



William (Bill) McLeod

In 1949, Bill McLeod was the first helicopter pilot licensed in Canada. When he left school more than a decade earlier, he took a nine month correspondence course in Aircraft Engineering with Brisbane Aviation School in Vancouver. He then completed 3 months of practical training and went to work for a flying school, Foggin Flying Service, at Sea Island. In 1939, while working as an engineer for the flying school, Bill learnt to fly in a Fleet 2.

When war came, Bill joined the R.C.A.F. At that time, the R.C.A.F. wanted at least 2 years of university for potential pilots, so he joined as an aero-engine mechanic, went to work in an Elementary Flying School, and applied to remuster as a pilot.

After completing his aero-engine mechanic's training at St Thomas, Ontario, Bill was posted to Ucluelet, where he worked on Stranraer Flying Boats until his reclassification as a trainee pilot came through. He was posted to Initial Training School in Edmonton, then to Elementary Flying School in High River and from there to Service Flying Training School in Calgary. He then went to Arnprior where he learned to instruct and finally ended up as an Elementary Flying Instructor in Fort William. Bill was sent from there to Abbotsford where he first met Carl Agar whom he got to know quite well.

Post War, Bill was at Sea Island and then joined **Bill Sylvester's BC Airlines** and later, in 1946, **Queen Charlotte Airlines**. He claimed to be one of the last pilots to fly the Stranraer Supermarine Flying Boat, which he flew on regular routes along the West Coast of Vancouver Island. He later flew Norseman and Waco aircraft. Flying the West Coast with only basic instruments was perhaps the most difficult flying in the world.

Bill left **QCA** for personal reasons and went to Vancouver with no particular future in mind. He met his old friend Carl Agar in a coffee shop and, though he had never seen

a helicopter, Carl offered him a job flying them. After Carl's impressive demonstration on the versatile performance of a helicopter, Bill decided he had to learn to fly one. Carl trained him at Okanagan Helicopters where he got his licence and learned something of Mountain flying techniques. His first job with them was at Kispix in 1950. Together with Carl, he was a pilot of a Bell 47B3 for Bowser Lake Mapping and Survey. A video of this project 'Flying Surveyors' can be found in BCAM's Resource Department. In 1952, he took the company's first Sikorsky S-55 to Kemano for the Kemano/Alcan hydroelectric project.

From Okanagan Helicopters, Bill went to PWA Helicopters until 1959 when he left to become a contract pilot. He later returned to commercial flying until he retired in Qualicum Beach.

More information on Bill's experience with Okanagan Helicopters can be found in 'Helicopters: The British Columbia Story' by Peter Corley-Smith and David N. Parker, available in the BCAM Resource Centre

Born: 1920 approx:

Nanosee

Family: Wife: Joan
(divorced)

2 daughters

RCAF

BC Air

QCA

Okanagan Helicopters

PWA Helicopters.

