

## Jim Lightbown



James Ray Lightbown (Jim) enlisted in the RCAF on 21 October 1941 and served with 431 Squadron, based in Croft, England. He flew 33 missions in Lancaster and Halifax bombers over heavily defended areas in Germany and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for fortitude and bravery.

After the war, Jim worked in commercial aviation. In 1956, he was flying for **PWA** out of Port Alberni. On January 10th, he piloted a charter flight to Muchalat Inlet taking three passengers who were on a routine maintenance trip. The plane was last reported at Kennedy Lake, near Ucluelet, and reported missing in the region of Nootka Sound.

The following day searchers from **PWA** found Jim and his 3 passengers alive and unhurt on the shores of Bligh Island. They were rescued by a **PWA** Norseman piloted by **Jack Moul**. It was assumed that the pilot became lost in unsettled weather and the plane was found upside down in the water.

In 1962, Stranraer CF-BXO was derelict and abandoned behind the Queen Charlotte Airlines hangar. Jim was leader of a consortium, Stranraer Aerial Enterprises, that purchased the plane and all available spares with the intention of rebuilding it and putting it back to use. The rebuild went smoothly but by April they were behind their target date and Wardair, out of Yellowknife, had agreed to lease BXO for the summer season. To speed things up, they abandoned their original plan to tow the plane to Mission, for takeoff from the river for testing, and decided to build a dolly and takeoff from the runway. The building of the dolly was a bigger feat than the rebuild of the plane but it was completed. The insurance company insisted that the pilot for this venture should have experience on Stranraers which ruled out Jim, and fellow former RCAF pilot, **Slim Knights** was pressed into service with Jim as co-pilot. In 1966, after 2 or 3 years of

service, the Stranraer was irreparably damaged when it broke free from its mooring and was blown into pilings. A TV personality bought her for a song and ultimately arranged for her to go to the RAF museum in Hendon, the last remaining Supermarine Stranraer.

In July 1970 Jim was one of two pilots who flew Queen Elizabeth, Prince Philip and Princess Anne on a tour of the Arctic.

Jim retired from PWA and died in 1996.



**Born:** 1922

Alberta

**Died:** 1996

**Family:** Wife Livainne  
First child Ricky

Pilot

RCAF Bomber Pilot

DFC

**Pacific Western Airways**

*Jim's own account of his venture with the Stranraer can be found in 'BXO' in 'West Coast Aviator' Sept/Oct 1996.*

