

Slim Knights



Herman Joseph (Slim) Knights started to fly with the R.C.A.F. He was a pilot officer flying Lancasters, Halifaxes and Stirlings out of wartime England. In December 1943, during a bombing raid on Berlin, his plane was shot down over Meppen. He survived and spent the rest of the war in a prisoner of war camp.

Slim returned to Canada and in 1946, along with another ex-POW **Jack Moul**, started Port Alberni Airways. The company struggled for a few years until it amalgamated with Associated Air Taxi, where Slim became Operations Manager. In 1953, that company was bought by Central British Columbia Airways which became **PWA**. Slim was fired from PWA for supporting the union in a dispute.

Air Force veterans and bush pilots started charter operations from time to time, which rarely lasted long. Slim started a couple of short lived companies at the old Vancouver Airport. Meanwhile, he spent his summers flying air tankers for Skyways Air Services.

Skyway Air Services was started shortly after the close of WWII. They were pioneers in the development and operation of aerial firefighting, agricultural and pest control spraying.

The owner of Skyways suffered a stroke in 1969 and wanted to reduce his work load. A consortium of five men, including Slim, formed Conair Aviation to take over the fire control and aerial agricultural interests of Skyways, which continued to operate as a flying school and charter business.

By 1984 Conair had the world's largest private fleet of Air Tankers including 50 fixed wing aircraft and 15 helicopters and by the early 1990s has grown to over 90 aircraft. Slim, who was Executive Vice President, continued to work for them until his death in 1989.

In 1962, Slim was the pilot with **Jim Lightbown** as co-pilot when the last Supermarine Stranraer took off from a 'Dolly', the largest seaplane to attempt this. The plane made a 40 minute flight from Abbotsford to Sea Island. The aircraft and a short video of this venture are held at the RAF museum in the UK.

Born: 1919
Adopted, no details
Hometown Surrey B.C.

Died: March 1, 1989
Matsqui B.C.

Family: Wife Thora
Daughter Karen

Pilot

RCAF P/O

Port Alberni Airways

Associated Air Taxi

PWA

Skyways Air Services

Conair Aviation

