



# Sabretache

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF  
THE CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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July Extra #1, 2020

## The Consolidated Canso A - Part of Canada's and the Royal Canadian Air Force's aviation history, Post War

In Canada a total of 254 Catalinas and Cansos were used by the RCAF units in the Home War Establishment. They served in both EAC and WAC and one squadron operated overseas for about a year-and-a-half from bases in Iceland and Scotland.

After the war, all the Catalinas and most of the Cansos were struck off strength, only about 40 Canso remaining active. These saw service with the search-and-rescue flights and few others were used in heavy transport duties. The last Canso, RCAF 11089, was retired from service on 29 November 1962 and went into civilian service as CF-PQO. Another Canso was retired to National Aircraft Collection. This was RCAF 11087, but it is restored in markings of No. 162 Squadron as the aircraft flown by F/L Hornell, V.C. A large number of these surplus aircraft were sold to civilian operators and to foreign air forces. Sweden obtained three Cansos, to serve in its Air Force Rescue Service .

**RCAF No. 13 Squadron** at Rockcliffe, Ont. operated a few Cansos on mapping operations in the Arctic. In 1946 F/L J.F. Drake, flying a Canso, rediscovered Spicer Islands north of Hudson Bay which had been 'lost' for nearly fifty years.

**No. 408 'Goose' Squadron** was reformed at Rockcliffe on 10 January 1949 for aerial mapping of Canada's northland. Operating from Rockcliffe, it formed part of **No. 22 Photographic Wing** and flew a mixed bag of aircraft including Cansos.

**No. 123(S&R) Squadron (later No. 121(S&R) Flight)** at Sea Island, B.C. used Cansos in their search-and-rescue work during 1945-47. **Squadron Leader A.G. Carswell**

**AFC, CD, was a Canso pilot with the 123rd and was awarded the Air Force Cross for bravery in a series of rescues in British Columbia which was presented by Queen Elizabeth. (Story on Page 2)**

**No. 102(S&R) Flight** at Trenton, Ont., operated a few Cansos in their rescue duties. **No. 103(S&R) flight** at Greenwood, N.S., flew three Canso on search-and-rescue work. **No. 111(S&R) Flight** at Winnipeg also operated some Cansos for various duties. **No. 121(S&R) Flight** at Sea Island (Vancouver, B.C.) used several Cansos.

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This is **Louis E. Curdes** sitting on his P-51 named the "Bad Angel".. During his career he shot down more than seven German aircraft, a Italian aircraft, a Japanese aircraft and finally a American plane for which he received a medal for. His P-51 fighter now sits in a Arizona museum . **Story on Page 3**



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CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
The SOCIETY

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which fosters the study of the  
military and the police, and the herit-  
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Canada, the British Empire, and the  
world  
as well as the preservation of military  
artifacts and records.

The CMHS meets once every calendar  
month at: Petty Officers' Mess  
HMCS Tecumseh  
1820 - 24th Street SW

## Acknowledgements and Thanks

The March supplement was provided by President Dave Love.

**The 1st April Extra was by Rory from the Boer War Forum. We thank him for allow-**

**ing us to publish his work. It was forwarded to us by long time member Mike Clare**

**The 2nd April Extra article was researched and provided to us by Member Garrett Lapp**

**The 3rd April Extra paper was researched, and provided by Member Michael Clare**

**The 4th April Extra article was provided by Member Tim Popp**

The May Extra #1 article was provided by Member Roy Akins

The May Extra # 2 article was provided by Member Garrett Lap

The May Extra # 3 is a reprint of 2015 newsletter

The June Extra #1 & 2 was Part 1 of 3 by Dave Love

The June Extra #3 was provided by President Dave Love

**This June Extra #4 was provided by David Gale and "button" story by Dave Love**

**July Extra # 1; The Canso story was organized by David Gale and the "Bad Angel" story sent in by Member Glenn Skene**

**No. 413 'Tusker' Squadron, formerly No. 13 Squadron,** operated out of Rockcliffe on aerial mapping of the Arctic regions. It formed part of NO. 22 Photographic Wing under the command of No.9 Transport Group. This squadron flew Cansos along with a mixture of Lancasters, Dakotas, Norsemen, and Mitchells. Cansos of No. 413 also took part in search-and-rescue work and also assisted in airlifting supplies during the floods in the Winnipeg area in 1950. It was the Cansos of No. 413 that pioneered the use of **JATO (jet assisted take off)** for northern operations. On 1 April 1949, the squadron became a Survey Transport Squadron and on 31 October 1950 was disbanded.



### Flight Lieutenant Andrew Gordon Carswell.

Received **Air Force Cross** per **Canada Gazette** dated 15 March 1958 .

On 28 June 1956, Flight Lieutenant Carswell took off in a Canso aircraft in an attempt to rescue two fishermen from a sinking vessel near Galiano Island in the Straits of Georgia. Despite strong winds and extremely rough waters, Flight Lieutenant Carswell made a successful landing. Flight Lieutenant Carswell then manoeuvred the aircraft into a position where the two fishermen could be rescued. The takeoff in the rough seas was a particularly hazardous one demanding of the highest skill as the aircraft had been severely damaged by the heavy seas during the landing and was shipping water faster than could be handled by the pumps. After taking off he was able to take the survivors to Sea Island without further incident.

On another occasion in September 1956, Flight Lieutenant Carswell under difficult conditions successfully landed a Canso aircraft at sea some 600 miles off the West Coast of Vancouver Island in an attempt to remove a critically ill member of the weather ship **St.Catharines**. With considerable difficulty the seaman was transferred to the aircraft and with jet assisted takeoff the aircraft became airborne and returned to Victoria where the seaman was transferred to hospital.

It was the belief of authoritative medical personnel that had not the patient been evacuated by air, he would not have survived the long sea voyage to Victoria. Flight Lieutenant Carswell's courage, devotion to duty, and skill have served as an inspiration and fine example to fellow aircrew. He is highly recommended as being most worthy of the Air Force Cross



**Louis Curdes** graduated from flying school on December 3, 1942, at Luke Field, Arizona at the age of 22. Later he was sent to the Mediterranean theater to fight against the Germans in southern Europe.

He joined the 329th Fighter Group, a unit of the **United States Army Air Forces**, but was transferred in April 1942 to the 82d Fighter Group, 95th Fighter Squadron, where he saw action in North Africa, Sardinia and Italy. Ten days later he shot down three German Messerschmitt Bf-109 fighters. A few weeks later, he downed two more German Bf-109s.

In less than a month of combat, Louis was declared an Ace. During the next three months, Louis shot down an Italian Mc-202 fighter and two more Messerschmitts before his luck finally ran out. A German fighter shot him down on 27 August 1943, over Salerno, Italy.

Captured by the Italians, he was sent to a POW camp near Rome. However, a few days later, the Italians surrendered and Louis, with a few other pilots, escaped before the Germans could take control of camp. Curdes was repatriated to the US and returned to his hometown in Fort Wayne. Curdes requested a return to active duty and joined the 4th

Fighter Squadron and the 3rd Air Commando in the Pacific in August 1944, flying the P-51 Mustang.

Soon after arriving in the Pacific, Louis downed a Mitsubishi reconnaissance plane near Formosa. Now he was one of only three Americans to have kills against all three Axis Powers: Germany, Italy, and Japan.

While attacking the Japanese-held island of Bataan, one of Louis' wingmen was shot down. The pilot ditched in the ocean. Circling overhead, Louis could see that his wingman had survived, so he stayed in the area to guide a rescue plane and protect the downed pilot.

It wasn't long before he noticed another, larger aircraft, wheels down, preparing to land at the Japanese-held airfield on Bataan. He moved in to investigate. Much to his surprise he saw that the aircraft was a Douglas C-47 transport, with American markings. He tried to make radio contact, but without success. He manoeuvred his Mustang in front of the big transport several times, trying to wave it off but the C-47 doggedly continued its approach. Apparently the C-47 crew didn't realise they were about to land on a Japanese-held island, and soon would be captives.

Lt Curdes, mindful of the vicious reputation of Japanese soldiers toward their captives, knew that whoever was in that American C-47 would be, upon landing, either dead or wishing that they were.

Desperate measures were called for. Audaciously, he lined up his P-51 directly behind the transport aircraft, carefully sighted one of his 50 caliber machine guns and knocked out one of its two engines. Still the C-47 continued on toward the Bataan airfield. Curdes shifted his aim slightly and knocked out the remaining engine, leaving the baffled transport pilot no choice but to ditch in the ocean.

The big plane came down in one piece about 50 yards from his bobbing wingman. At this point, night-fall and low fuel forced Louis to return to base. The next morning, Louis flew cover for a PBY Catalina that picked up the downed Mustang pilot, 12 passengers and crew, including two female nurses, from the C-47. All survived. Later, Lt Curdes would end up marrying one of these nurses!

For shooting down an unarmed American transport aircraft, Lt Louis Curdes was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Thereafter, on the fuselage of his P-51 'Bad Angel', he proudly displayed the symbols of his kills: 7 German, one Italian, one Japanese and one American flag. He continued on in the Air Force and took part in the Berlin Airlift. He retired a Lieutenant Colonel in 1963 and died in 1995.





Souvenir Hunters

**From:** [Marjorie Wilson <wilsontime@nexicom.net>](mailto:wilsontime@nexicom.net) **To:** [canwehelp@cmhs.ca](mailto:canwehelp@cmhs.ca)  
**Subject:** Interesting frame

Dear Sir, I have been trying to find the significance of the letters on this frame. I assume that it is of World War 2 vintage, that it has a George vi crown. I have had frames for RCAF and this frame looks a little similar. Maybe made by the same company? The "A" looks identical. The first letter does not look like the RCAF "C". In fact I am not sure the first letter on this frame is a C. The frame size is approx. 10" x 12". I would very much appreciate any information you might have. Thanks so much!

Marjorie Wilson

**From:** [dlove@davincibb.net](mailto:dlove@davincibb.net) **To:** [Marjorie Wilson <wilsontime@nexicom.net>](mailto:wilsontime@nexicom.net)  
**Subject:** Re: Interesting frame  
 Hello Marjorie,

My name is Dave Love. I am this year's president and society historian of the Calgary Military Historical Society. In answer to your question, the abbreviated letters are not commonly used and I must confess I have never seen these first hand in this context, however I have seen similar on other picture frames. In all probability, the CAA stands for 'Canadian Active Army'. During World War 2, Canada's overseas army was officially called the 'Canadian Active Service Force' (CASF). I have seen that abbreviation in identical script on the bottom of many picture frames from the second world war period. Likewise, the George VI crown is also always present. I suspect this is due to a consistent manufacturer of the frames. Given the close resemblance in some ways to those other frames that I have seen (I have one in my collection), it does not take a great leap of faith to infer that the initials stand for Canadian Active Army. To reinforce that thought, the term 'Canadian Active Army' as would be more recognizable to most civilians of that period than the CASF. And these would have been the people who bought this sort of frame. I hope that helps clarify things. Thank you for your question. Take care.

Dave

**Members: Any Ideas ?**



## News from the Members

**President Dave Love** would like everyone to know that Member **Stewart (Stu) Egglestone** is now a **LIFETIME** Member. He also states that Stu is doing well and sends his regards to all his friends.



**Member Roy Gale** from Medicine Hat turned **100** years old last week. He was saluted and entertained by a 200 vehicle parade past his residence. You can visit the TV news article by going to:

<https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/medicine-hat-veteran-celebrates-100th-birthday-on-father-s-day-1.4993987>

He was quite thrilled when one of the first vehicles to greet him in the parade was a WW2 Jeep driven by **Member Wes Krause**



### Note from Member Michael C

Good Evening Everyone.....

In 1960 the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation interviewed a number of surviving Boer War veterans,,,,, Their stories can be heard here.....

[www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/canadian-boer-war-veterans-look-back](http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/canadian-boer-war-veterans-look-back)

The total broadcast is about 1/2 an hour..... (After the ad).....  
Hope you enjoy.....Mike

**From:** [Garrett Lapp](mailto:lappgarrett@gmail.com) <lappgarrett@gmail.com> **To:** [david@sunnyspotsservice.ca](mailto:david@sunnyspotsservice.ca)

**Subject**

Newsletter Extra **Date:** Saturday, April 25, 2020 14:20

Hello David, I

have another RCAF write up that may be of interest as an extra for the newsletter. There is a lot of information that may not be needed for the newsletter, specifically multiple pages of transcribed flight reports which you may want to exclude to save on the length.

**Something else of interest to everyone is that as of recent, the National Archives (UK) is offering 50 Free record downloads (10 per basket) for a 30 day period to registered members which is also free, opposed to the usual 3-4 pound cost per record. These records also include all operations records for airforce squadrons including RCAF and RAF, which include specifics on the crews and mission details. So if you could pass this along it would be appreciated.**

**From:** [JAMES BALDWIN](mailto:jabaldwin@shaw.ca) <jabaldwin@shaw.ca> **To:** [David Gale](mailto:david@sunnyspotsservice.ca) <david@sunnyspotsservice.ca>

**Subject:** Re: newsletter Extra

I have been doing some transcribing of WW2 veteran interviews for the museum at home, some in the 1990s from the Calgary Highlanders. A guy named Sgt Red Anderson from the Hat is mentioned frequently in one of the CalHigh interviews and is in Ber-cusons Battalion of Heroes Cal High history. Been watching online facebook lectures from the LA Holocaust Museum and CWGC. Most are excellent. The CWGC has an online Wall of Remembrance right now for WW2 and I sent in a relative who was killed in training in Scotland. Very massive virtual memorial - random organization but that is also interesting in itself. They also have a special remembrance for D-Day and you can send in for a special memorial to be placed on the grave of soldier in a Normandy cemetery in the next few days. (No public ceremonies because of virus.) They supposedly will send you a picture of this memorial on the grave to you. All for free! I sent in KIA I had visited in Beny-Sur-Mer cemetery in Normandy when I was there. Will see what happens.

In our community, people have been great about social distancing. On the Bow River Paths is another matter. I think some people think the grass has mines as they will not leave the asphalt pathway if their life depends on it - oops maybe it does!! ha ha . They crowd up and pass each other in groups despite lots of green space on the pathway.

Been going through my modest bayonet collection and researching what I have. Sometimes it is like "the more you research, the less you know." Just watching a History Channel doc on US President in WWII and it says US was losing 1500 aviators a month through WW2 due to friendly fire. I have never heard of that high a figure but who knows.

Sincere thanks for your extra efforts with the news letters! Out for now, James Baldwin



**Some of the famed battle ships met sad fortunes while others endured a better life.**

