



Robert (Al) Eustis

Al Eustis is remembered as a very kind man, with an infectious smile and a warm handshake.

He was an honorary member of the Helicopter Association of Canada and a recipient of the Carl Agar/Alf Stringer award for making an outstanding contribution to the Canadian helicopter industry. His interest in aviation dated from the time he used to watch the RCAF aircraft departing from Boundary Bay Airport.

Al joined the RCAF Reserve forces and then transferred to the regular forces. Although he hoped to be trained as a pilot, he was commissioned as a radio operator. He found it interesting, but it was becoming redundant, as communication directly with the cockpit became easier, and in addition it was not what he really wanted to do.

After he left the RCAF, Al took flying lessons independently and earned his pilot's licence. His first job was as a dispatcher for **Pacific Western Airlines** and later he began his first commercial flying job with **BC Airlines** in Campbell River. At that time they operated 40 float and amphibious aircraft including Beaver, Norseman, Pilatus, and Grumman Goose. In 1966, he took a number of flights with helicopter pilot Bruce Payne, and from there on switched his allegiance to helicopters. He joined Okanagan Helicopters and later moved to Canadian Helicopters.

Al was a strong advocate for safety in the helicopter industry and post retirement at 70, he became a Safety Consultant to keep a presence in the industry. For years he was the Vice President System Safety for CHL.

A pilot hired by Al at Okanagan Helicopters has a story from his first overseas job in Burma. Al, known for his ability to remain calm in all situations, was touring the bases and, at breakfast in the hotel in Rangoon, the pilots were complaining about the rats and bats. Al was listening intently when a rat fell from several floors up and landed on his toast. Unruffled and with his trademark smile, Al simply said 'Well, I see what you mean'.

Born: May 28, 1933
British Columbia

Died: December 20, 2016
Surrey B.C.

Family: Wife Joan, and
Children and Grandchildren
R.C.A.F.

Pilot

Pacific Western Airlines

B.C. Airlines

Okanagan Helicopters

Canadian Helicopters

