



Halifax 57 Rescue (Canada) April 1, 2005 Progress Report (Number 6)

by KARL KJARSGAARD (Project Manager)

On this day in 1924 the Royal Canadian Air Force was born. We look back on the great excellence and sacrifice of the RCAF over these 81 years and hope to carry on in the patriotic spirit of those who have served in the RCAF.

This project can and will be a tribute to all our aircrews and personnel who flew, fought, and served in one of the finest Air Forces the world has seen. They were second to none in quality and effectiveness.

Did you know that on October 14/15 1944, over a 24 hour period, that RCAF 6 Group of the Royal Air Force Bomber Command sent out 503 Halifaxes and Lancasters as a major contribution to the bomber force to bomb Duisburg, Germany? The RAF Bomber Command senior officers were skeptical that RCAF 6 Group could muster this many heavies over such a short time span. True to their assurances the Canadian Squadrons came through using Canadian determination and ingenuity to perform this excellent effort. The RCAF squadrons pulled out all the stops by working endlessly during this 24 hour period, recruiting and employing all RCAF personnel, including cooks and administrative types to service, load, and arm the Halifaxes during this maximum effort operation. The scepticism turned to amazement as the RCAF turned their "colonial" approach and innovativeness to this huge task. This was the RCAF as its best, true excellence shining through during such a tumultuous period in World War 2.

As the Allied nations celebrate Victory and remember the sacrifices of our veterans in World War 2 during the 60th anniversary of VE and VJ Day we will remember those bomber crews and personnel of the RCAF and our Allies who were the first of our forces to take the offensive to the enemies of Freedom. When no other forces could touch the enemy or get near him the bomber crews, taking horrendous casualties (only 1 out of 4 bomber crews finished their combat tours) were able to attack and weaken the Axis powers. During the dark days of the war these bomber crews, against all odds, went to the attack and saved the day.

I am sure that in all of the celebrations pending you will see and hear of who did what and where for Allied victory. Canadians will be there in the back somewhere, quietly nodding as the accolades of other Allied nations are mentioned in descriptions of Victory. Remember that Canada had one of the highest percentages of their population in the military of any Allied nation in World War 2 and that the RCAF was the fourth largest Air Force in the free world during this

time. And by the way, 1 out of every 4 aircrew in the British RAF was a Canadian.

Special mention must be made of the 7000 Americans who served in the RCAF who will be known as our "American Patriots - Canadian Warriors". They flew and fought with their Canadian comrades in the RCAF with over 700 killed-in-action. After much research Halifax 57 Rescue (Canada) has found all their names and hometowns of those Americans who paid the ultimate price for Freedom. All 48 states of the USA are represented on this RCAF Roll of Honour with at least one son killed-in-action from every state. THE MAJORITY OF THESE 700 + ARE NOT LISTED ON THEIR STATE MEMORIALS. During this project we will give special tribute to these unknown Americans and heroes who flew and died for Canada in the RCAF. It is the least we can do for our best friends and neighbours.

On to business - These are the **HALI-FACTS**

Halifax 57 Rescue (Canada) has been able to gain more support for the Halifax Project in special spheres of influence in Canada.

The Royal Canadian Legion was approached to endorse the project and pass on news of our special project to all their members and Legion branches across Canada. In early March I received an official letter from the Dominion President of the Legion, Mary Ann Burdett, formerly from the RCAF, endorsing our project. Further to this, "Legion Magazine" editors have advised me that an official announcement about the Halifax Project will be included in their May/2005 issue. Considering the national scope of their organization and Branches, not to mention the thousands of members, this is a very positive step for Halifax 57 Rescue (Canada). As Project Manager I have offered to speak to any Legion Branch across the country about the Halifax Project to raise financial support to locate and recover Halifax LW170.

In January this year I spoke to the Air Cadet Squadron at Milton, Ontario about the RCAF, the Halifax, and the Project. The officers and cadets were most supportive and even made a contribution to our project fund. They suggested I approach the Air Cadet League of Canada headquarters in Ottawa to gain support for the Project. After positive communication with the Executive Director it was agreed that the Air Cadet League would endorse the project. All the squadrons and their cadets will be invited to support the Halifax Project as a fully bilingual invitation from Halifax 57 Rescue (Canada) will be included on their official website. This is good news for our aims to include and educate the youth of today of the great heritage of the Halifax in the history of Canada and her Allies.

On April 21 I will be speaking to the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) chapter in Montreal about the Halifax Project. In addition the Airforce Association membership (Western Canada) is having their AGM on April 29/30 in Kelowna, B.C. and the executive have invited me to be their guest speaker at their dinner. I will do my best to gain support for our special project.

On the U.S. front Reverend Bob Bluford of Richmond, Virginia (a B-24 Liberator pilot with the USAAF) whose friend Mel Compton flew LW170 in combat is 110% behind this project and wants to make sure those 700+ Americans killed-in-action in the RCAF are not forgotten. We are going to have a meeting later this month with influential people in Richmond and Washington, D.C. to rally support for the Halifax Project in the U.S. I am hopeful to meet with the new Canadian ambassador, Frank McKenna, this month to gain his support in promoting the Halifax Project as a possible joint historic project to celebrate the victory and remember the sacrifice of our RCAF warriors of Canada and the U.S.A.

From the members and supporters of Halifax 57 Rescue (Canada) we have received good support in the form of membership fees and donations for our Project and activities. The receiving of status as a Registered Charity in Canada has been an essential development for our fund raising campaign. (**Charity Reg. No. 84586 5470 RR0001**). We have and will be submitting proposals to several corporations and foundations for the critical funding needed for the sonar survey to locate Halifax LW170. This is in the order of \$150,000 to \$175,000, subject to currency fluctuations which are a main concern right now.

I would like to explain about the memberships and renewals for people who wish to support our project. As our group is fairly new and this is our first full year together I think it would be best if we make our renewal date be April 1 of each year, which is also the birthday of the RCAF and before tax forms are due. If this will be ok for our members and supporters I would like to ask that for the year 2005 that all of you who read this report would consider renewing your membership now by sending in the fees and any donations you feel is in order to help our project. To our member Richard K. we issue special thanks for your timely and generous donation to keep Halifax 57 Rescue (Canada) going when progress was slow and bills were due.

Our legal bill for getting the Charitable status is mostly paid, thanks to the patience of our lawyers Binavince Associates, but we still owe over \$500 to finalize the bill. The smaller costs of postage, phone calls, and raising support for the project by my appearances, as I travel about, we can cover from your donations and with some funds from my pockets. Your renewals and donations will revitalize our project progress.

I apologize for the overall slow progress to go after RCAF Halifax LW170 but I hope you will remain determined with me. There are several proposals from our group with foundations, corporations, and powerful philanthropic people at this time. We will continue to apply and lobby for one of these special groups or people to find the funds we need to go after Halifax LW170. She is a true international aviation treasure and the focus of our honourable quest.

I will close with a quote from Tom Withers, American air gunner of an RCAF Halifax, in a letter to his parents in Roseland, Virginia on January 10, 1941:

"... to say goodbye to you was not an easy thing for me to do. However, I believe you both will understand that I could not well do anything else since everything that I, as well as both of you, believe in is now in a very precarious position. My training, inclinations, and whatever abilities I may have seem best suited for the choice that I have made. And there is no question of serving Canada to the neglect of my mother country. He who serves Great Britain or any of its Dominions also serves the U.S. and vice versa. Our differences are in arbitrary boundary lines only."... Love Tom

On July 27, 1942 Tom's Halifax W1230 of 405 Squadron, RCAF, was shot down over Germany. He rests now with his Canadian crew in the Allied War Cemetery in Kiel, Germany.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

Best regards
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