

RIGHT: Col. Charles "Duff" Sullivan, Wing Commander of 4 Wing Cold Lake, examines the contents of the time capsule following its official opening 25 years after being sealed. (JACQUELINE CHARTIER)

4 Wing at 50!

Base at Cold Lake celebrates fifty years of proud service.

By Jacqueline Chartier

This year members of Canada's air force are marking two extremely momentous milestones in the history of Canadian military aviation. Eighty years ago, on April 1, 1924, the Royal Canadian Air Force officially came into existence. Three decades later, in 1954, Canada's largest and busiest fighter base, located at Cold Lake, Alberta, was born.

4 Wing Cold Lake, the airbase formerly known as Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake, is currently celebrating its Golden Jubilee year with a lot of hype and a tremendous display of solidarity. From its humble beginnings half a century ago, 4 Wing has evolved into a symbol of immense national pride. Located roughly 300 kilometres northeast of Edmonton, the base is arguably the most essential cornerstone supporting Canada's modern air defence system. Military analysts and serving members of the Canadian Forces have time and again referred to it as a national treasure.

On a recent visit I found an atmosphere of glamour and exhilaration in Cold Lake, something distinguishing, yet intangible, that can't be detected on other Canadian Forces bases. 4 Wing is a complex organization with many flying, specialist and support units. It consists of 2,000 military members plus 250 civilian staff and their families. The base provides training not just for Canadian fighter pilots, but also for those



from other NATO countries. Indeed, the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range is the only tactical bombing range in Canada and is widely considered to be one of the finest facilities of its kind in the world.

Col. Charles "Duff" Sullivan, Wing Commander of the base, feels an intensely personal connection to Cold Lake, having embarked on his military career here in the late 1970s while awaiting his training as a fighter pilot. When I spoke with him, he conveyed to me that he feels extremely privileged to be in his position of leadership at such a crucial time. "These 50th anniversary celebrations present us with tremendous opportunities to rekindle our pride in who we are and what we do," he said.

Sullivan is quick to draw an association between the Cold Lake of previous generations and those who serve as part of 4 Wing today. "It is right that we pause at this time of year to reflect on our rich history, because who we are and where we are going has everything to do with where we have been and who came before us," he maintained in a recent front-page editorial in the base newspaper.

THROUGH ADVERSITY TO THE STARS

To reflect on the origins and history of 4 Wing, one can't help but experience a certain sense of wonder at what has been

achieved. Chronicles of the earliest days of the base reveal a close-knit and cheerful military community. However, hardship, isolation and loneliness were also common for those who inhabited the base in the 1950s or early 1960s at the height of the Cold War. They were, beyond a doubt, brave souls—men and women who lived and worked under the old Royal Canadian Air Force motto *per ardua ad astra*. Freely translated, the maxim encouraged members to work through adversity in pursuit of the stars.

Cold Lake has the distinction of being the first flying station to be built for the RCAF after the Second World War. In April 1951 the announcement was made that a tract of land 180 km by 65 km bridging Alberta and Saskatchewan would be developed into an air weapons range. The area was selected by the RCAF because of several beneficial geographical features; namely, adequate drainage, flat terrain and nearby gravel deposits. The features met the considerations required to construct an air weapons training base: land accessibility, good weather for flying, land to build an aerodrome, and the prospects for future development.

Accounts differ on the exact day that the station was opened. Some report it as March 31, 1954, and others as April 1, 1954. Either way, conditions at RCAF Station Cold Lake were harsh and primitive by today's standards. Provisions for year-round winter sup-

plies and facilities for sewage disposal had to be met. Emergency kits, insect control, medical care, and proper cold weather clothing all had to be taken into consideration.

In September and October of 1954, 355 Permanent Married Quarters (PMQs) were ready for occupation. Though some PMQs were built for RCAF Station Cold Lake's earliest arrivals, they encountered no roads and little or no infrastructure. Semi trucks slogged through mountains of thick mud to get to the PMQs, and then movers used wood planks to unload furniture. It was a nightmare for some of the wives with small children to keep clean.

By November 1954, 40 major buildings that were required in the operation of a modern airbase were completed. This included a state-of-the-art base hospital, which, unique to most RCAF station hospitals, also provided services to all the dependents of air force personnel and to civilians in the surrounding areas. Slowly and surely something magnificent was materializing out of the remote hinterland of north-eastern Alberta.

LET THE CELEBRATIONS BEGIN!

How do you adequately celebrate something as significant as the 50th anniversary of 4 Wing Cold Lake? For the past year this has been the responsibility of a 25-person anniversary planning committee spearheaded by Capt. Steve Connell, Wing Commander Sullivan's executive assistant. According to Connell two things were always certain: First, it would be a year-long celebration encompassing numerous events. Secondly, it would involve the entire com-

munity of Cold Lake with its population of 12,500.

Before the anniversary year is concluded it is expected that 4 Wing will be given Freedom of the City, an occasion for base personnel to parade down Cold Lake's main street. Over the past half century an apparently unbreakable bond has developed between the air base and civilians from the region. These ties are social as well as economic. 4 Wing is the largest base of its kind in Canada, pumping more than \$200 million a year into the local economy in wages and expenditures. Mayor Hansa Thaleshvar recently noted that Cold Lake's economy does well because it is balanced around the base, a fledgling aerospace industry, oil and gas, and tourism.

I was in attendance for the most symbolic and important of all the scheduled Golden Jubilee events. On June 18, 2004, 4 Wing celebrated its Anniversary Day. Military personnel and civilians alike gathered on the base to witness the impressive outdoor ceremony. Highlights included the historic opening of a 25-year-old time capsule as well as the dedication of a CF-18 display aircraft. Throughout the lengthy proceedings the sun shone brilliantly in a piercing blue sky.

The day was set in motion with the arrival of Col. Sullivan, who was accompanied by such invited dignitaries as former Chief of the Defence Staff Gen. Paul Manson. The crowd, which had been seated in bleachers and chairs, rose for the singing of the national anthem. We were soon seated and, following several readings from the Bible, the 4 Wing Pipe Band played a soulful and

moving rendition of *Amazing Grace*. Then, on cue, a CH-146 Griffon helicopter and a formation of CF-18 Hornets soared overhead.

Gen. Manson then unveiled the CF-18 Hornet and the plaque that will accompany it. In 1979, Manson was a key member of the team that chose the CF-18 as the successor to the CF-104 Starfighter. He is also proud to have been the second Canadian pilot to fly the aircraft. At the time, it was the largest federal government acquisition in the history of Canada. Understandably, the dedication was an emotional experience for Manson as well as others.

"To me, the unveiling of a CF-18 is a bit of a sad event," explained Sullivan. "Sad in that it helps us realize that the aircraft fleet is getting a bit older. Who thought that one of our brand new F-18s would ever go up on a pedestal?"

As the festivities progressed, Lt.-Gen. Lloyd Campbell was invited to oversee the opening of a time capsule that was interred on the base a quarter century ago. Campbell began by delivering a speech in which he related the story behind the time capsule. In 1978, he was a newly promoted major stationed at Cold Lake and was given the responsibility of overseeing the Silver Jubilee celebrations. One Silver Jubilee project included the building of a large cairn in which to place letters, papers and various artifacts.

The plaque used to seal the capsule in the cairn was removed one screw at a time. The capsule was then lifted down from its ledge and opened, the contents moved to a

4 WING AT FIFTY ... CONTINUED ON P. 28

"OTTAWA'S FRIENDLY LITTLE HOTEL"



Travelodge

Downtown, walk to Parliament, attractions & DND

40 Guest Rooms
from \$85

Furnished Apartments
from \$1500 (tax incl.)

Free breakfast and parking

Travelodge Doral Inn

486 Albert St. (near Bay St.), Ottawa

1-800-263-6725

www.doralinn.com

Canada's Largest Selection of Military Action Figures 'SCOTT J. DUMMITT PRESENTS' P.O. Box 23004, Amherstview P.O., Amherstview, Ontario, Canada, K7N 1Y2



Monthly
Sales

Quick
and
Friendly
Service

Featuring:
*Hasbro GI Joe (Vintage, AT, and Classic), Dragon,
Soldiers of the World, Elite Brigade, Marx, Blitzkrieg Toys,
Hot Toys, Vintage Action Man, In The Past Toys,
Ultimate Soldier, 54mm Canadian Toy Soldiers, Armoury,
Canada's Cops and much more*

Weekdays: 5 pm to 10 pm, Saturday: noon to 5 pm
Phone: (613) 389-5955; Fax: (613) 389-5055

e-mail: gijoe@kos.net

Web site: www.gijoeincanada.com

Catalogue available: send \$2.00
(refundable on 1st order)



HANKEY-PANKEY ... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

and destroyed every copy of an issue that had suggested there was some government discontent with Kitchener.

When Keith Murdoch, a young Australian journalist, arrived at ANZAC Cove, he found a press corps silenced by officialdom. Among the cynical group of correspondents was Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett who filled Murdoch in on the poor leadership and the absolute disaster that would befall survivors if they had to spend the winter in the trenches. Ashmead-Bartlett wrote a detailed letter to Prime Minister Asquith and Murdoch agreed to deliver it. He got as far as Marseilles where he was arrested by a British officer who demanded the letter. Another reporter back at ANZAC Cove had informed the authorities.

Murdoch went on to London where he wrote another letter urging that Gen. Hamilton and his deputy be reassigned and that an evacuation take place before winter. The letter got to the Prime Minister and the War Committee which relieved Gen. Hamilton of his command and ordered an evacuation of Gallipoli, which began in mid-December.

The question that continues to haunt history is what would have happened to units like the 1st Newfoundland Regiment on the rock of Gallipoli had reality not intervened. When evacuation was completed early in 1916, over a quarter million Allied soldiers were dead from enemy action and disease. Then the war spread to Macedonia like an itch. ♣

4 WING AT FIFTY ... CONT'D FROM PAGE 11



LEFT: Col. Charles "Duff" Sullivan, Wing Commander of 4 Wing Cold Lake, raises his ceremonial sword over the anniversary cake. Gen. Paul Manson looks on. (JACQUELINE CHARTIER)

tent and put on display. For the next few hours, people were permitted to view the contents of the capsule and to contribute personal items for a second container to be exhumed in

the year 2029. Many in attendance placed their business cards or personal letters; entire families were represented, with a few, myself included, having grown up as Cold Lake air force brats in the 1960s or 1970s.

As the new time capsule was placed alongside the original and the cairn was resealed, we paused to reflect upon our lives and upon the role of this extraordinary military community. Col. Sullivan himself acknowledged that his destiny has been inextricably linked to Cold Lake. Sullivan recalled being at 4 Wing in 1979 when the time capsule was first dedicated. The young recruit's modest role at that ceremony had been the distribution of programs. Twenty-five years later, addressing the audience as Wing Commander, Sullivan emphasized that he felt "so privileged and honoured to be here for the 50th anniversary." Then, adding poignantly, "I have this wish that twenty-five years from now, God willing, I'll be invited back for the 75th anniversary." ♣

Next month watch for the conclusion of 4 Wing at Fifty! as Jacqueline Chartier goes behind the scenes to interview several of Canada's elite CF-18 fighter pilots.

THE WAR AMPS

MILITARY HERITAGE DOCUMENTARIES



The War Amps has two responsibilities: to pay tribute to those who served, and to do everything possible to avoid future conflicts. War Amps military heritage documentaries provide historical accounts of Canada's participation in the First and Second World Wars and Korea, and convey the NEVER AGAIN! message to younger generations.

A War of Their Own

The Canadians in Sicily and Italy
D-Day

The Story of the Canadian Assault Troops
DIEPPE

Don't Call it a Failure

Operation

Charnwood
The Canadian Battle for Caen

Against All Odds
Canadian Infantry Battle for the Scheldt

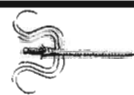
KOREA

Canada's Forgotten War

War Amps documentaries are available on loan free-of-charge or may be purchased at a cost-recovery price. For a complete listing, please contact The War Amps.

1-800-250-3030 or www.waramps.ca

(French language productions are also available)
Charitable Registration Number: 13196 9628 RR0001



Help is Available

P.T.S.D. - Addiction - O.S.I.

Put an end to the depression, re-experiencing, anger, and/or alienation and *regain control of your life.*

You don't have to go through it alone.

Discreet services are available.

Call **Capt. Rob Tyler** (ret'd.) at **416-512-2121.**
Psychotherapist

As seen on CBC, CTV and Global