

RECOGNIZING ACHIEVEMENT IN CANADA'S AVIATION HALL OF FAME

By John Chalmers

On May 26, 2011, four individuals who have made outstanding contributions to Canadian aviation were inducted into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame. Also recognized was a special-purpose airline, which was honoured with a Belt of Orion Award for Excellence.

The late Richard W. (Dick) Ryan, who started a career in aviation as a pilot in the First World War and retired as vice-president of Canadian Pacific Air Lines, was represented by his granddaughter, Marji Johns, of Brentwood Bay, British Columbia. Edmonton's Donald T. Hamilton, still flying at 87, is chief executive officer (CEO) of Air Spray (1967) Ltd., an aerial fire suppression company that is a leader in its field.

William J. (Bill) Wheeler of Markham, Ontario served as editor of the *Canadian Aviation Historical Society (CAHS) Journal* for 45 years, and is an accomplished illustrator of aviation articles and books. John W. Crichton of Ottawa, president and CEO of NAV CANADA, has been

honoured several times for his work with the corporation that provides Canada's air navigation services.

Hollinger Ungava Transport (HUT), a special purpose airline established to support the building of a railroad, was represented by John Timmins of Kingston, Ontario, one of the first pilots hired by HUT. Also present was 97-year-old former Second World War pilot Wess McIntosh of Oakville, Ontario, who was hired as chief pilot for the airline.

At the induction dinner gala held in the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum adjacent to the Hamilton International Airport—a perfect venue for the event with the museum's Lancaster poised in the background—380 people were present for the occasion. CBC broadcaster and pilot Jacquie Perrin served as master of ceremonies. Gerald Haddon, grandson of J. A. D. McCurdy, assisted in the presentations and spoke from the podium about the importance of preserving and recognizing our aviation heritage.



RICHARD W. RYAN (1896–1992)

Born in Huron County, Ontario, Richard W. (Dick) Ryan was raised on the family farm at Nile, Ontario. In 1916, while attending the University of Toronto, he enlisted for training in the First World War with the University Officers Overseas Training Corps. In 1917, the Royal Naval Air Service called for volunteers; Ryan seized the opportunity and was soon aboard a ship sailing to Liverpool.

In England, the aviators were offered the rank of first lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps (RFC). After basic training, Ryan was posted as a fighter pilot to RFC Number (No.) 66 Squadron in France, flying the famous Sopwith Camel. In November 1917, in a formation flight, Ryan's aircraft was hit from below by another Camel. The two aircraft locked together and began a spiral dive from 10,000 feet (3,048 metres). Miraculously, they separated, but with no propeller and an engine not working, Ryan made a forced landing and survived. Sadly, the other pilot was killed.

After recovering, Ryan became a flying instructor. In April 1918, the RFC became the Royal Air Force (RAF), and Ryan was assigned to No. 1 Canadian Squadron of the RAF. But his transfer was delayed, and the war ended on November 11. Back home, he graduated from the University of Toronto with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1920.



In 1922, he earned a teaching certificate from Regina Normal School, taught for a year in a rural school, and then began teaching at Ross Collegiate in Moose Jaw in 1923.

In 1928, he started instructing with the Moose Jaw Flying Club. In 1930, he served as events manager for the first Moose Jaw air show. In 1931, he was manager of the flying club, and in 1932, received a Master of Arts degree from the University of Alberta.

The Moose Jaw Flying Club formed a charter company in 1935, Prairie Airways Ltd., and as business grew, Ryan was hired as manager, resigning from teaching in 1937. With implementation of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) in the Second World War, No. 3 Air Observer School (AOS) was established in 1941 at Regina, and Ryan was hired as manager.

In 1940, Canadian Pacific Air Lines (CPAL) purchased 10 small airline companies, including Prairie Airways Ltd. Ryan not only managed No. 3 AOS, but he also served as superintendent for the Saskatchewan district of Canadian Pacific Air Lines, with C. H. "Punch" Dickins as general manager. In 1943, No. 3 AOS was closed and Ryan became supervisor of operations for western lines of CPAL. He recommended that the company concentrate on building a scheduled airline service and was appointed as general superintendent of western lines.

In 1945, CPAL began converting Douglas Dakota DC-3 aircraft for passenger service. In 1946, Ryan was appointed general manager of operations, and in 1947, Grant McConachie was appointed as president. By 1948, CPAL had ordered Canadair North Star aircraft for flights across the Pacific.

Soon Ryan became executive assistant to the president. DC-3 service continued in Quebec, but as most operations were in the West serving the Pacific from Vancouver, headquarters moved there, as larger aircraft were put into service, including Douglas DC-6B models.

In 1951, Ryan was appointed by McConachie as vice-president. In the 1950s, international service expanded from Canada to Mexico City, South America, and European cities. In 1956, Ryan became executive vice-president and was put on the board of directors. In 1957, he was elected as president of the Air Industry Transport Association of Canada. In 1961, CPAL entered the jet age with four-engine Douglas DC8-43 aircraft.

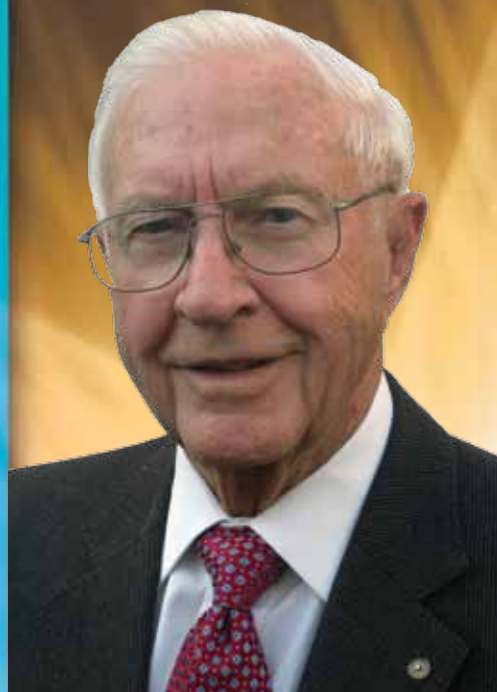
At the end of 1961, Ryan reached retirement age, leaving CPAL, but staying on the board until 1965. In 1982, he published his autobiography, *From Boxkite to Boardroom*. Ryan died on November 17, 1992, in Penticton, British Columbia. His life in aviation spanned nearly half a century, from the time of primitive biplanes to the age of jet-propelled airliners.

DONALD T. HAMILTON (1924–)

Donald Hamilton was born at the farm home of his grandparents at Havelock, Ontario. In the mid-1930s, his parents moved to the hamlet of Tilney, Saskatchewan. After graduation from high school, he enlisted in 1942 in the King's Own Rifle Regiment of Canada. In 1943, he transferred to the Royal Canadian Air Force, graduating in 1944 as a bomb aimer at No. 2 Bombing and Gunnery School at Mossbank, Saskatchewan, with the rank of pilot officer. The war ended before Hamilton was sent overseas, but he returned to aviation in pilot training at the Moose Jaw Flying Club in May 1946.

In 1947, Hamilton bought a new two-seater Cessna 120 and had dreams of making a living as a barnstormer. Because he did not have a commercial license, he hired a qualified pilot to take passengers at three dollars a ride at sports days in small towns.

Later in the year, Hamilton flew frozen fish with the Cessna for processing at Cold Lake, Alberta, a town of only 200 people at the time. Returning to Moose Jaw at the end of winter, Hamilton modified the airplane for crop spraying. In 1948, he returned to Cold Lake, starting a charter service to fly fish, passengers, and cargo to Cold Lake, Hay River, and Great Bear Lake.



In 1950, Hamilton purchased a Stinson 108-2, using it to transport government personnel for aerial survey work in locating a site for what would become the Cold Lake Canadian Forces base. With construction under way by 1951, Hamilton was kept busy with air charter service between Edmonton and Cold Lake. Two more aircraft were acquired, a Cessna 195 and an Avro Anson Mark V. When the base was completed, with no further need for Hamilton's services, the Stinson and the Cessna were sold.

During construction of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line inside the Arctic Circle, Hamilton was hired by Tommy Fox of Associated Airways in Edmonton to carry freight and passengers from DEW Line northern headquarters at Cambridge Bay, and the Anson was put back in service.

In 1956, Hamilton flew Ansons and Beavers for Standard Oil and sold aircraft for Gateway Aviation in Edmonton. He helped establish Aero Engineering in a wartime hangar for maintenance and repair to serve small operators. He sold out to his partners in 1958 and established Hamilton Aviation, selling Helio Courier and Dornier aircraft while still providing charter service. He continued hauling fish in northern Alberta, and to carry bigger loads acquired a Fairchild 82. In 1987, Hamilton built his own facility, the General Aviation Centre, at Edmonton City Centre Airport.

In 1969, Hamilton became a partner in Air Spray (1967) Ltd., helping launch the company into forest fire suppression with a B-26 Invader bomber converted to carry fire retardant. Hamilton flew a Cessna 310 as a "bird dog" to lead the bomber into firefighting areas. In 1972, he bought out his partner. In 1974, operations moved to the Red Deer Regional Airport, the site of the wartime BCATP station at Penhold. Air Spray had contracts to operate provincial government aircraft and also increased its own fleet. By 1990, Air Spray was operating fifteen B-26 Invaders, three Canadair 215s, two Cessna 340s, three Aerostars, and a Cessna Citation executive jet. Staff had grown to 60 pilots, as well as support and maintenance personnel.

To increase capacity for firefighting, Hamilton selected the Lockheed Electra L-188, powered by four turboprop engines. Eight of them, accompanied by Gulfstream twin-engine turboprop aircraft for bird dog duty, comprise the largest such fleet in North America.

In 2000, the company's wartime BCATP hangar burned down, with the fatal loss of an engineer and six aircraft. It was a serious setback, but Air Spray recovered when Hamilton built a modern 97,000-square-foot hangar on the same site in 2001. Hamilton continues to be active in the business as CEO, working from his Edmonton office. He still flies his Cessna 340, over 65 years after starting a lifetime in aviation.

WILLIAM J. WHEELER (1931–)

Long-time editor of the *CAHS Journal*, William J. (Bill) Wheeler was born in 1931 in Port Arthur, Ontario, and attended school at Central Public School. His father, the city architect, designed and supervised the construction of the school in 1909. By the time he completed Grade 13 at Port Arthur Collegiate in 1950, like many boys who grew up during the war years, Wheeler had developed an interest in aviation.

In 1955, Wheeler graduated from the Ontario College of Art with an Associate of Ontario College of Art diploma and worked as a freelance illustrator during the early 1960s, with assignments from aircraft manufacturer de Havilland and various publishers, creating illustrations of aircraft and ships.

In 1958, for publisher Macmillan of Canada, Wheeler illustrated a book on First World War flying called *Knights of the Air: Canadian Aces of World War I*, which went through eight printings and two editions. In some ways that book foreshadowed aspects of Wheeler's own future. It was his first aviation publication, and it included stories of pilots who have since been inducted into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame.

In 1962, meetings were held at Wheeler's home to discuss the formation of an organization to address the significance of aviation in Canada, and Wheeler became one of the founding members of the CAHS in 1962. Starting in 1963, for 45 years as volunteer editor, he published the *CAHS Journal*. Under his direction it grew to become the foremost journal of Canadian aviation history. Its readership is one of the most important ties that bind together CAHS members with a shared common interest in chapters across Canada.



Wheeler's abiding interest in art and his passion for aviation history have been instrumental in producing a publication in which a thousand stories, thousands of pictures, and cover art by some of Canada's best-known aviation artists have been shared with *Journal* readership. In producing the *Journal* in over four decades, Wheeler has himself become one of Canada's most knowledgeable aviation historians.

In the late 1960s, Wheeler furthered his education with completion of a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Toronto. Starting with the Scarborough Board of Education, now part of Toronto's educational system, he taught for 28 years, serving as head of the art department. He retired from teaching at West Hill Collegiate in 1994.

Serving as an unpaid editor for a quarterly publication, and recruiting writers and artists to share their work can be a tedious job. However, Wheeler says personal rewards included the opportunity to define and shape the *Journal*. He has also served as president of the CAHS and provided many illustrations for the magazine.

His dedication was instrumental in recognition given to the CAHS by Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame, which bestowed the Belt of Orion Award for Excellence upon the historical society in 2001. Wheeler himself has been recognized by his readers to receive an annual CAHS Mac McIntyre Award for the best-researched article to appear in the *Journal*.

Wheeler has published four other aviation books. *Images of Flight* (1992) is a portfolio of paintings by Canada's best-known aviation artists. *Skippers of the Sky* (2000) is a selection of stories about bush pilots that first appeared in the pages of the *CAHS Journal*. Volume 1 of *Flying Under Fire* (2000) and Volume 2 (2004) are aviation stories from the Second World War.

In 2008, Wheeler was approached by the Toronto chapter of the CAHS to produce a special edition publication celebrating Canada's Centennial of Powered Flight. It is a 40-page account of Canadian aviation history and was widely distributed by aviation museums in North America. The volume was a fitting cap to nearly a half-century of Wheeler's work in sharing important aviation stories in an unmatched contribution to the published word for present and future generations.

JOHN W. CRICHTON (1946–)

Ottawa native John Crichton was born November 15, 1946. He developed a passion for aviation from his father, who had served as an RCAF flying instructor in Canada during the Second World War. Crichton earned his private pilot's license in 1967, and managed the Ottawa Flying Club while enrolled in journalism at Carleton University, during which time he earned a commercial pilot's license.

He left university to fly for Bradley Air Services Limited, which provided charter services to the high Arctic. In 1973, Bradley formed a new operation called First Air, and with it Crichton established scheduled air service across the North, introduced jet service from Ottawa, and expanded turboprop routes in northern Canada. As executive vice-president of First Air in the 1980s and early 1990s, he was a guiding force behind expansion of air service in northern Canada.

In 1994, Crichton left First Air to become president and CEO of the Air Transport Association of Canada (ATAC). In that capacity, he influenced government policy and was a key advisor to Transport Canada. As president of ATAC, he spearheaded the privatization of Canada's air traffic control and navigation services. He brought together diverse interests of government, commercial aviation industry, unions, and general aviation in the creation of NAV CANADA.

In 1997, Crichton became president and CEO of NAV CANADA, one of the world's few fully private air navigation services. Since then, he has built the corporation



into one of the most modern and efficient air navigation systems in the world. The corporation now has 4,900 employees at 130 staffed sites across Canada. It is Canada's civil air navigation services provider, delivering air traffic control, flight information, weather briefings, aeronautical information services, airport advisory services, and electronic aids to navigation.

The corporation's innovations include the northern radar program and in-house development of air traffic management systems, including an air traffic surveillance system called Automatic Dependent Surveillance – Broadcast (ADS-B). It provides benefits for aircraft over the Hudson Bay region, expanding the capacity for this area of 250,000 square nautical miles (402,336 square kilometres [km]) flown by several international routes.

In 2006, NAV CANADA received the J. A. D. McCurdy Award from the Air Force Association of Canada for the company's "outstanding achievements in the field of civil aviation in Canada, in particular for the delivery of safe, efficient, and effective civil air navigation services across the country and in international airspace assigned to Canada."

In 2010, NAV CANADA was honoured with the Eagle Award from the International Air Transport Association, representing the world's international airlines. The award is given to recognize the Best Air Navigation System Provider. NAV CANADA had previously received the Eagle Award in 2001.

Under Crichton's leadership, NAV CANADA has built a global reputation for safety, efficiency, and a wide-ranging program that has seen the company's technology sold on a commercial basis to other air navigation providers. In-house talent—working with operational employees in the field—continues to develop NAV CANADA's own proprietary systems. These include trans-oceanic air traffic control systems, an automated tower terminal electronic-flight-strip system, and touch screen electronic technology. Such developments have been sold to air navigation service providers on three continents—North America, Europe, and Australia.

Crichton himself has been honoured for his work. In 2006, he was selected as Transportation Person of the Year by the Transportation Association of Canada. In 2008, he received the Glen A. Gilbert Memorial Award from the Washington, DC-based Air Traffic Control Association for lifelong achievement of an individual in aviation. In 2009, he was awarded the C. D. Howe Award from the Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute for his lasting contributions to Canada's aviation industry.

Crichton is regarded as a skilled and effective manager with a deep understanding of the airline industry and the ability to bring parties together for a common purpose.

HOLLINGER UNGAVA TRANSPORT (1948—1954)

Hollinger Ungava Transport Ltd. (HUT) was an air transport service created to fulfill a unique function. HUT was an airline that used mainly Douglas DC-3 aircraft that were veterans of the Second World War to build another transportation system, a special purpose railroad.

The airline was formed in 1948 as a subsidiary of the Iron Ore Company of Canada (IOC) to transport personnel and freight during the construction of the Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railway (QNS&L).

Hollinger North Shore Exploration planned construction of a railroad from Knob Lake, Labrador, to the port at Seven Islands (Sept-Îles), Quebec, on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The railroad would run 360 miles (580 km) from Sept-Îles north to the open pit mine at Burnt Creek, just inside the Quebec border near Knob Lake (later known as Schefferville) in the Ungava district. The railroad would transport iron ore to Sept-Îles, to be then carried by ship to steel mills in the United States and other parts of Canada. The slogan for the project was "Ore by '54."

Mont-Joli, Quebec, 350 miles (560 km) east of Montreal, served as HUT's main operating base. Mont-Joli had a well-equipped airport used by the RCAF from 1941 to 1945 for training and maritime patrol during the war. Starting in 1948 with two Douglas DC-3 aircraft, HUT eventually operated a fleet of ten, plus several other types of aircraft. At its peak, HUT averaged 70 flights per day, using 80 pilots with



PD Photo

crews that flew an average of 1,000–1,200 hours per year. Over 100 mechanics, radio operators, and other technicians were among the large supporting staff.

The DC-3s flew around the clock, with only three non-flying days scheduled per year—New Year’s Day, Easter Sunday, and Christmas Day. Blowing snow, poor visibility, poor runway lighting, and a cold winter for seven to eight months were among the conditions that made flying a challenge.

In 1952, when winter roads failed to support the loads that travelled on them, the IOC moved to build the railroad from the air. Eventually, a dozen airstrips were built. Additional aircraft were acquired and chartered, and HUT was soon supporting 7,000 men on the railroad project.

In 1953, the DC-3s delivered cement and steel to build the dam and spillway near Knob Lake across Guy’s River. When completed, the dam would also serve as a bridge for ore trains. By early 1954, the dam was providing electrical power to the mine.

As the railroad neared completion, using DC-3s and one Canso, HUT in 1953 flew more than 18,000 hours and carried 68 million pounds (28,123 metric tons) of cargo, more than the combined cargo carried by all other Canadian airlines that year. From 1948 to 1954, HUT flew over 55,000 hours in 24,077 flights and carried 163 million pounds (73,936 metric tons) of cargo. By the end of 1953, over a thousand people were working at the Burnt Creek mine, where open pits were producing and storing ore waiting for completion of the railroad and transport to the seaway.

On February 17, 1954, at Burnt Creek in –52 degrees Fahrenheit (-46 degrees Celsius) weather, the last spike was driven, symbolizing the completion of the QNS&L. By July 1954, the railroad would run nine 100-car ore trains each day, operating fully automatically and without crew, between the mine and the port at Sept-Îles. At that point, ore cars were emptied into ships to transport ore to steel furnaces in Canada and the United States.

The first shipment of iron ore was loaded onto an ore carrier at Sept-Îles on July 31, 1954. The arrival of the ore from the mine was celebrated at Sept-Îles with Joey Smallwood, premier of Newfoundland; Maurice Duplessis, premier of Quebec; and George M. Humphreys, chairman of M. A. Hanna Coal and Ore, who was also Secretary of the Treasury of the United States. HUT had completed its task on time, and “Ore by ‘54” had become a reality.

Each year, Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame, located at the Reynolds-Alberta Museum in Wetaskiwin, Alberta, recognizes outstanding individuals for their accomplishments. The Belt of Orion Award is given to organizations that have made important contributions to Canadian aviation. The CAHF web site at www.cahf.ca provides details regarding nominations, as well as information on all members and Belt of Orion recipients inducted into the Hall of Fame. Biographical notes at the site are illustrated by original portraits created by Toronto artist Irma Coucill, who has now drawn portraits of the Hall's 204 inducted members. ■

John Chalmers is an Edmonton writer who serves as historian for Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame. He is a board member of the Alberta Aviation Museum in Edmonton, a national CAHS member and a member of the CAHS Ottawa chapter.

Abbreviations

AOS	air observer school
ATAC	Air Transport Association of Canada
BCATP	British Commonwealth Air Training Plan
CAHS	Canadian Aviation Historical Society
CEO	chief executive officer
CPAL	Canadian Pacific Air Lines
DEW	Distant Early Warning
HUT	Hollinger Ungava Transport
IOC	Iron Ore Company of Canada
km	kilometre
No.	number
QNS&L	Quebec North Shore & Labrador
RAF	Royal Air Force
RFC	Royal Flying Corps