



427 LION SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

PATRONS

G. CAPT. DUDLEY BURNSIDE DSO OBE DFC & BAR

L. GEN. (RET) DONALD MCNAUGHTON CMM CD

M. GEN (RET) ROBERT CHISHOLM CMM CD

Newsletter

Number 11

November 2001

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

A super Gathering of the Lions, celebrating our 59th Anniversary was held at CFB Petawawa, the last weekend of October 2001. It was "super" because most of the serving members of 427 Squadron were back from duties overseas, and we had a full house at all activities. There was tight security at the gate, but all visitors had proper ID and were greeted with a smile. The Commander of #1 Wing, Kingston, Colonel Marcel Duval was our special guest at the Medals and Awards parade, and also at the mess dinner. Also present were 11 wartime Lions, 6 Sabre & CF104 pilots, several former CO's & DCO's, and other ranks, totaling just over 240 at the mess dinner. Special thanks to our friends at MGM for providing the special draw prizes at the Greet & Meet function on Friday afternoon. Thanks also to Capt. Ed Coleman and his committee for organizing this Gathering, and to the CO's wife Diane for hosting a dinner for the ladies at her home. It was indeed a great weekend. More on this in the Petawawa Report.

As you know, 427 Squadron was disbanded on May 31, 1946, following a glorious wartime career as a Bomber Squadron. Then on August 1st, 1962 the Lions were reactivated as a fighter squadron flying F-86 Sabres at St Hubert, Quebec, before moving to Zweibrucken, Germany. The squadron subsequently served in France, Morocco and Sardinia, as ambassadors for Canada, before becoming the first Canadian Squadron to be equipped with the CF-104 Starfighter in 1962.

Our invitations to the Lions who served in that era, to join the 427 Lion Squadron Association, and also to attend the Gathering of the Lions, are finally getting some attention. It was a pleasure elbowing up to the bar with

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these Sabre & Starfighter jocks these past couple of years, and I hope more of them will respond. I noticed in Petawawa that they can make as much noise as we bomber boys do, and are not afraid to pressure us re the MGM coin. (Ask Bob Middlemiss.) Welcome to the Lion's Den.

This has been an incredible year for me personally. Our CO, L/Col. Randy Meikllejohn is not just a great host, but he also arranged a few out of town trips for me this year. All of them very rewarding. There were three visits to Petawawa to present medals and awards; two conferences at #1 Wing Kingston; one visit to

#15 Wing Moose Jaw; a great Gathering of the Lions; and from all the Lions in Petawawa the biggest birthday card I ever saw.

One final word. Keep in mind that next year we will be celebrating our 60th Anniversary, having been formed at Croft Yorkshire on November 7, 1942. The Gathering of the Lions is already in the planning stages, and we will have details in the spring issue. In the meantime, have a very merry Christmas

A. L. d'Eon

PETAWAWA REPORT

Last December, when I returned from a 3 week leave in England and France, including a visit to Leeming, I was informed by the A3 (my boss) at 1 Wing Headquarters in Kingston that I would be posted in the summer of 2001. I was for a moment dumbstruck, as I had only been at the HQ for 17 months at that point, and wasn't aware that I had not been performing satisfactorily. Seeing my confusion, the A3 thought it best to tell me right away, "Oh, but don't worry – you're going back to 427 Sqn as the Deputy Commanding Officer."

Well that was certainly good news! I was extremely happy to be "forced" to come back to the Lion's Den. So far in my career, I gather I've had trouble holding a job, since now on my seventh tour, this is the first time that I have ever returned to a unit, any unit, for a second tour. If anyone had thought to ask to which Squadron I would prefer to return given the choice, it would be a simple, immediate, and unequivocal answer...The Lion Squadron of course!

But I'm not all of the news. As those of you present at The Gathering may have noticed, we also have a new OC "A" Flt, and a new Squadron Chief Warrant Officer. Maj Burt Bolderheij was posted back to us from Kingston,

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427 LION SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

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.

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Cartoons by 'Muff' Mills and Graphics by Michael Cleland

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having been promoted and sent there without his family a year before. CWO Dennis Becker was promoted and sent to us from 441 (Silver Fox) Squadron in Cold Lake and was immediately immersed in the tactical aviation world of green tents and trucks and helicopters for the first time.

Recent operations at the Squadron have included Op SABOT, which the Canadian Forces assistance to the RCMPs annual Marijuana Eradication Program, and like each successive year, we get better and better at finding what we're looking for.

Additionally, the Lions have started preparing for our next deployment to Bosnia in September 2002, and Exercises OPEN ROAD, and WALKING LION were conducted this summer to start us all on our Individual Combat Skills training. The plan for this deployment to Bosnia is a little different than our previous rotations: instead of deploying the entire detachment for 6 months at a time, we will now deploy most members for only 56-days at a time, and rotate members through eight or nine per week to make sure that everyone gets a chance to go. We will also have responsibility for manning the deployment for a year, so we're pretty sure that almost everyone will get to go three times for 56 days. The idea being that eight weeks isn't nearly as bad as six months!

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Of course, the biggest news since the last ROAR! was the Squadron's 59th Birthday and annual Gathering of the Lions celebrated this year from 26-28 October. The weekend was a grand success, and except for the Sabre guys and that one Starfighter pilot going to bed early both nights, we all had an excellent weekend. The visits from our Wartime Lions, and now our Cold War Lions are always a pleasure, and we readily look forward to the next opportunity that any of you have to visit. Drop in any time you're in the Petawawa neighbourhood!

Letters back already from the Wing Commander and some previous Commanding Officers say that "evidently, Squadron spirit is still strong." Evidently yes – as anyone of the 231 guests at the all-ranks Mess Dinner can attest. Apparently it has been stronger though, as one of the fighter Lions did describe it as "tame". Goodness – what were they like then? Next year, being our 60th Anniversary there will likely be a different format for the gala dinner, there being great interest (already!) in expanding the guest list to include more members of the entire Lion Family.

For those Lions who returned to the Den and took part in the tour of the Squadron, please note that MCpl Park, who hosted the tour of the shops in Maintenance flight, was on 1 Dec 01, promoted to Sgt Park.

In closing, please let me say again how happy I am to be back in the Lion's Den. Being posted back to a Squadron with such a rich history, and such a strong family tradition is indeed an honour. Standing on parade, looking at approximately 50 visiting Lions from all of our eras, I couldn't help but recall a line from the movie *Amistad*: "All of my ancestors, all of my family....all of them existed and all of them have worked only to put me where I am today. I cannot disappoint them."

It was poignantly heartwarming to have so many of those Lions seated in front of us, as well as standing together on parade. Thank-you to all of you who were here, and thank-you to each of you who worked over the years to put us where we are today.

Ferte Manus Certas.

Maj. Ed. Haskins, DCO.

**CELEBRATE WITH US
AT THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
GATHERING OF THE LIONS.
DETAILS IN SPRING ISSUE.**

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WE SHALL REMEMBER THEM

William Norman Chalk

David Cowan

Lionel D. Johnstone

Dan W. Murray

William Roberts

G. Richard Shelton

John Bryson Sullivan D.F.M.



HALIFAX UPDATE

The restoration of Halifax NA 337 at the RCAF Memorial Museum, Trenton, Ontario, has a new look. This aircraft has just been turned 90 degrees in the repair hangar to gain enough width to allow the outer wing sections to be installed following restoration. These sections from the outer engine mounts to the wing tips have been in storage, and will soon be under restoration

The plexiglas nose section is still at the Yorkshire Air Museum waiting installation of the new nose. "We are in our seventh year now, and it looks like we are going to be close to the original estimate of a 10 year project", says Bill

Tytula, Project Manager.

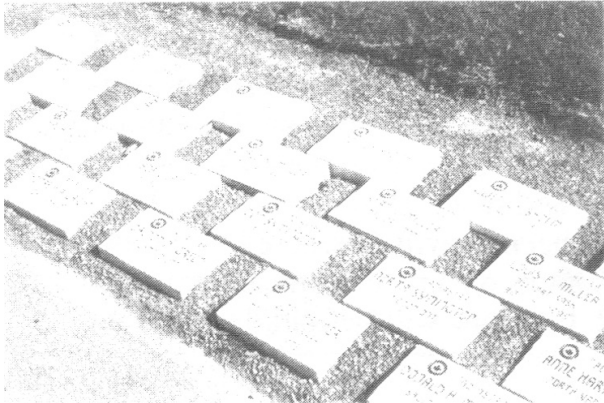
HALIFAX VETERAN

Willis Wilson writes in his "You Who Served with the Halifax" registration form that he was with 427 Squadron, was shot down, a prisoner of war, released and returned to Canada. After all this --- he attempted to vote in the new Federal Election, but was turned down. He was too young!.

Contributed by Regional Rep Weldy Moffatt, Regina SK

AD ASTRA STONES

A stroll down the Ad Astra Stones lane at the RCAF Memorial Museum in Trenton is a very moving one. Over 5,000 stones have been placed there by members of families who served, or are now serving, in any of Canada's Air Forces, including the spouse of a person eligible. The above photo shows how they are placed. Note the one family of five that are placed in-line. The next dedication ceremony is scheduled for Saturday, September 28, 2002 at



2pm at the museum, with Chaplains participating. Relatives, friends and the public are especially welcome. Now is a good time to order. The donation per Ad Astra Stone, engraving & installation is \$135. A receipt for Tax purposes will be issued for the full donation amount. To receive your application form, write to: RCAF Memorial Museum, CFB Trenton, PO Box 1000, Astra, ON K0K 3W0.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

G/C DUDLEY H. BURNSIDE D.S.O O.B.E DFC&BAR

In January 2002, Group Captain Burnside, our first Commanding Officer will celebrate his 90th birthday in Windsor, England with family and friends. This distinguished and highly-decorated RAF career officer served his country in the Middle East, the Far East, completed two operational tours in Bomber Command and later commanded a Sunderland Group in the Korean conflict.

G/C Burnside is admired and respected by the war-time Lions for his personal courage as a bomber captain and his dedicated leadership in successfully launching a new squadron. In the past quarter century, Lions of all eras have come to know Dudley Burnside as a friend and supporter and appreciate his continuing interest in all matters relating to 427 Squadron and the Association. He is a former Honourary Colonel and a former Honourary Lieut. Colonel of the squadron. He has attended and participated in numerous Lion Gatherings at C.F.B. Petawawa and at Allied Air Forces Reunions. He has also attended and participated in Dedication Services at RAF Leeming, at Waterside (near Heathrow) and at St. Clement Danes. No person could have done more and we say thank you sir.

On behalf of Lions everywhere we extend congratulations and best wishes to this gallant officer and gentleman in having reached yet another milestone in an illustrious career.



“HOW THE LION GOT STUFFED”

A few years ago, the present Honourary Colonel of 427 Squadron was partaking of a pleasant luncheon with retired members of the Squadron and other wartime Lions. During the course of the lunch a variety of stories concerning the squadron were recalled and enjoyed. The now Honourary Colonel then asked if anyone knew how the Lion was obtained for the Squadron. Someone at the table did know and related it to those assembled. Since that time, the teller of the story has been heavily pressured to put the details on paper. Since the statute of limitations on any misdemeanour which may have occurred has probably expired, the story will be told, but without the names of individuals involved, organizations and any other detail which may incriminate the innocent or casual participant.

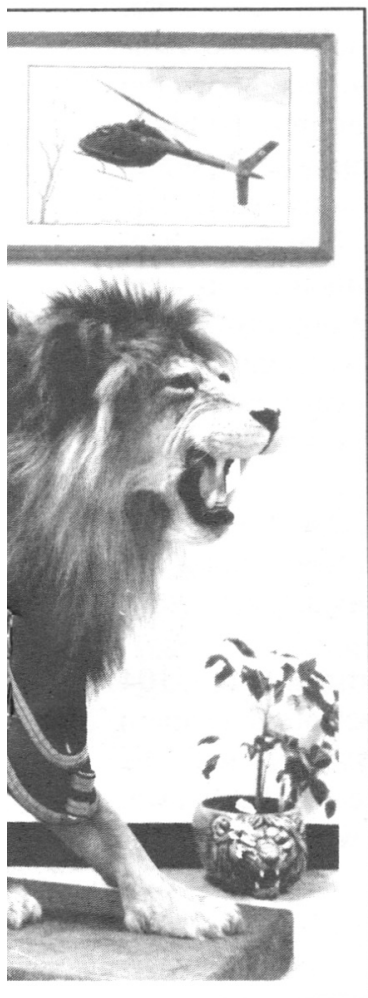
A renowned Commanding Officer of the Squadron was approaching the end of his tour at the Squadron and asked his DCO for suggestions as to what might be an appropriate gift that he could present to the Squadron at the upcoming Change of Command parade. After much brainstorming and fuzzy thinking by the DCO, it was agreed by the CO that a stuffed Lion recalling the Squadron's original mascot "Mareith" would be an appropriate gift.

Charged in strict confidence with this responsibility, the DCO soon realized that if he had been a lot smarter he would have suggested a less ambitious gift, like a plaque or framed picture perhaps.



Time constraints, not considered before, were now pressing; however, there was an unfounded confidence that there had to be a surplus stuffed lion in one of the many museums in Canada.

After two fruitless weeks of contacting almost every museum north of the Rio Grande with absolutely no response, the Lion provider was getting desperate and had visions of an extended posting to Alert. However, after talking to a senior director of a Canadian Museum who was unable to provide a ready -to -go stuffed lion, a ray of hope glimmered at the end of the tunnel which the Lion provider hoped was not an oncoming express train. It appears that lions in captivity in zoos are not the most desirable of animals; they breed like rabbits and are difficult to handle when full grown (especially males). It was intimated that the really undesirable males, those who fought with other lions and their keeper, were from time to time put down. Since the Squadron was looking for a large male there seemed to be at least a chance that if we could locate a willing zoo and equally important, a willing taxidermist, the faint possibility existed that the CO's gift to the Squadron could be found, stuffed and presented at the Change of Command parade, which timewise was getting nearer and nearer.



A zoo in Canada was contacted and after much secret correspondence, phone calls and assurances of non-disclosure in reference to any lion which might be made available, an agreement for one 400 lb male lion was finalized. On the appointed day, when the lion was to meet his maker, a vehicle was dispatched from Petawawa to pick up the lion in the early morning hours (3:00 AM). Pick up personnel were sworn to secrecy and as directed, drove to the zoo where the 400 lb dead male lion, encased in a plastic body bag, awaited. The vehicle then proceeded to a museum which had very generously volunteered their services in the form of one of the best taxidermists in Canada, if not the world.

The lion provider was now feeling confident that he would meet the time deadline of the Change of Command parade. However, taxidermy is a highly specialized art, which involves African flies eating and cleaning the excess meat and material surrounding the skin of the lion. The flies could not be hurried!

There was also the unforeseen problem of obtaining the interior form which the skin of the lion would cover. The forms could only be obtained from a taxidermist warehouse in the mid- western United States. Through the connections of the Squadron CO it was arranged that a

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Dakota from the Navigation School in Winnipeg would plan a long-range trip which would stop in the particular town in the mid-west United states where the body forms required by the taxidermist were available. These were duly transported back to Canada, but were held up by Canada Customs in Winnipeg who were not sure if transportation of these items into Canada was legal. After many telephone calls and help from the Museum Taxidermy Department, the goods were finally released and forwarded to the Museum.

By this time the margin for obtaining a presentation lion in time for the parade was becoming extremely narrow. However due to the truly heroic efforts of the museum's taxidermy department a presentable lion on a mobile base was made ready the day before the parade.

Again in secrecy, a vehicle was sent to the museum for the now magnificent presentation lion. The vehicle was to return to the base after dark and park in the base MSE parking compound well away from the Squadron area. The driver was told to park the vehicle with the back door against the fence. He also told the base MSE dispatcher, who held the vehicle keys for emergency purposes, that the vehicle was not to be moved and people should be kept away from it. The base MSE dispatcher being of a curious nature, decided to see what big secret was being concealed in the back of the vehicle. After moving the vehicle away from the fence so that he could open the back door, the dispatcher, armed with a flashlight climbed up into the black interior of the truck. Turning on his flashlight he was extremely surprised to see a nine foot 400 lb male lion with its jaws open in a vicious snarl. The dispatcher thereupon leapt backward falling off the four foot truck bed, severely incapacitating himself. Fifteen minutes later his calls for help were heard and he received attention. This was made know to the lion provider at his home after midnight by Military Police who wanted to keep the vehicle and its contents as necessary evidence for the accident investigation. After much discussion, pleading and outright grovelling, the matter was smoothed over and everyone went home.

The next day, the outgoing CO presented the incoming CO and Squadron members with his gift of a new Squadron mascot. All attendees thought it was a truly amazing presentation. Now all will know the truly amazing story behind obtaining it.

I believe there are many other stories out there from Wartime, Sabre, 104 and Helicopter era Lions. Please let the Honourary Colonel pressure them out of you. One that comes to mind is the infamous mess dinner with the 101st Air Mobile Division held at the old Airbourne/427 Mess in Petawawa. However, since I believe the present CO was at that one, it will have to wait for a few more years before being told..

(submitted by The Shadow)

RED AND BOB

When the Association membership list was published a few years ago, G.A.(Red) McKeown, of Newburgh, ON spotted the name of Bob Penrose of Delta, B.C. Neither had seen or heard from the other in more than 50 years and Red decided to contact his friend from the Leeming days. Red McKeown was a fitter(aero engines) by trade and a crew chief. He served on 427 Squadron from March 1943 through June 1945. The following are excerpts from a letter written by Bob Penrose dated January 7, 1998:

“Dear Red : A nice surprise to receive your letter and of course I remember who kept “L” London and crew alive. Six crews arrived at Leeming in early 1944 and only two of us came home. Red, I look back on the bomber days where life and death were never far apart and honestly feel it was the support and fellowship of you and your crew gave us that we survived. With 410 hours I knew so little about engines and aircraft. I still remember a rather easy operation down the Spanish coast one night and “L” London had a large mag drop. I pleaded with you to let us go and you said no and now I thank you.”

In recent telephone conversations with Bob and Red it is obvious that a close bond existed between this air crew and the airmen who toiled at their dispersal site. It was perhaps typical on bomber stations especially if the association was long and continuous as this one surely was. The dedicated ground crews often worked long hours in all kinds of weather conditions to have the kites ready for the next call from Bomber Harris. But there were times for relaxation too. Special memories for Red and Bob were the evenings spent at the local watering hole together with their crews where they socialized and shared a pint or two. Good times for sure.

Bob Penrose flew 28 of his 40 operations in “L” London. According to Red it was also the favourite aircraft of the C.O's. Bob recalls when it was time to screen the trusty Halifax from further operations, Red McKeown organized a farewell party. Everybody turned out in their best blues and there were many fond adieus as the Penrose crew boarded “L” London for the last time — for the flight to a base down south where the Hally was retired. More than half a century has elapsed but time has not diminished the admiration and togetherness shared by this closely -knit group.



CF 104 - STARFIGHTER

Standing outside the hangar of CFSATE (Canadian Forces School of Aerospace Technology and Engineering) - mounted proudly on a pedestal is CF-104 - Starfighter 792. This was one of the first Royal Canadian Air Force Strike/Attack aircraft to join NATO in 1972. 427 Strike/attack Squadron was stationed at #3 Wing, Zweibrucken, Germany with Wing Commander "Bob" Middlemiss as the first Commanding Officer. The Wing Commander on his visits to CFB Borden discovered this aircraft outside CFSATE hangar, and on checking his logbook discovered that he had flown this actual aircraft on a number of occasions. He approached L/Col. Bill Sergeant, Commandant CFSATE, who organized the painting of the squadron crest on the engine air intake duct. The painting was done by M/Cpl. Walter Taggart (ex 427), and M/Cpl. Mike Lindsay (father was ex 427). This photo shows the group in front of the CF 104 with the 427 crest visible on the engine air intake duct.

The aircraft is presently covered with camouflage paint. It is planned to remove the aircraft from its pedestal soon, and return it to its silver colour and attach a photo pod to the belly of the aircraft.

Then the original RCAF and Squadron markings will adorn the aircraft, and be returned to its present pedestal.

This CF-104 Starfighter(CF104792) was presented by Colonel E.J. Manzie, Comdt CFSATE, to the Borden Military Museum. B/Gen. R.S. Dziver, BCOMD CFB Borden, accepted the aircraft on behalf of the museum. The Starfighter was designed by Lockheed Aircraft Corporation of Canada Ltd., and was flown by Canadian Pilots from 1962 to 1986 in a Strike/Recce Role. It was the first operational Canadian Starfighter in the European Theatre, arriving at RCAF #3 Wing on 14 October, 1962. It operated from RCAF Stations Zweibrucken, Lahr, Baden, and also at Cold Lake. The CF 104 stands as a proud reminder to the dedicated airmen and airwomen who maintained and flew this great aircraft.

(Submitted by Bob Middlemiss.)



Left to right MCpl Walter Taggart, L/Col. Bill Sergeant and MCpl Mike Lindsay

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

The birthplace of 427 Squadron was at RAF Station Croft, North Yorkshire, in 1942. It was a primitive establishment, with comfort and washing facilities, etc. more like WW1, than three years in WW2. There was little if any comfort at Croft; while wonderful at our parent station Middleton - St. George, for those of us who played rugby there.

We NCOs lived in huts in the woods, but had to wash at the Sgt.'s Mess, and I don't think anyone took a bath. The water was pumped from Darlington once a week only, until one terrible day I suspect that someone forgot to put the plug into our water tower for the next day it all leaked away! It took several days to correct the situation. In the meantime (after the beer ran out) there was no water to drink, wash, or shave with. One could not imagine a more dreadful looking bunch at 427 Squadron. Everyone filthy with stubber and potential beards. However, morale remained good, and life at Croft produced great friendships, but sadly many losses too.

When we moved to RAF Leeming and Halifaxes, many of us missed our Wellingtons, and Croft. I believe our crew was the fifth to complete a tour. (Pilot A. Rodwell, Nav. C.L.Hughes, Wop/AG. W. MacDonald. B/A. J.B.Carr, A/G. W.Seddon.)

"Life after 427"

After completing my tour, in December 1943, I was posted to Kinloss OTU, as a Navigator Instructor. The first GEE instructor they ever had. In winter Scotland is a bleak place, and I arrived tired and depressed after a night journey. The officer's mess was empty, so I reclined down in front of a huge fireplace, and fell asleep. I awoke at lunch time to find myself being disturbed by four officers, including a very unfriendly, very large Group Captain. One approached me to say: "the station commander wishes to know what ribbon you are wearing?"

(During my time at 427 the 1939/43 Star had been introduced). This explained, I relaxed feeling rather special, but soon came a command that the Station Commander wished me to move to the other end of the mess, as this is HIS Fire. At that moment I realized that pleasures of squadron life were over and I already missed it very much. Cheerio.

Contributed by F/L(ret) Clary L Hughes DFC, Luton, Beds, England



FIRST FLIGHTS OVER THE ROCKIES

Flight #1 – Vancouver to Calgary – August 7, 1919; through the Coquihalla Pass with fuel stops at Vernon, Grand Forks, Cranbrook Lethbridge, landing at Calgary after a twelve-and-half flight hour flight and a return to Vancouver. Flown by Captain Ernest C. Hoy, DFC in a war-surplus Curtiss Canuck JN – 4 open cockpit bi-plane with a 90 horsepower engine.

Flight #2 – A Trans Canada flight, Halifax to Vancouver, using several different aircraft and teams of pilots crossing the country in progressive relays; the final leg – October 13, 1920 – Calgary to Vancouver with fuel stops at Revelstoke, Merritt, Agassiz; flown by Captain Tommy Thompson with Lieut. Col. Arthur Tylee in a DeHaviland DH-9, an open cockpit Royal Flying Corps bomber.

Contributed by Regional Rep. Rev. Derek Salter, Okanagan Falls, BC.



A DAY IN HISTORY

13/6/44

Weather: Fair to cloudy with slight rain in the morning.

No operations were scheduled for this date, so an intensive training program was carried out. Three aircraft took off on air-to-air firing, one on local flying, four on H.2.S. cross-country trips and three took part in a night bombing practice.

It was learned today that F/O M.S. Strange landed at Woodbridge last night after being badly shot up. His rear gunner Sgt. Sullivan was badly wounded in an encounter with an enemy aircraft, but in spite of this he remained at his post after the engagement until the aircraft had safely crossed the coast of France.

F/O G.A. Weldon and his crew were screened today as they had completed 35 sorties including last night's operations. This crew has set an example to all members of the Squadron that will not be easy to match.

Source: 427 Squadron War Diary

NORAD LIONS

A string of illustrious Canadian airmen have served at NORAD in Colorado Springs in the traditional role of Deputy Commander. Beginning with Air Marshal Roy Slemon 1957-64 followed by A/M Dunlap and A/M MacBrien there have been 18 RCAF/Air Force senior officers who have held this key command. Included in this number was LGen Reggie Lane, the three-tour Pathfinder pilot. It should be noted that three Lion Squadron alumni are also on this select list in the persons of LGen Ken Lewis 1978-80, our Association patron LGen Don McNaughton 1986-89, and the recently-appointed LGen Ken Pennie. The latter was a Flight Commander on 427 Sqn in the early 80's, Don McNaughton was C.O. in the 70's and the late Ken Lewis was D.C.O. in the Sabre era. Supporting Ken Pennie at NORAD these days is another Lion Squadron ex-CO MGen Eric (Rick) Findley who is serving as Director of Operations at the Colorado Springs site. Many will remember Rick as the commander of the Lions in the 1988-90 period, during part of the time on deployment in the Sinai. We wish LGen Ken and MGen Rick successful tours of duty at NORAD in Cheyenne Mountain (or wherever else they hang out) during these uncertain times.

MEMBERSHIP NOTES

The membership list has remained steady this past year. There has been some regular members not renewing their cards, however we welcome a number of new members making up for the loss.

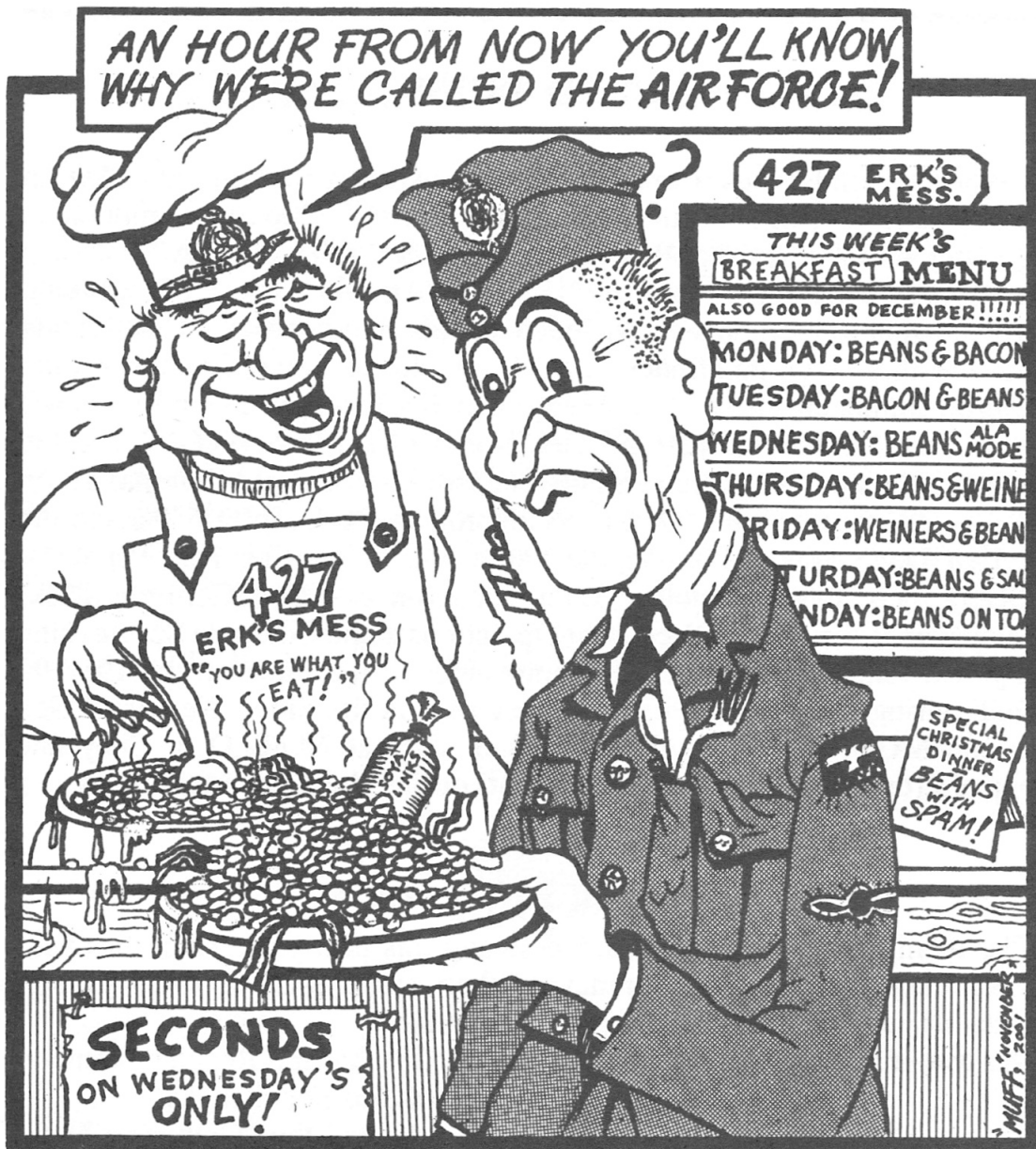
As was mentioned last December, a reminder that the Regular Members that "Dues" are due 01 January. And my address has not changed.

It was great seeing those members who attended the "Gathering of the Lions". I had a discussion with some "Lions" on a program for increasing the membership of the Association. We are still open to suggestions, as an increase in membership means better finances, means our continuation is assured. And a note by email will be appreciated.

Just a note - my "Tail wheel flying" continues at a modest rate. Plans for next year are indicating that it will be a busy one. The sound of the Harvard will be heard more often. If you are going by Oshawa, drop in, would be pleased to show you our "School".

With an interesting kind of year coming to an end, thoughts are surfacing of the festivities in store. Hope your year was a good one, and that the promise of the next one exceeds your expectations

*Merry Christmas and a Very Happy New Year.
Stan Miller, Treasurer and Membership Chairman*



ERK

(RAF: since WWI)

“ERK” is RAF slang for the lowest form of RAF life: the Aircraftman 2nd Class, or AC2. Though erk has been accepted RAF usage from its earliest days, its origins are extremely vague. It has been suggested that erk is a variant of “erg”. In physics, erg is a mathematical unit of work, and was also a turn-of-the-century nickname for sailors of the rank of Ordinary Seamen, the lowest navy rank, presumably because it is they who do all the work! Another suggestion is that erk was a corruption of “AirC” (i.e: pronounced “ayrk”), which was once proposed (but rejected) as the official RAF abbreviation for “Aircraftman”.

(Refs: Collins; Partridge (FS); Partridge (8th))

Contributed by Bob Tracey