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THE SNAG SHEET

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF CANADIAN
AIRWAYS LODGE 764



International Association
of Machinists and
Aerospace Workers
Representing Air Transport
Workers in
British Columbia and the
Yukon



President's Message

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In an effort to get involved with our community and to try and give back a little of our collective good fortune we have been soliciting donations to the Richmond Food Bank in recent months. A donation box has been placed in the Lodge hall and we continue to ask members to bring a non-perishable food item or a cash donation when they attend training classes or the general monthly meeting at the hall. We are also looking to establish drop off boxes in the Shop Committee offices in the near future.

LL764 has also just entered into a partnership with the Canadian Blood Services through their "Partners for Life" program. We would like to encourage our members to "give the gift or life" and make a blood donation. For those of you who already donate, we will soon be advertising an IAM764 donation number that you can use when you give blood so that your donation can be credited toward our yearly target commitment. For all of our members who have never donated or have not donated in a long time, we would encourage you to seriously consider making a donation. It may seem like a cliché, but you never know when the life you save may be your own or that of a loved one. Brian Bethell and our Community Services committee are spearheading this initiative and will soon have more information in the workplace and on the website and bulletin boards asking for your help in making a blood donation.

As well as getting involved and giving back to the community we live in, we want to get involved with and give back to our own members. LL764 is in the early planning stages of a BBQ and picnic for our members and their families to be held on Labour Day. Details of the location and time will be communicated later in the spring as our Social Committee firms up the specifics of the event.

This Union is your Union. Too many of our members think of the Union as an abstract being that is somehow detached from them and their actions, or more accurately, lack of action. This Union is only as good as the members who take the time to get involved and make it work. You do not need to run for office but you do need to make your voice heard and stay informed and involved about the issues in your workplace and community.

Those of us who have stood for elected and voluntary roles within the Local would like to see more of our members take an interest in what we are doing or not doing. We need you to talk to us when you see us in the workplace. Attend the monthly Steward's meeting if you are a Steward. Take the big leap and come to the Local Lodge on the 2nd Wednesday of any month at 17:00 and attend the General Monthly meeting and see first hand what your Union is doing on your behalf. Let us know what your issues are.

Please take the time to tell us if you like what we are doing and please take the time to tell us if you don't. We are always looking for suggestions and ideas on how to improve the Local's service to our members. There is a contact list of phone numbers and email addresses of all of the LL764 officers on the Bulletin Boards and on our website www.iam764.ca.

Christopher Hiscock
President
Canadian Airways Lodge 764

Picture front page: Brother Austin retired as a Lead Mechanic (Structures) in June 2009 after 35 years service. He served on the Local Lodge Executive Board and many Local Lodge Committees throughout his many years.

Russell Baker & PWA



Many of us who approach the Vancouver International Airport will travel down "Russ Baker Way" as we make our way to work. Few of us have any knowledge of the person for whom the "Way" is named.

In fact, many of the street names on Sea Island are worthy of a Snagsheet article, and I see a summer full of research ahead of me.

While the trip down the "Way" may be uneventful, the person for whom the road was named most certainly was not.

"Francis" Russell Baker was born in 1910 in Winnipeg, Manitoba and at a very early age was hanging around the old St. James (forerunner of the Winnipeg International) Airport, fascinated by aircraft. Blessed with charm, good looks, a silver tongue, a quick wit, and an aggressive business sense, young Russell at age sixteen was soon an accredited flyer with the Western Canada Airways Training School (one of the many airline businesses in the James Richardson Canadian Airways stable) and earning money as a "barnstormer" in small prairie communities. By age twenty, he had his first airplane and had moved to Fort St. James, British Columbia, joining the many legends of early aviation who "cut their teeth" in the bush pilot business, as opportunity opened up with mining and logging ventures in British Columbia.

Russ Baker soon had his own company, Central British Columbia Airways (CBCA), and was aggressively seeking out business wherever he could find it.

Some of that business came from the British Columbia Forest Service, who would charter his aircraft for fire spotting duties. The majority of CBCA business was flying prospectors and loggers in and out of remote areas with limited visibility and impossible terrain. Russ Baker acquired a well-known reputation (mostly due to self promotion) for flying skill and reliability. It also did not hurt that he was able to partner with Vancouver Sun journalist Pierre Burton (later to write many books, including "The National Dream") on early explorations of the mythical "Headless Valley". The newspaper articles established Russ's reputation as an aviation legend from that day forward.

Russ not only wanted fame, but also wanted to grow his business, and this meant competing with the other major player in British Columbia coastal aviation – Queen Charlotte Airlines.

Quite a different perspective emerges of Russ Baker when you read the biography of Queen Charlotte Airlines (QCA) founder Jim Spilsbury.¹ Both Baker and Spilsbury were competing aggressively for coastal customers, and Baker was not above poaching passengers from QCA if it furthered his ambition and his business. And let there be no doubt that Russell Baker was both aggressive and ambitious.

Baker frequently monitored the QCA radio frequency and would pick up passengers requesting transport, before the QCA Stanraer flying boats could arrive. Russ would stop at stations licensed to QCA and offer passengers a cheaper fare if they boarded his Norseman aircraft immediately, and paid cash. Often, on his Vancouver – Kitimat charter run for Alcan Canada, he would fill his deadheading aircraft back to Vancouver with construction workers and loggers on a route licensed to QCA.

Even when the Federal Government Air Transport Board interceded and tried to divide up the British Columbia coastal route authorities fairly between QCA and Baker's CBCA, Baker repeatedly violated the authorities with multiple infractions.

Russell Baker ultimately became the dominant force in British Columbia coastal air transport. The Alcan Corporation, who built the powerhouse at Kemano, and the aluminum smelter at Kitimat in the early 1950's gave most of their business to Russ Baker, and Baker spent that money to expand his business further.

Baker made it part of "business" to have a permanent room at the old Devonshire Hotel in Vancouver, where customers, government contacts, politicians, and suppliers could have a good time discreetly at CBCA expense. Queen Charlotte Airlines did not do "business" that way, and, in the end, Baker simply wore QCA's Spilsbury down.

Unhappily for Jim Spilsbury, QCA became part of Baker's larger vision, Pacific Western Airlines (PWA) in 1955 through acquisition.

Baker's second major business bonanza came with the

American Government's decision to build the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line, a radar defense system pointed towards the feared Soviet Union, and stretching across the Canadian Arctic.

Construction started in 1955, and the contract called for using Canadian air carriers familiar with the North to transport the personnel and infrastructure. The project was not finished until the 1960's and several air carriers with knowledge of the Canadian Arctic – CPA, QCA and PWA, and Transair – made millions of dollars in profit. PWA acquired a healthy balance sheet and a world-wide reputation for quality charter work after the DEW Line work was done. PWA later acquired B707 and Hercules aircraft to continue its charter work.

Russell Baker had a life-long dream of seeing PWA operating on a national scale. The vision never happened in his lifetime. Russ Baker died of a heart attack in 1956.

His good friend, Grant McConachie, that other revered aviation pioneer that I have written about (May Snagsheet, 2009), was soon to follow him into history, again, with heart attack in 1965, when he was 56. Sadly, in those days, we lost our pioneers too quickly.

Russ, some would say, was the victim of too much work and worry, too often late nights and hard partying, too many stressful flights and long hours, too little willingness to delegate authority, and not enough concern for his health.

Russ was like his friend Grant McConachie (they liked to vacation together in Hawaii with their wives) -- hard-driven, determined, forever optimistic of their company's future, and always ready to make a deal to advance their business prospects.

However, Russ Baker never thought about succession. At PWA, Russ was a one man show. His succession was not clear nor orderly. His benefactor over the years on the PWA Board of Directors had been wealthy mining prospector and investor Karl Springer, but Karl was not interested in running the airline. With Russ Baker gone, Karl stepped back and PWA fell in succeeding years to people like Dick Laidman, Rusty Harris, Jack Cooke, and Donald Watson.

Some of the dreams Russ Baker never lived to see were his vision of opening up the North with the Hercules aircraft and expanding that on-demand cargo charter market (at one time, PWA had seven Hercules aircraft, either owned

outright or sub-let in 1964).

In addition, PWA opened up the market for “affinity” (group) charters, buying a B707 from Qantas and running all-inclusive tours to the Grand Cayman Islands and other Caribbean destinations.

In 1968, PWA received the first of many B737 aircraft, which dramatically improved their economies to many destinations, and hastened their expansion as a regional carrier. Its principle tragedy with that aircraft type was at Cranbrook in 1978 when a PWA B737 collided with a snowplow on the runway, killing 43 passengers and crew. Subsequent investigation highlighted poor air traffic control.

In 1974, Peter Lougheed and the Government of Alberta felt it needed to have a regional airline based in the province that would serve its expanding interests.

The Government of Alberta purchased all the outstanding shares of PWA (it made Russ Baker’s widow, Madge, a very wealthy woman, complete with a retirement home in Hawaii and a second home in the Grand Caymans, not to mention original investors like Karl Springer), and two years later, Peter Lougheed, ordered the company to move its headquarters and major overhaul work to Calgary.

One of the casualties of that order was the then-President of PWA, Donald Watson, who strongly opposed the move. Watson was fired by Lougheed, and with the change of command at PWA management, a young accountant named Rhys T. Eaton, assumed the presidency.

In 1977, PWA was able to continue its westward expansion with the purchase of regional carrier Transair Winnipeg and all its routes, which also gave the expanding regional a toehold into Toronto.

PWA growth was so amazing, that the company was able to order and take delivery of two B767-275 aircraft in 1983.

By 1986, PWA had amassed a corporate surplus of \$350 million dollars, and Rhys Eaton was hungry for further expansion and acquisitions. The Canadian Pacific Corporation had grown weary of the continual losses of its subsidiary CPAir, and happily sold the company to Eaton.

Financial pundits were quick to pounce on the facts that PWA had just purchased a company five times its size, and hoped to operate an international airline without any experience in the business. Rhys Eaton, perhaps overtaken with

the “buccaneering spirit” of the legendary Russ Baker, was undeterred. The new company was christened Canadian Airlines International (CAIL), and went on to contribute its share towards air transport history in Canada.

Russ Baker died at age 48 of a heart attack and was buried in a high hilltop overlooking the beautiful lakes of Stuart, B.C., his grave marked by an anodized Beaver aircraft propeller on the headstone. His dreams for PWA expansion lived on until the company’s sad demise in the CAIL bankruptcy of December 1999.

Footnotes:

1. See *“The Accidental Airline, Spilsbury’s QCA. Jim Spilsbury with Howard White, Ed., Harbour Publishing, Madiera Park, B.C., 1994. paperback, 250pp.*

2. *Much of the research for this article was aided by the book “Wings Over the West: Russ Baker and the Rise of Pacific Western Airlines”. John Condit, Harbour Publishing, Madiera Park, B.C. 1984. Hardcover, pp. 235*

3. *The aircraft was a B707-138 registered as C-FPWV. It was operated for about ten years until sold when PWA got out of the group inclusive charter business. The aircraft was ultimately bought back by the Qantas Historical Society in 2006 and restored to original Qantas markings. More details and a website reference can be found in the “History” section of the Local Lodge 764 website, on the left-hand sidebar under “History Tidbit No. 2”*

4. *Two aircraft were delivered, registrations C-FPWA and C-FPWB. The aircraft were placed on a Seattle-Vancouver-Calgary-Regina-Winnipeg return routing on weekdays, and were planned to fly low-cost charters to new destinations in Mexico and the Caribbean on the weekends. The decision to buy the -275 model was made because it was easy to load/offload at new destinations lacking pallet loading equipment.*

Very quickly it was realized that the B767 was not a good airplane for regional routes, and the two aircraft were returned to the lessor (CitiBank). The aircraft were immediately leased by Air Canada for service on their long haul domestic, transborder, and Caribbean flight schedules. Both aircraft are now out of service and in long

term storage in Marana, NM.

Their next reincarnation may be as small package freighters.



David Varnes, ST LL764 and Chair History Committee

Tech-Ops Report

Grievance Arbitration Hearings: The next scheduled date with Chief Arbitrator Martin Teplitsky to address the outstanding Level III grievances has been scheduled for March 16th, 2010 in Toronto.

Tech Ops Mitigation Meetings: District 140 General Chairpersons and Shop Committee Representatives from Vancouver, Winnipeg, Montreal and Toronto met on February 9th, 10th, 17th, 18th, 23rd & 24th, 2010 in Montreal to reconvene discussions pertaining to Air Canada and Aveos's decision to layoff Bargaining Unit Members.

Layoff Mitigation Programs: The following programs; Deferred Payment Leave Plan (DPLP), Special Voluntary Leave of Absence Program (SVLOA), Vacation Purchase Program (VPP) and the Special Time Bank Mitigation Program have been agreed to between the Union and the Company for the purpose of mitigating staff reductions within the Categories/Classifications affected by the Company's intent to layoff Bargaining Unit Members.

Layoff & Bumping Meeting: Representatives from the Shop Committees, District Lodge 140 will be meeting with Labour Relations in Montreal on March 18th, 2010 to commence the layoff and bumping process. Any Member who has received Bumping and Recall Election Forms is reminded to ensure that they have faxed their completed forms to the Company and the Tech Ops Shop Committee as directed in their documentation.

Article 16.18.01 Seniority Appeals: Representatives from the Shop Committees, District Lodge 140 met with Labour Relations in Montreal on February 25th, 2010 to review the various seniority appeals/challenges that were submitted. Anyone who submitted an appeal should be receiving a response from the Company.

Heavy Maintenance 2010 Vacations: Local Vacation Committee Representatives have commenced the 2010 Vacation Bidding for the remaining Categories that have yet to conclude the vacation bidding process. Any individual that is expected to be absent during this process is reminded to ensure that they have submitted their vacation selection to their respective Committee Representative.

2010 Shop Steward Training: The Education Committee will be holding another Basic Shop Stewards training session on April 12th, 2010 at the Local Lodge office. Bro. Glenn Cooper will once again be providing this training.

Tech Ops Retirements: The Shop Committee would like to congratulate the following Members; Barry Probert – Category 1, who retired on March 1st, 2010. The Shop Committee would like to wish him a long, happy and healthy retirement. The Shop Committee also requests the assistance of all Shop Stewards in notifying the Shop Committee of any Member considering retirement.

Joe Toth, L/L 764, Tech Ops Chair
Glenn Cooper, L/L 764, Tech Ops Member
Glenn Girard, L/L 764, Tech Ops Member

Pension Report

The last two reports I talked about the four options available to you when you opt to take a monthly pension benefit. This is the only real choice that you will have to make when you retire. Everything else about your pension is determined by your years of pensionable service, final average earnings and the benefit formulas. This is the one place in the rules that govern the plan where you get to make a choice about the final result of how you will receive your pension and to a certain extent how much you will receive and when you wish to receive it.

The option you choose: J&S50% or J&S60% combined with Level Life or Integrated with Government Benefits is the single most important decision you will make with respect to your pension. Once submitted and accepted by the company it is irrevocable. There are no mulligans or do overs. You are stuck with your choice for the rest of your life. It is vitally important that you make the choice that is right for you and your family. There is no right or wrong choice. There are pros and cons with each option as with any choice in life. I have taken three monthly reports to talk about these options because I think that you must absolutely understand the differences in each of these options and chose the one that best suits you and your individual circumstances.

I would urge each of you to take some time to think about the different options available to you and ensure that you understand them fully. I will gladly take the time to answer any lingering questions you may have so that there is no doubt in your mind about how they work and what they mean. What I cannot do, nor can anyone else, is decide

United Airlines Report

Scheduling.

The Company continues to be unable to consistently provide 14 days notice of shifts. Day sheets since the start of the year have seldom been available for more than a week at a time, in spite of this issue having been brought up at the last three Union Management meetings. Further action may be required to resolve this issue.

Olympics.

The station did very well during the Olympics, with several upgauges of aircraft and a 24 hour operation in the final days. There were some issues that arose, particularly around the assigning of overtime and the Company's failure to give notice of the exact numbers and function of outside workers they planned to bring in for Feb 28 and Mar 1. It appears that ramp workers were brought in and put to work in the bagwell and grooming. Prior discussions had only covered the possibility of bringing in agents, and only inside agents from other Canadian stations. This issue has been forwarded to the District for further investigation.

Overtime.

There seems to be an inability to clearly indicate overtime shifts and hours that are available. Members are reminded to verify that their accumulated hours are correct for the purposes of getting overtime assigned, and any bypasses should be addressed with a shop steward.

The Company has indicated they will be looking at sick time, and have concerns about tardiness. Members are reminded they are entitled and encouraged to take a shop steward with them for meetings with the Company about sick time and the attendant letters of Innocent Absenteeism.

With the reduction of part time shifts to 4 hours, part time employees are reminded the Company has collateral duties available which can provide extra time. Please indicate interest to a supervisor.

Concerns have been raised about staffing levels for the Paralympics. Already there have been teams of Paralympic athletes arriving. Members are reminded to keep safety in mind at all times, especially when handling heavy or awkward baggage.

In Solidarity,

Janet Andrews

Pension Seminars

Pension seminars are scheduled for

Monday, March 22nd and Thursday, March 25th, 2010

for all interested IAM Members. The seminars will deal with the Air Canada Pension plans for both AC & ex-CAIL Pension Plan Members. The rules of the plans and available options for both retirement and termination will be discussed. Post retirement benefits provided by the Government and Company will be explained. There will be opportunity for individuals to ask questions and we will endeavour to provide answers for all. We expect the seminar will run approximately 3 hours.

There will be one (1) session each day at **1600 hours**, at the Local 764 offices, 7980 River Road, Richmond.

All Members are welcome to attend, but as space will be limited I ask that you register as soon as possible. Please provide your name, phone and/or email contact and indicate the session you would like to attend. Please be advised that attendance will be on your time and will not be at Company expense.

Please register by fax or email only:

Fax: (604) 273-9670 **or**

Email: iam764@telus.net

Respectfully submitted by
Chris Hiscock and Ed Wainwright

Next General Meeting

Apr 14, 2009

5 PM

7980 River Road
Richmond, B.C.



WE'RE ON THE WEB!
WWW.IAM764.CA

IN MEMORIAM
BROTHER
DON DEBAY

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