

THE NORSEMAN NEWS

Fall 2023



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE
BRITISH COLUMBIA AVIATION MUSEUM

NEWS

KF Centre for Excellence by Jack Funk



As a follow on to my previous article where we took a quick survey of KF Aerospace, formerly Kelowna Flightcraft, in this issue, I can now report on The KF Centre For Excellence. A few weeks ago, I was fortunate enough to be able to get up to Kelowna to see this amazing museum for myself. I met some friends at the Convair Cafe located in a KF Aerospace Hangar. The restaurant is paneled with aircraft interior panels, etc. After coffee we proceeded up Airport way to the magnificent museum. This amazing building is perched on an elevated piece of property overlooking the Kelowna airport. Sitting on the large patio out front are two Convair 580's one a Conair water bomber #52 (BCAM's is #55) the other a former Honeywell Flight Test example. As you enter the building you can't help but be

impressed by the size of it, 60,000 square feet! The quality of construction is evident. All materials are from BC. The laminated ceiling beams are shaped to match the camber of a Spitfire wing. The building is “aircraft shaped”. The centre of the building (the fuselage) is a huge atrium. The lower floor has many aviation related displays including DC-10 and Convair flight deck simulators. Aircraft engines and other components are on display. a souvenir shop is near the entrance. Upstairs in the atrium at the front is a restaurant/coffee shop with an amazing deck overlooking YLW (Kelowna airport). This is a great place to watch/photograph aircraft. The number of airplanes on display is not huge. The aircraft that are there however are significant.

Among the collection is the Douglas DC-3 “Odyessy’ that owner Barrie LaPointe flew around the world in 1986. Hawker Tempest 2 MW376 is under going restoration. The Tempest was one of the fastest piston engine fighters of WW2. DeHaviland Mosquito VR796 better know to us here as F Freddie was recently flown in from Vancouver to join Barries collection. Most of us will recall this aircraft being test flown here after a lengthy rebuild at Victoria Air Maintainance. A few months ago a F-104D Starfighter arrived from an owner in California. This example had been flown in recent years. It came with spare parts and two J-79 turbojets.



F-104D Starfighter Freddie

In the other “wing” of the museum are a Beech Stagerwing, Turbo Beaver and Cessna 185 on floats. Amazingly all these aircraft are in near flying condition. All in all This museum is an amazing testament to Mr LaPiontes love of aviation! It is a “Must” for anyone visiting the Kelowna area!

Are you interested in researching and writing about aviation in BC?

The Norseman News welcomes new writers. Please contact Marie Savage, Editor,

The Norseman News at mariesavage@bcam.net

to talk about your chance to volunteer as a writer.

President's Message

Fall 2023

Conal Oldfield, Executive Director
BC Aviation Museum

Where to begin! The rollercoaster that is the BCAM just doesn't know how to stop. It has been an incredibly busy summer at our museum. Year to date, I'm delighted to say that all our vital statistics are up. We have record attendance, record revenue sales and record membership. Our media presence and enhanced profile also mean we have received record donations.

The arrival of the CF104 Starfighter caused quite a stir both here and in the media. We had fantastic coverage across TV, radio and in the written press. In fact we've had more press coverage in the past 3 months than in the preceding 6 years! The Starfighter went off to be stripped of its old and peeling paint and to have the wheel struts replaced and repaired. It is now back with us and will take pride of place in the Henderson Hangar.

The museum's Open House, this year held over two days, was without doubt an undisputed success. The weather was fine and the crowds responded! We had upwards of 3,500 visitors and the museum raised approximately \$24,000. I would like to personally thank all the volunteers who selflessly gave up their time to make the event the triumph it was.

We also saw the arrival of two Piasecki helicopters which were transported from Golden to us in what was quite the feat of logistics and planning. With the landing gear re-attached by a team of volunteers from VIH, the aircraft are now sitting on a newly laid gravel pad awaiting the restoration to begin. With so many exciting projects already underway, it may be a little while before manpower and resources are available for this project.

I am delighted to be able to announce that the BCAM Education Program is now underway. We are able to offer workshops and on-site classes to Grade 6 classes as part of the BC academic curriculum. We are also working in partnership with UBC and Clarkson University as part of their aeronautical engineering programs. All these initiatives are great news for us as they make BCAM eligible for grants, lottery money and government funding. This is also a great way to get our message out there and to share our heritage and history with younger generations.

In August we welcomed our very first intern to the museum. Darian has joined us for 6 months and comes fresh from a university degree in Museum Management. Her first project is focusing on the "family tree" of commercial BC airlines. It's a fascinating topic and it is intended to be the centerpiece of a whole new display for the museum. Darian will also be working with other departments to get a rounded overview of all aspects of our operations.

A final good news story involves Government House in downtown Victoria. As I'm sure you all know, next year is the 100th anniversary of the RCAF. In recognition of this, the BCAM has been asked to provide the centerpiece of the Government House Costume museum, celebrating the history of the RCAF through uniforms and artefacts. As you can imagine, this will give another terrific boost to our public profile.

I'd like to say a final thank you to all the volunteers and staff who make our museum the success it is. It is only through your collective dedication and commitment that we are able to offer the public the experience that sets us apart from the ordinary!

Conal Oldfield
Executive Director



Important Upcoming Dates

October-December 2023

Oct 18 Wednesday	Speaker Night
Oct 21 Saturday	Run Up Saturday—Weather Permitting
November 11 Saturday	Admission by donation—Accepting Food Bank donations
November 15 Wednesday	Speaker Night
November 18 Saturday	Run Up Saturday—Weather Permitting
December 16 Saturday	Run Up Saturday—Weather Permitting
December 25 Monday	Christmas Day—Closed
December 26 Tuesday	Boxing Day—OPEN 11am—3pm
January 1 Monday	New Year's Day—Closed

Please continue to check the Museum's website or the current Slipstream magazine for the most up-to-date events information.

The Museum is open seven days a week 10am-4pm except for some holidays.

Think about volunteering!

The Museum is always looking for volunteers to take on various roles, from working the till and welcoming visitors, to guiding tourists, to working on the collection, to helping out on special events.



Contact Peter Garnham at petergarnham@bcam.net if you'd like to help.

Film Review: *China Clippers* By Dave Byrnes

This film is available on DVD from the British Columbia Aviation Museum. Any member of the Museum can check out a DVD from the Museum Library!

In 1935, Pan American Airways inaugurated the first trans-Pacific crossing from the United States to China. The flight captured American imaginations, and Hollywood obliged a year later with a film named after the airplane – *China Clipper*. Wikipedia describes the film as a thinly veiled biography of Juan Trippe, the founder and longtime president of Pan Am, and the film was made with Pan American's support and approval. Pan American is never mentioned by name, but the Pan Am logo is clearly visible throughout the film. It was also a stroke of marketing genius to name the flying boats Clippers, after the fast sailing ships. Pan American subsequently called all its passenger aircraft Clippers, all the way to the Boeing 747s and the bankruptcy of the airline in 1991.

It must be said that *China Clipper*, the film, is something of a potboiler. It was directed by Ray Enright who, according to Wikipedia, directed 56 Hollywood films in the 1930s. There is the obligatory romance – two of them, in fact. The central character, Dave Logan, is played by Pat O'Brien, as a driven, bullying businessman keen to keep aviation in the Americas in American hands. The second lead is Humphrey Bogart, thankfully not encumbered with a Hollywood romance, and easing away from the villainous roles he'd played until then. The film opens with Logan and his wife watching (in flashback) Charles Lindberg's ticker-tape parade on his return from his transatlantic flight, and it is truly astonishing to realize that *China Clipper* was made only 9 years after the Spirit of St Louis crossed the Atlantic.

The real star of the film, though, is the Martin M-130, the original China Clipper. Just three M-130s were built by the Glenn L Martin Company. The M-130 had a parasol wing and sponsons like those on the Boeing 314. Powered by four Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp engines of 950 hp each, the China Clipper looks very modern compared with its predecessor, the Sikorsky S-42. Sadly, all three had crashed with loss of all crew and passengers by 1945.



Many vintage landplanes as well as flying boats can be seen in *China Clipper* – Trimotors from both Fokker and Ford, a Lockheed Vega, Keystone bombers, as well as two flying boat predecessors to the M-130, the Sikorsky S-40 and S-42.

As the BC Aviation Museum is in the slow but steady process of acquiring the largest *flying* flying boat in the world, it's an opportune time to catch a film from a time when flying boats appeared to be the wave of the future. Development during the 1930s was staggeringly fast, but was eventually undone by the development of bomber-capable land-based runways during the Second World War. The final American flying boat was the Boeing 314, which made its first trans-Atlantic and trans Pacific flights in 1939.

Postwar large flying boat development collapsed, possibly the last effort being the ill-conceived Saunders Roe Princess. (The Princess was the largest metal flying boat ever built, with a wingspan 20 feet longer than the Martin Mars. One flew, two were under construction, and all three were scrapped when there were no buyers.) Flying boats, as opposed to amphibians like the Goose and the Canso, are mostly used today for firefighting, and still have an active role.

The BC Aviation Museum Reaches for the Stars

The BC Aviation Museum has acquired a CF-104 Starfighter, a Cold War fighter-bomber that was a major Canadian contribution to NATO. It features very thin and stubby wings, a distinctive “T” tail and a powerful engine. While its small wing area resulted in a poor turning capability and high landing speeds, it displayed excellent acceleration and became the first production aircraft to achieve Mach 2 (twice the speed of sound), and to reach an altitude of 100,000 feet (30,480 meters) following a takeoff under its own power.

Entering service with the United States Air Force in 1958, designer Kelly Johnson’s impressive Starfighter was the first aircraft to simultaneously hold world records for speed, altitude and time-to-climb. This led to it being widely touted as, “A missile with a man in it.” Due to its short range and limited agility the Lockheed Starfighter had a relatively short front-line career with the United States Air Force but saw long service in fifteen different air forces with 2,578 examples produced. Despite its design as a high-altitude interceptor, Canadair Ltd of Montreal, Quebec, produced 200 single-seat Starfighters optimized for a low-level, nuclear strike role. Designated the CF-104, the Canadian variant featured a strengthened fuselage and wings, robust landing gear and a special hard-point for either a nuclear weapon or a reconnaissance camera pod.

While primarily a single-seater, the RCAF also purchased an additional 38 dual-seat Starfighters built by Lockheed for training purposes, designated the CF-104D. Entering RCAF service in 1962, eight squadrons in Europe were equipped with the CF-104 as a major NATO commitment. At the end of 1971, Canada switched from a nuclear to a conventional attack role that saw the Starfighter re-equipped with conventional bombs, rockets and the M-61 Vulcan gatling gun. In either case, the high speed and low-level tactics enabled the Starfighter to survive in a high-threat environment. However, this also required great pilot skill and many accidents resulted from a demanding low-level mission profile flown at very high speeds combined with often poor European weather.

The last Starfighters were withdrawn from Canadian Forces service in 1986 with the stand-down of 441 Tac (F) Sqn at CFB Baden-Soellingen, West Germany. They were replaced in theatre by the CF-18 Hornet. The museum example, a single-seat CF-104 model, was produced in 1962 and based at RCAF Station Cold Lake, Alberta; initially with 6 Strike/Reconnaissance Operational Training Unit and then 417 Operational Training Squadron. The aircraft was flown into storage at CFB Mountain View in June 1983 until it was struck off strength in 1990. In April 1991, the Starfighter was transferred to the Comox Military Museum, where it remained on display until being donated to the BC Aviation Museum.

The CF-104 is the fastest aircraft Canada ever deployed and the only one that had a nuclear-strike role. It also holds the Canadian altitude record of 100,110 feet (30,513 meters), set in 1967 by Wing Commander Robert “Bud” White, a Vancouver resident. As such, it will complement the museum’s other jet aircraft from the Cold War era, the classic Lockheed CT-133 Silver Star trainer. The Starfighter will be a static display featuring the livery it sported in Cold Lake, Alberta, where it spent its entire career in a training role. There are a number of retired CF-104 pilots living in the Victoria area who flew Starfighter 731, including Major General (Ret’d) Ken Lett, the original commanding officer of 6 Strike/Recce OTU in Cold Lake.

New Education Program

We're almost ready to launch the BCAM's long awaited Education Program which will see Grade Six students visiting the museum as part of the structured curriculum. They will learn about flight, airplanes and so much more while having a great time.

If you think contributing to this project is something you'd be interested in, please don't hesitate to come forward. We can tailor hours and commitment to your availability. Please reach out to myself or the volunteer coordinator (volunteers@bcam.net) for more details; we'd love to hear from you!

Conal Oldfield
Executive Director
conal@bcam.net



Another Membership Benefit!

We have another great benefit to offer to all BCAM members. The Royal BC Museum and BCAM have entered a reciprocal agreement. This means that any card holding member who shows their pass and ID can enjoy a 20% discount on their admission. *This offer is valid for the holder of the membership only.* This is a great opportunity to enjoy the benefits of being part of the BCAM family.

Join or Renew Your Membership



A Local Relic

Almost from the very beginning, Canada produced classic TV series blending action, adventure and comedy that focused on aspects of Canadian life in a particular geographical area. Examples include; The Forest Rangers; Adventures in Rainbow Country; Corner Gas; Little Mosque on the Prairies, and most recently, Kim's Convenience. Probably the best example of this particularly Canadian genre, and one of the longest running Canadian TV programs ever with 387 episodes, is The Beachcombers, which ran from 1972 to 1990 and is still in re-runs.

The Beachcombers featured the Canadian actor, Bruno Gerussi as Nick Adonidas; a Canadian-Greek log salvager who patrolled the western coastal waters of British Columbia in search of logs that had broken free from their booms. The series was shot in Gibson's, on the Sunshine Coast just north of Vancouver, and featured a number of colourful characters. Chief among these was Nick's foil; Relic. He was an unkempt and unscrupulous local who was always looking to steal business, and logs, from Nick. Relic was the quintessential Canadian villain; shady, underhanded, and scheming but not really all that bad. The part was played splendidly by another veteran Canadian actor, Robert Clothier. He had studied architecture at the University of British Columbia after World War II, but preferred painting, sculpting, and increasingly, acting. Although Relic is instantly recognizable as a main character from The Beachcombers, few Canadians know that in real life Robert Clothier had been a pilot and a war hero.



Clothier and Gerussi in character

Born in Prince Rupert, BC, when World War II broke out the 19-year old Clothier joined the RCAF in late 1940 and learned to fly at #1 EFTS, Malton, Ontario. From there he graduated from advanced training, received his wings, was promoted to sergeant, shipped overseas and was posted to active duty with 408 Squadron; all within a year, and before he turned 20. Now flying the obsolete Handley Page Hampden on bombing raids over the European Continent, the young pilot faced many dangers. Six months later Clothier was commissioned as a Pilot Officer, and six months after that, in December of 1942, as a Flying Officer. Fortunately for his career longevity, around this time the Squadron was converted to the 4-engine Halifax heavy bomber.

Following completion of his tour of duty in early 1943, Clothier was rotated back to Canada, but returned in March 1944; again with 408 Squadron but now flying the iconic Lancaster bomber. He was promoted to Flight Lieutenant in June of 1944 and the following month was converted back to the Halifax, which he continued to fly until his second tour was completed in October 1944. In recognition of his long service Clothier was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and in December of 1944 was assigned as an instructor to #5 Operational Training Unit in Boundary Bay, British Columbia. There he instructed pilots on the B-25 Mitchell medium bomber; preparing them for transition to the B-24 Liberator heavy bomber that was intended for use against the Japanese in the closing months of the war.

On December 23, 1944, his Mitchell lost power right after takeoff, causing it to come back down on the runway, where it veered sharply to the side and struck a



Clothier (3rd from right) with crew

deep drainage ditch. Three crew members perished in the ensuing explosion and fire, while Clothier, the sole survivor, suffered a broken back and other serious injuries. It took two years for recuperation and rehabilitation. He left the RCAF in 1946 and entered university to study architecture. In the post-war decades Clothier found increasing work in TV and then, in 1972, he landed the iconic role of Relic in *The Beachcombers*. When the series finally wrapped after 18 memorable years, Clothier appeared in other TV series, notably *The X-files*, *Jake and the Kid* and *Da Vinci's Inquest*, but would never again achieve the iconic status he enjoyed in *The Beachcombers*. Living in North Vancouver, Clothier was able to indulge in his passion for collecting and restoring Renault automobiles, take the odd acting gig, and generally enjoy life.

Clothier suffered a debilitating stroke in 1996, which cost him the effective use of his right hand. Determined to keep on painting, Clothier learned to paint with his other hand, and continued with his passion until he passed away in 1999 at the age of 77. Clothier, known to most Canadians as the scoundrel he played in the *Beachcombers*, was a remarkable and talented man who led a full life. And, to his everlasting credit, Clothier served his country honorably as a bomber pilot in a time of great need.

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