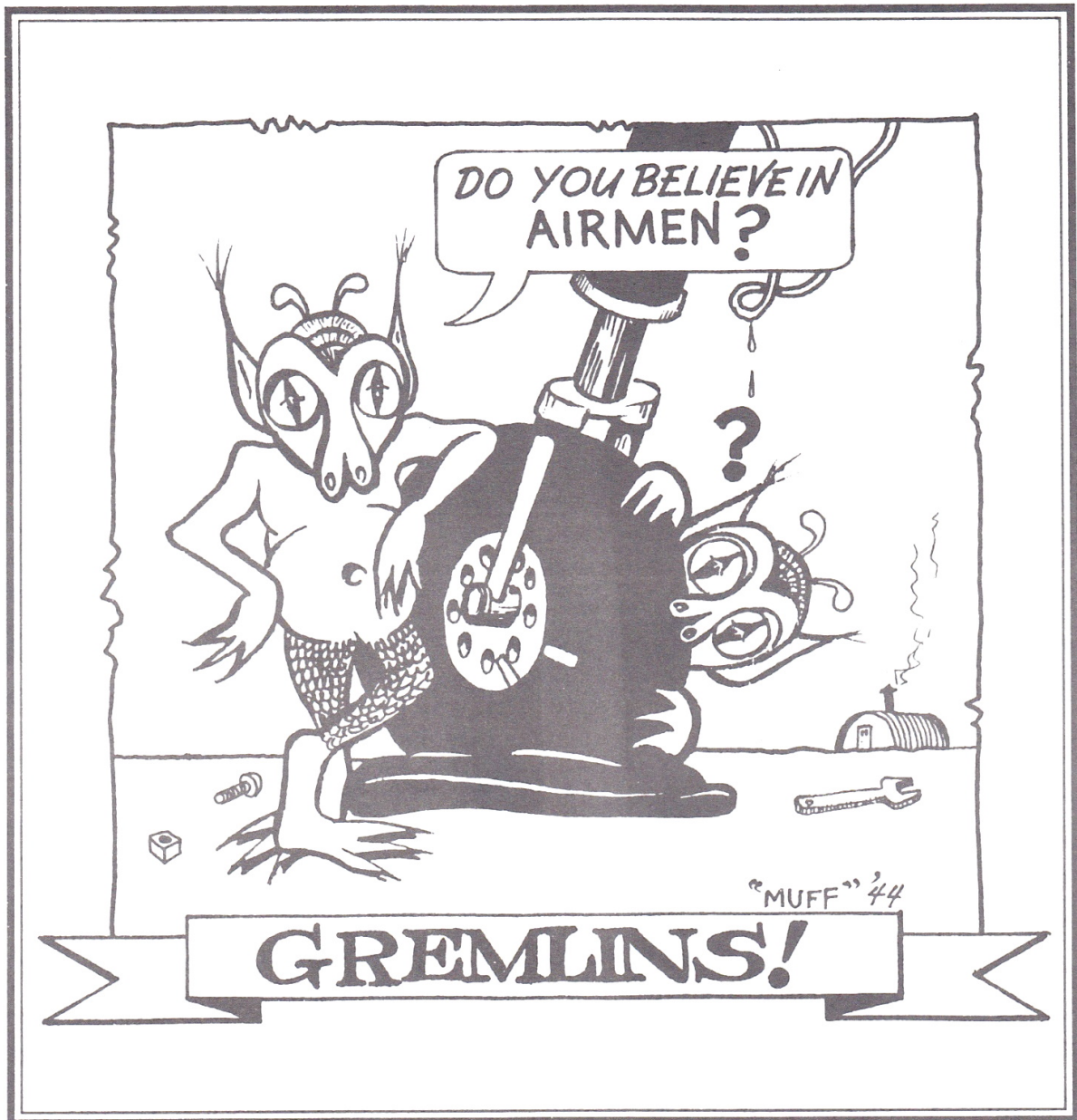


Times Never Change

Merve Harron of Woodstock, Ontario sent in the following story to the Legion Magazine some years ago. Merv had been stationed at RCAF Leeming in 1944-45 and like so many others made a post-war return visit. During his tour of the base, Merv told about an incident that had occurred a few days before during a period of Irish Republican Army activity in England. Late one evening, an object was noticed on a runway and a guard was posted to secure the area until daylight when the article could be examined by a bomb squad expert. The object turned out to be a Women's Auxiliary Air Force raincoat evidently dropped during the night while its owner tried to sneak back into camp. Merv found this situation interesting because the raincoat was found in the same dispersal area where many WWII squadron types used to hop the fence on their way to Bedale for an evening of pub crawling. There is no word on what happened to the WAAF offender.

Age of Retirement

The persons who are most difficult to convince they've reached the stage of retirement are young children at bedtime.



Poppy Day

Many of our readers will have handed out Poppies at the local mall or on Main Street in the days leading up to Remembrance Day. It is almost always a very rewarding experience for the veteran while doing his stint and interesting conversations often develop.

Ken McOrmond, of Rexdale, Ontario, (as quoted in Legion Magazine) seems to have attracted more than his quota of unforgettable questions. Here are a few.

- Are those your medals or are they given to you to sell poppies?
- Can I have one of the medals instead of the poppy?
- Can I buy medals like those?
- Where were you in the World war? Which war are we talking about? Was there more than one?
- And then there are those when asked if they would like a poppy:
". . . No thanks, I still have one from last year."