



The NStar Chronicle

Project North Star Association of Canada

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Annual Project Manager's Progress Report

Bruce Gemmill

This past year very significant progress has been made on the North Star restoration, and our volunteer workforce continues to provide much needed support for the project.

Nr 2 Engine

The second engine was removed in 2010 and last year at this time we reported it was undergoing final assembly. We were hopeful the engine would be completed before the end of the year, but there were a few minor setbacks, and together with a reduction in the number of volunteers available to work on this complex item, it took until April to complete all final assembly and install the engine. Normally we would also install the propeller, but since the spinner requires repainting, this propeller was left off.

Nr 3 Engine

The third engine was removed in early May, and already much of the disassembly of the engine has been done. Again, we are hopeful that this engine can be completed even faster than the last.

It is significant that we are now more than halfway through the restoration of all engines (and propellers) for our North Star. This is a testament to the dedication and expertise of our engine shop crew.



Engine Nr.3 restoration under way –cracked main bearing journal, close up.

Cockpit

Last summer, while the North Star was outside, the navigator/equipment rack was completely stripped and repainted. After that, all cables were repositioned and all the electronic assemblies and navigation instruments were refurbished and then installed. Several missing radios were donated to the

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project, and these were also refurbished and installed in the radio rack. Our search for other missing equipment continues. A list of needed items is posted on our web site.

Work on the cockpit is now almost complete. All new insulation and new headliners were recently installed, along with the top hatch, crew door and new floors. The ignition analyser and drift meter were also installed, although the drift meter was subsequently removed to protect it from damage, since space in the cockpit is now at a premium. Many small items, such as cockpit lights, audio controls and heating vents were also added.

This spring we removed the rest of the equipment from the crew lounge, galley and forward washroom. While the aircraft is outside this summer, all these areas will be cleaned, stripped of paint, the repainted and re-equipped. The galley will need extensive repairs because of severe corrosion. Restoration of the washroom equipment has been started

Fuselage and Empennage

We have now removed the flaps, horizontal stabilizers and elevators, and placed these in storage until work can be done to restore these items. The four large brake packs that were removed from the main landing gear have now been disassembled, cleaned and repainted, ready for installation. The forward baggage compartment was cleaned and repainted,

and the large green tanks that hold breathing oxygen for the crew were stripped, repainted and re-installed in the baggage compartment. Some work was done on the aft baggage compartment, including overhauling the door. Work in these compartments will continue this summer. A new project was started this year to fabricate facsimiles of the de-icer boots that were attached to the leading edge of the wings, horizontal and vertical stabilizers. It is not possible to acquire functioning de-icer boots.

Planned Restoration Work–2012-2013

Over the next year, we hope to have much of the work on engine Nr 3 completed. This involves restoring major components such as the crankcase, cylinder heads, supercharger and intercooler, the reduction gear, wheel case and auxiliary drive. The crew rest area and forward washroom will be painted and equipment and furnishings restored and installed. We plan to begin work on the main cargo compartment, including removing and refurbishing the main heater duct, and removing floors to begin cleaning and repairs under the cargo floor. There will also need to be repairs done to the engine frame and cowl panels from Nr 3 engine. We may yet get to work on the engine nacelles.

PNSAC

Recollections of Operation Hawk

Part Five

Tim Timmins

After a few months of bucking the headwinds on the NORPAC (Northern Pacific) route to Japan, our Squadron Commander, Wing Commander Mussells, decided to re-route the westbound flights through Honolulu and Wake Island (MIDPAC) to take advantage of lighter headwinds. The eastbound flights would continue on the NORPAC routes, taking advantage of the prevailing strong westerly winds. On 1 December 1950, North Star 17516 departed McChord AFB with three crews on board plus servicing personnel to set up the staging points for the MIDPAC route at Hickham AFB (Honolulu) and Wake Island. My crew drew the short straw and would dead-head to Wake Island and then take the aircraft on to Tokyo.

The deployment did not start well, almost ending

up in a disaster. Upon arrival at Travis AFB (Sacramento), the starting point for the flight to Honolulu, the assigned crew learned that all USAF westbound flights were on hold due to very strong headwinds. Undeterred, and probably looking forward to few days off in Honolulu, they adjusted TAS (true air speed) up and fuel consumption down to produce a flight plan. It amounted to a gamble that the winds would not be as strong as forecast. Well, they were, and after 13 hours in the air, there were some very concerned aircrew on board. We reviewed our ditching drills and donned Mae Wests. It was another hour and ten minutes before we landed at Hickham AFB, a total of 14 hours and 10 minutes flight time. There was no measureable fuel in the tanks. The first reaction to this near miss was to attribute it to navigation error. Analysis of the flight log and chart however showed that there was no problem with the navigation and that the enroute winds were very much as forecast.

The second crew flew from Honolulu to Wake Island and my crew continued to Tokyo. The elapsed time from our departure from McChord AFB to landing at Haneda AFB was 50 hours. That's a very long time on a noisy North Star. However we had a much longer crew rest than expected as strong westerly winds on the MIDPAC routes stalled all operations completely. After seven days, the planned route change was abandoned and the crews were picked up and returned to McChord AFB.

The seven-day stoppage of flight operations jeopardized the Commanding Officer's plan to take all Squadron personnel back to Montreal for Christmas with their families. The 30 day commitment had to be completed in the remaining time before Christmas which meant round the clock operations and some very heavy crew schedules. We flew 180 hours with flights every day except the week we spent in Tokyo. Everyone but my crew was home for Christmas.

The airlift tasking for 426 Squadron was changed in January 1951 to include medical evacuation flights from Japan to Travis AFB. Our westbound flights would continue on NORPAC routes while eastbound flights would use the MIDPAC routes through Wake Island and Honolulu.

The medical evacuation flights originated in Tokyo or Itami, about two hours flight time south west of Tokyo. Medical teams, supervised by Flight Nurses, were responsible for loading, unloading and care of the patients while on board. Flights departed Japan in the late afternoon or early evening and arrived at Wake Island the next morning. There was a crew change and the flight departed for Honolulu, arriving in the late afternoon or early evening. Another crew change and the flight departed for Travis AFB, arriving in the next morning. Movie stars were frequently on hand to greet the wounded soldiers. Once the patients were offloaded, the crew returned

to McChord AFB.

The flight conditions on the MIDPAC routes were quite different than those experienced on the NORPAC routes. Terminal weather was rarely a problem and most flights could be conducted clear of cloud. This was fortunate as our North Stars did not have radar and those innocent looking fluffy white clouds packed quite a wallop if you got too close.

The highlights of the MIDPAC flights for our crews were the stopovers on Wake Island and at Honolulu. During the winter months the temperature change from Anchorage could be as much as 120 degrees. At Wake we were accommodated in Quonset style buildings which had openings all around the base for air circulation. This gave the rats "big as alley cats" free access to the rooms. Consequently the top bunk was very popular. A day on Wake would include, a little basketball, a walk around the fortifications, a swim, a few libations at the Drifters Reef and an outdoor movie each evening at the Pan American Base. In Honolulu we were quartered at a United States Army recreation facility located next to the only two hotels on Waikiki beach in 1951, the Royal Hawaiian and the Moana. Needless to say, our few days off in Honolulu were the highlight of every trip.

As the demand for airlift decreased, 426 Squadron was tasked with fewer flights each month. So it was decided it would be more efficient to bring the Squadron back to its former base at Dorval and deploy a single aircraft to McChord AFB as needed. A crew and aircraft would fly a domestic schedule to Vancouver and then a Korean Airlift schedule over the NORPAC route to Tokyo. There would be a crew change in Tokyo and the aircraft would return to McChord AFB, Vancouver and Dorval. This routine was followed until the conclusion of Operation Hawk on July 1954.

PNSAC

Notes from the President

Richard Lodge

Since the last issue of the NStar Chronicle our Association has once again moved noticeably forward. We held our AGM on June 2 and, for the first time, we had a contested election for the 2012/2013 Board of Directors. The Board consists of 6 members and there were 9 nominations. All the nominees would have made excellent Board members and it was difficult selecting only 6. It says much for the enthusiasm of

members that so many people were willing to serve on the Board.

Our communications continue to develop. One of our new Board members, Drew Hodge, has agreed to take responsibility for all our communications. In addition to our Web site and Facebook page we now have a Twitter account (@pnsacommms).

For the second time our Vice President, Bill Tate, organized a memorable trip for members on June 15/17. A 34 seater coach was filled for a visit to the Hamilton Air Show, wineries in Niagara-on-the-Lake and a visit to the Air Canada Control Centre at

Pearson Airport.

This brings me to a pleasantly unexpected side of our Association activities. We started operations in 2004, restoring the North Star for the Aviation Museum. We had no thought of doing anything else. With the completion of our second successful bus trip and our continuously expanding connections with other aviation groups in the Ottawa area, we are finding that our members are making many new friends and enjoying camaraderie with other people who have similar interests.

For those people who are able to work on the plane restoration there is now the double benefit of making new friends as well. For those members who are employed full time and cannot work on the plane at present or who live too far away, we always looking for ways to make our Association interesting for them. We want to involve them whenever possible in

activities relating to the plane itself or other aviation activities. A good example of this was that two of our members, Garry & Liz Fundytus, from Edmonton decided to take a vacation in Ottawa and join us on the Hamilton bus trip.

One of the likely future constraints to our continuing restoration activities on the North Star will be caused by a lack of funding for purchasing necessary replacement parts for the plane. We are also limited in the number of volunteers we can use at any one time on the plane restoration work. We are working closely with the Museum staff to find ways to increase available funds and to use the services of as many volunteers as possible, in particular the senior volunteers, who have experience of older technologies which are important to pass on to younger volunteers.

PNSAC

Hamilton Air Show Trip

Bill Tate

All photos by Guy Poirier.

After months of planning, Friday June 15th dawned sunny and clear for our trip to Hamilton. We departed ahead of schedule, and thanks to a "heads up" from Denis Pharaoh, we were able to divert around an accident on the Queensway that saved us from being stuck in traffic while the wreckage was cleared.

En route to our first leg-stretch on Highway 401, Richard gave his welcoming remarks, followed by my short briefing for the day's events. With assistance from Garry Dupont and Michel Coté, everyone was served coffee and donuts, along with newspapers, courtesy of Guy Poirier, our official PNSAC photographer.



Bill's briefing

We continued on to our lunch break at the Big Apple near Colborne, on Highway 401. A commemorative group photograph was taken along side the bus before we continued on to Pickering where we joined the ETR 407 to avoid the heavy Toronto traffic.

Our first visit of the day was at Jackson-Triggs Winery in Niagara-on-the-Lake (also known as NOTL by the locals), where we all enjoyed a tour of the winery along with wine tasting. I was told that some of our group enjoyed the design and sophistication of Jackson-Triggs winery.

We then proceeded to Marynissen Estates, a much smaller family-run winery just outside of NOTL where John Marynissen, the founder began growing grapes in 1953. A tour along with free wine tasting for the group, compliments of Marynissen confirmed our appreciation for the passion that goes

into the production of wine.

A quick shopping tour on Queen St in NOTL was next on our agenda where members, through the courtesy of Graves jams and Kurtz Orchards enjoyed discounts on purchases made, in part by the receipt of coupons prior to our arrival and our distinctive logo golf shirts.

We dined on the outdoor patio at the Epicurean Restaurant, after which we travelled to the Comfort Inn in Hamilton, where we were well taken care of by a very gracious staff. We arrived at the parking lot with four minutes to spare of the bus driver's sixteen hour duty day!

We departed from the hotel early on Saturday morning for our visit to the Hamilton Air Show. On arrival we were all impressed with how well organised the Air Show was. We had reserved parking and a dedicated coach to take us to the Flight Line Chalet check-in counter for the Air Show, given our privileged tickets which were donated to us by a long time supporter of PNSAC.

Once we were all given our distinctive bracelets for the Flight Line Chalet some of our group proceeded directly to the chalet to hold tables for us which turned out to be a great idea as they were inside the tent, shaded from a very strong sun.

Before the air show started I walked over to the flight line by myself. Whenever the Lancaster is on display I am always drawn to this aircraft for a very strong personal reason; my maternal uncle Russell Wright was seconded to the RAF from the RCAF in WW2. Russ served with RAF 156 Squadron (Motto: We Light the Way) as a Navigator on a Lancaster. RAF 156 was a Path Finder Squadron and Russ and his crew were killed over München-Gladbach in the Ruhr Valley on June 17th 1943. I have been the only family member to visit his grave which is at the Commonwealth War Graves cemetery in Rheinberg Germany. The thing that I will always remember about that lost aircrew was their youth; the average age was 21; Russ was the "old man" at 30.



B-29: Fifi

After my personal time with the Lancaster I went over to Fifi the only surviving B-29 in the world still flying and talked with some of the crew members. One interesting statistic is each engine goes through a gallon of oil an hour! The whole restoration of this aircraft is an epic story as it came out of the desert in California where the USN were using surplus B-29 aircraft as bombing targets.

Also along the flight line were many unique war birds in pristine condition. On another ramp were aircraft that the Canadian War Plane Heritage are restoring and the quality of their restorations is a testament to their efforts.

The air show started at 12:00 and went on to 17:00 with very spectacular flying. The aerobatic display of a Beech 18 had me thinking out loud several times that a Beech 18 cannot possibly do the things it was demonstrating.



CF-18

The highlight of the show for me, besides the Snow Birds, WW II fly-past (lots of Merlin engines here) was the finale, where Fifi, the Lancaster, B-17, B-24, and a P-51 all flew by in a loose formation. The feeling of the moment was I would probably never see a fly-by of those historical aircraft together again.

Our group dinner that night at Jack Astor's was a highly animated affair as we all shared our personal highlights for the day.

After an early departure on Sunday morning, we proceeded to the historical Distillery District in downtown Toronto for brunch where our early arrival allowed all some free time to walk around and to enjoy a "designer" coffee at Balzac's Coffee House before our brunch at Mill Street. For all meals, we included our bus driver Don Bordeaux as we considered him part of our tour group. At the end, Don expressed great appreciation; he has had tours where he was told not to enter the same restaurant as his tour group!

During our brunch, conversation centered about the trip along with the level of enjoyment for all. Af-

ter brunch I suggested SOMA which is a store for chocolate lovers. I did get some grief from a few husbands as their wives were melting their credit cards! My personal indulgence at SOMA is the Mayan Hot Chocolate drink with steamed milk that has a hint of cayenne pepper in it which gives a sweet hot taste sensation.

Our next stop was the Air Canada Flight Operations Centre; our host was Scott Cummings who gave an excellent briefing on pilot hiring and training in the Air Canada "North Star" Classroom. As our group was large Scott divided the group in two for the walk-through of the simulator rows (each simulator is charged out at a \$1,000 per hour; they cost over 25 million dollars to build). As I have been "personally" familiar with simulators I elected to stay behind and demonstrate my depleted skills on the B-767-300 fixed training device and the new state-of-the-art A-320 computer generated fixed training device.

After this tour we drove over to the brains of the airline, the combined Systems Operational Control/Flight Dispatch Centre located in a rather security conscious environment. It was a relatively normal day with a 107,000 passengers in the system and some thunderstorms to the west approaching Toronto. Again Scott did an excellent briefing de-

scribing the functions of SOC Flight Dispatch and the other units that keep the airline operational. The group remarked how calm and quiet it was. A placard on the wall, relic of WW2, commanded all to "Keep Calm and Carry On".

A very personal moment for me was a meeting with one of my favourite Flight Dispatchers Don Stewart who dispatched my last flight from Paris on May 21st 2010. I was finally, after years of phone calls, data link messages and SATCOM calls to meet him in person and say thank you for all the years of helping me conduct my flights efficiently and safely.

After our tour we said our goodbyes to Scott (who is a passionate, articulate advocate for Air Canada) and departed to rejoin the ETR 407 en route to the Big Apple Restaurant for a quick meal along with the opportunity for those who wanted to pick up an apple pie or three to take home, along with their cases of wine.

Our tour ended back at the museum at 22:00 where we all said our goodbyes after three jam-packed days of fun.

In closing thank you all for understanding the need for the early mornings and being there at the appointed time to make this a very successful trip.



Group photo

Calendar of Events

September 13, 2012	Board of Directors' Meeting
September 22, 2012	Quarterly Meeting
November 24, 2012	Board of Directors' Meeting
December 1, 2012	Quarterly Meeting
March 21, 2013	Board of Directors' Meeting
March 30, 2013	Quarterly Meeting
June 6, 2013	Board of Directors' Meeting
June 15, 2013	Annual General Meeting
June 15, 2013	Board of Directors' Meeting (post AGM)
June 27, 2013	Board of Directors' Meeting (first meeting of new Board)

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