# Project North Star Newsletter

November 2005

## Colonel Klink's return

Colonel Klink is back from his holidays on the edge of the Black Forest, and looking refreshed. Schultz tells us that Klink really enjoyed the hot baths at Baden-Baden. Schultzie says: "Ya, maybe now he'll stop ogling the secretarial pool. My wife was furious!" Hey, Major Hochstetter was breathing down our necks, so we're all glad to see Klink back. Sadly, Klink has learned that the Russians are coming, and will be retiring soon.

*"War will net dyken mut wieken"*

## In Other Camp News

The Merlin engine stand is well underway. Conservatively, we're making at least 28 knots in that department, and the wake is a sight to behold. Well-fortified with a bottle of Jamaican mineral water, and the following publications: "Merlin, Two-Stage, Two-Speed Aero Engine Maintenance Manual," "Rolls-Royce Maintenance Manual, Merlin 724-1C," and "Tools and Equipment for Engine Type Merlin 620 Series, Power Plant Type –TML," Ted Devey has designed the engine stand and is now building it from the ground up. Jim "The Flying Scotsman"

Riddoch says: "Pretty good for an old navy guy, eh. It's unsinkable!" Consensus has it that it looks damn solid. (Tip o' the hat to RCMP Garry for all the melt time on the frame.) Peter Houstonov insists that the base of the engine stand alone weighs 800 kilos, minimum.

## The FBC Crane

Also known as the tripod crane hoist, this former RCAF crane was a gift from First Air, at Carp. It was made by Cobra Industries of Quebec. The forward/reverse mechanism and the gearbox components were manufactured by Ranson and Marles of England. A full crew of North Star volunteers arrived at Carp during the fall of 2003 to disassemble the crane for transport to Rockcliffe. Using a combination of scissor lift, forklift, and gas-powered diamond wheel, the crane was ready for delivery about five hours later. Restored and resplendent in chrome yellow, the crane awaits attachment of the jib, and installation of motor, gearbox, and forward/reverse mechanism.

## On the Next Page…

… you will find a finely wrought poem by the Robert Service of the upper atmosphere, Dave

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Lambeth. Happily, this item was discovered by Tim Timmins in a weathered manila envelope aboard the North Star, within the aluminium lock box

underneath the galley table. It was written on a piece of scrap paper during one of those long, bumpy flights across the Atlantic.

***The Whispering Giant***

*Twinkle, twinkle, old North Star,*
*With wrinkled skin and creaky spar,*
*For years you've always been on sked,*
*As many of our force you've sped to distant lands beyond the skies, you've never failed to see the rise of distant suns or moonrise glare.*
*You've carried us with tender care -back you came to take us home, from old Japan or France or Rome from England, Goose, and Kef,*
*We cannot hear you.*
*('cause we're deaf)*

## John Corby:

The second in a series of volunteer bios

Mr. Corby lived on the fringes of London at the time of the Blitz. He was an apprentice toolmaker at the National Physical Laboratory (NPL). Early one morning, just a few blocks from his home, Mr. Corby saw the ghostly skeleton of the entire geodetic airframe of a Wellington bomber perched on the roof of a house. The airframe had somehow quietly settled there during the night without alarming the neighbourhood.

During his stint at NPL, John worked at the Department of Metrology, which made master gauges (tolerances within 1/100,000th. of an inch) for the production of ammunition and guns at factories across the U.K.

In October of 1947 John emigrated to Canada in one of the six North Stars Trans-Canada Air Lines had borrowed from the RCAF. This early trans-Atlantic trip may have been a proving flight, just before scheduled service began. The flight was 13.5 hours from Heathrow to Gander to Toronto. John worked in Toronto for six months, then began work at the National Research Council in 1948.

During the years 1948-1954, John continued his work at the NRC, becoming "a Jack of all trades, but master of none," while working at the Radio Division and the Hydraulics Lab. John set up the model shop for ship trials, made instruments for testing ships, made watertight cases for underwater cameras, and designed a detachable, adjustable rudder for post-war destroyer-escorts (to determine the optimum practical length of the ships' rudders.)

Now working in building M22 at NRC, John was invited by a colleague, Jack Duffield, to enjoy a change of scenery, and so John became assistant superintendent at the tri-sonic wind tunnel (NAE U66) at Uplands from '61 – '68. John's wife, Catherine, spied an advertisement for Curator, Industrial Technology in July of '67, and by mid-January of '68, the Museum of Science and Technology was blessed by his presence. John discovered a completely different work ethic at the museum. None of his earlier jobs had involved dealing with the public. "Everybody was new at the game, even the Director was a geologist. Most people were as green as grass as far as the museum business was concerned!"

John settled down to running the railroad exhibitions. Stelco had restored a steam locomotive as a Centennial project, and by late '68 decided to donate it to the museum. This was the museum's first working locomotive. To meet a July 1st. deadline, John gave himself a crash course on the operation of the beast, and somehow managed to set a stretch of track on fire, not far from the museum. But overall, the steam enterprise was considered a great success. Day excursions to Wakefield began in 1975.

To commemorate the 100th. Anniversary of the driving of the last spike at Eagle Pass on

the CPR line, John engineered "good old 1201" and three passenger cars to the West coast. "This was not a fun trip." Due to the rigours of railroad traffic scheduling, John and his small crew of necessity were slotted into a strict timetable from Ottawa to North Bay, and on to Winnipeg. A two day layover was made in Winnipeg just to catch up on their sleep. The train was left in Vancouver, and the crew returned in the spring for EXPO '86. Twenty-two locomotives from the U.S. and Canada –- all working steam engines –- arrived at the CN yards adjacent to False Creek for this event. Again the crew returned in July to attend, with good old 1201, the 100th. Anniversary of the arrival of the first trans-continental train in Port Moody.


John brought 1201 back to Ottawa the same year (and got plenty smoked up in the Spiral Tunnels). Just East of Schreiber, Ontario, there was an incident which necessitated a stop "in the hole" (a siding). A drawbar had broken on a freight five or six miles down the track, tearing up a great number of ties. "A lengthy wait, no water to drink, and it was hotter 'n Hell!" "At Chapleau I experienced a sight I'll never forget. We had stopped late in the evening, to service the engine. We took on water and oil, and greased the locomotive. Millions of mosquitoes crowded the air at the isolated depot. I saw a figure standing in the shadows watching us work – tears streaming down his face. The old guy - 80ish – just about the age I am now –- was wearing an engineer's uniform and a cap with a union badge."

"Back in '77, as part of the Queen's Silver Jubilee visit, we took the Queen by train up the Gatineau. I spoke to the Queen for ten minutes. A miserable bloody day in October. It snowed."

"On one hair-raising charter trip to raise money, booked by about 100 railroad enthusiasts -- we were going through Marathon… I was in the cab and smelled smoke. Next I noticed smoke coming through the floor. The bearing on the trailing truck wheel on the left-hand side had gone. The axle was so hot it had turned blue. Where's the nearest siding? We moved forward slowly. Unfortunately, the jacks for the wheels and axles, normally stowed in the baggage car, had been forgotten by an assistant."

As part of the rehabilitation of the tripod crane (c. 1957), John has recently completed the total restoration of the pillow block casting. This required 24 hours of work.

"The North Star got me to Canada. This was the first time I'd ever been on a plane. My first flight was a good one."

## The Wager

Early in 1949, 426 (T) Squadron's 'old faithful' twin-engined C-47 Dakotas were replaced with new four-engined C54GM North Stars. (The 'M' was added to the U.S. designation to indicate that these aircraft were powered by Rolls Royce Merlin engines.)

A long-term technical problem with older aircraft such as the Dakota, was the time required to change an engine. This procedure usually took about eight to ten hours because of the need for removal/installation of the propeller and the transfer of fuel, oil, and electrical components from the old to the new engine.

Designers of the North Star recognized this problem, so the Rolls Royce power plants included a 'quick change' feature requiring only 13 connections between the power

plant and the airframe.

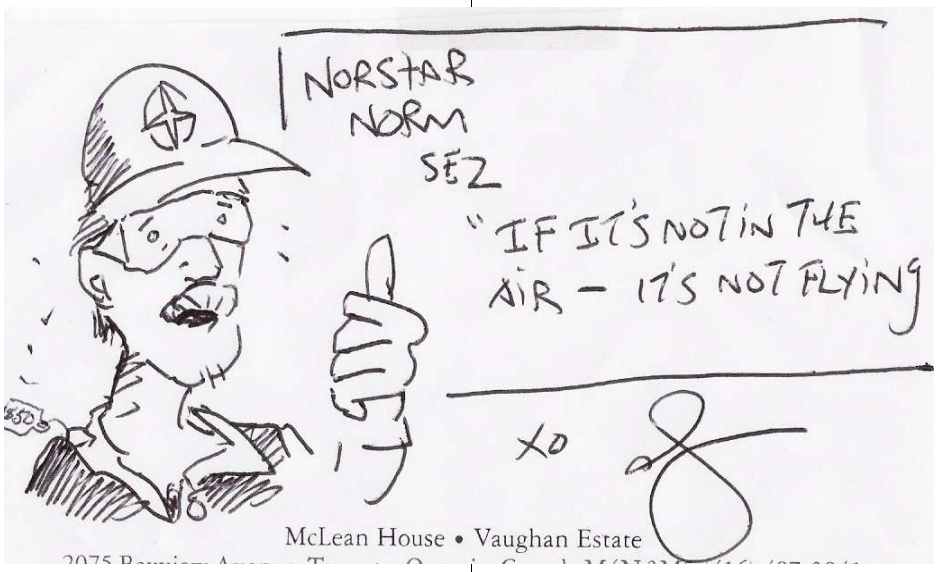
The technical staff of the squadron was well aware of this 'quick change' feature, but its use required a ready supply of replacement parts. It also required that the full power plant, consisting of the basic engine as well as coolant/oil radiators, exhaust/fire systems, exterior cowlings and propeller be assembled and tested before it was installed. In the early days of the North Star operations at Dorval, both engine and airframe parts were in short supply, and there were few occasions when all requirements of the 'quick change' procedure could be met. However, on one occasion during a discussion of the 'quick change' with some of the pilots, the technical staff stated that the power plant could be changed in less than an hour! The pilots rose to the bait, wagering a case of beer that it couldn't be done.

After ensuring that a complete and ground-tested power plant was available, the scene was set for the challenge. As an aircraft arrived that was due for an engine change, the pilot "umpires" duly recorded the time when the propeller stopped turning. The selected crew then towed the aircraft into the hangar and proceeded with the power plant change. As soon as the job was completed, the aircraft was towed out of the hangar and, as the propeller started to turn for the test flight, the "umpires" checked the time and were astounded to find that the job had been done in only 45 minutes.

The "suds" were enjoyed by all.

H.G. "Bud" Graves

*The Flying Scotsman*

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