

# Harry Bray



**Born:** 17 June 1921

Ontario, Canada

**Died:** December 29, 2003

Saturna Island BC

**Family:** Wife Margaret, and

4 sons with ex-wife Kathleen

RCAF bomber pilot

Kamloops Air Service

Central BC Airlines

**PWA**

Author 'Lap of the Gods'

Harry Layton Bray grew up in a small town Ontario, the son of a banker. His uncle, who worked for the Dept. of Transport, brought many aviators to visit the family cottage, at least one of whom moored his floatplane on the cottage lake. Harry's first experience of flying was in a float plane when he was 12. He was an enthusiastic builder of model planes and rushed to any barnstorming in the district.

WWII started as Harry finished high school. He joined the RCAF and trained as a bomber pilot. He served in the Eighth Bomber Reconnaissance Squadron in Sydney Nova Scotia and then, when the Japanese invaded the Aleutian Islands, in Alaska. After two tours of duty, he joined 35 Squadron and served in India and the Cocos Islands, dropping supplies and bombing Burma, Bangkok and Singapore. He flew Blenheims on the Canadian Coast and Liberators in India. When peace was declared Harry helped evacuate troops from POW camps.

After the war, Harry was one of many returning airmen who tried to make a living as a pilot back home in Canada. 90% of these ventures failed but Harry had some success after he founded Kamloops Air Services with 2 Seabees. Business was good in 1948 when floods washed out the road to Vancouver but eventually he bowed to the inevitability of being taken over by Central BC Airlines, who operated with Beavers and who had been attempting by any available means to oust him out and take over his business. He continued to fly with CBCA after the takeover and stayed on after it grew to become Pacific Western Airlines—in his words, flying from the era of overloaded Junkers to that of Boeing jets. He even became Chief Pilot, which was a brief boost to his ego until he found that the title had also been given to at least two other pilots.

In his spare time, Harry wrote, farmed, built houses, developed a housing subdivision in Belize and married several times. His book Lap of the Gods went to two printings. He retired to Saturna Island in 1978 and enjoyed another 25 years travelling, doing genealogy, singing, and fishing. He loved travel, dogs, horses and beautiful women.

Harry was the older brother of Lorna Vivian deBlicquy, photograph right, a pioneering female Canadian aviator who flew for over 50 years becoming Canada's first woman civil aviation flight test inspector. She contributed significantly to improve conditions for working women pilots. In 2014 she was posthumously inducted into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame.



*More information can be found in Harry's autobiography 'Lap of the Gods' available in BCAM Resource Centre*

