

## March Meeting

Topic: *"The Harvard at 75"*

Speaker: Pat Hanna, President of the Canadian Harvard Aircraft Association

Reporter: Gord McNulty

CAHS Toronto Chapter President Sheldon Benner welcomed new members and guests to another enjoyable meeting. About 30 people packed a smaller conference room that the Chapter had to use instead of the auditorium, which was booked by 16 Wing of CFB Borden. Gord McNulty introduced Pat Hanna. Born in Kitchener in 1953, Pat moved to Cambridge as a child and he's lived there ever since. He acquired a pilot's licence in 1974 and flies out of Kitchener Airport. Pat joined the Canadian Harvard Aircraft Association (CHAA), an all-volunteer organization based in Tillsonburg, in 1985. Rising through the ranks as a result of his dedicated effort and leadership on behalf of the CHAA, Pat joined the Board of Directors in 2000 and became President two years ago. Pat is an employee of K-W Surplus in Kitchener ([www.kwsurplus.com](http://www.kwsurplus.com)). He is married to Ruth and they have three children, two daughters and a son.



Speaker: Pat Hanna  
Photo credit - Neil McGavock

A very engaged and personable speaker, Pat delivered an outstanding, informal presentation using a few notes. The CHAA ([www.harvards.com](http://www.harvards.com)) originated in 1985. Several pilots owned Harvards which they bought in the Woodstock area, when they were fairly inexpensive. As the aircraft became more costly to operate, the enthusiasts organized to manage expenses. They originally operated from the Woodstock Flying Club grass strip on Regional Rd. 2. In 1986, they moved to their present home at Tillsonburg Airport, which had a hangar and a paved runway. Today, the CHAA boasts about 700 members worldwide.

The CHAA has been very successful at acquiring aircraft, starting with a Harvard Mk 2 in 1986. Since, then, three more Harvard Mk 2s were acquired, five Harvard Mk 4s, a Yale, and a Tiger Moth. The Tiger Moth has been a real challenge, being so different from the Harvard. The first time the engine started, the crankshaft broke on the engine and threw the prop, almost hitting some volunteers. The feisty Tiger Moth has continued to pose maintenance issues.



CHAA Yale 3399 Ceremony June 26, 2010  
Photo credit - Gord McNulty

The Yale, ex-RCAF 3399, from the Ernie Simmons' estate auction in 1970 at Tillsonburg, took 23 years to restore. It flew for the first time in public on 26 June, 2010. A photo of the Yale as seen on that occasion is in *Flypast*, Oct. 2010, Vol. 45, No. 1. and is repeated here. Well-known RCAF pilot, Wing Commander Lou Hill, spearheaded the restoration, a difficult challenge as the aircraft consisted of nothing but beaten-up parts at the time. The Yale is registered in Lou's

honour, as C-GLJH. Unfortunately, the impressively restored Yale had an accident on its first official flight before news media and spectators filled with anticipation. The accident occurred on its fourth flight, when the engine stopped as it flew past the crowd at an altitude of 250 feet. Pilot Dave Hewitt, who was one of the Canadian Harvard Aerobatic Team pilots, skilfully did some fancy footwork on the rudders and landed the Yale in a cornfield across the runway. The trainer stalled at the instant it touched down, dragging the wingtip a bit. Dave wasn't hurt. The engine, however, required major repair.

The investigation established that when the engine was originally reassembled by Dumont Aircraft Engines in Florida, they forgot a 10-cent cotter pin on a nut that held the flywheel gear and the camshaft gear together. The engine had been fine in its first couple of hours, but then the nut started to back off to a point where it split the gears. The result was that Dave had suddenly found himself without a camshaft in front of the crowd.

After another three or four years to rebuild the engine and restore the aircraft, the Yale finally returned to the air for test flights last year and is now fully operational. The CHAA is looking forward to flying it quite a bit this year. "I flew in the back seat last year and had some stick time on it," Pat said. "It's a nice little airplane, very different from a Harvard. You fly it like a Yale, not like a Harvard, and you'll be all right."

Another milestone occurred in 2012, when the CHAA became debt-free for the first time. All of the aircraft were paid for and all of the hangars were paid for. The CHAA has operational debts in flying aircraft but it owns all of its assets. That's critical to the success of an organization dependent on fundraisers, donations and memberships.

In June of 2014, the CHAA celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Harvard in Canada. The story began with the arrival of first Harvard, No. 1321, a Mk I, at Vancouver, on 20 July, 1939, the same day that No. 1322 arrived as well. The CHAA hoped to celebrate the anniversary on the exact day but with scheduling conflicts, they moved the "Gathering of Harvards and Heroes" to 20-22 June. It was a fortuitous move. The weather was spectacular, with nice temperatures and light winds.

The RCAF completed the last training flight of the Harvard on 21 May, 1965, as reported in the book *Harvard!* by David Fletcher and Doug MacPhail. After investigation, the CHAA learned there were 144 surviving Harvard airframes, though not all are flying. The CHAA sent personal letters of invitation to every single owner. Most of them lived too far away from Tillsonburg, but two pilots from British Columbia – Trevor Skillen and Vic Bentley – planned to bring two Harvards from Vancouver. They left on the Monday for a four-day flight to Tillsonburg, but were foiled by a storm front over the mountains of Idaho and Montana.



Veteran Harvard Pilots at the Harvards and Heroes Event 2014

*Photo credit - Pat Hanna*

"Harvards and Heroes" was an inspiring occasion, with 18 Harvards in attendance "painting the field yellow." Among the CHAA Harvards was a Mk 4, 20436/C-FWLH, acquired from Bill Lamon, of Eugene, Oregon. Lamon is an ex-NATO pilot trainee from Belgium who trained on Harvards in Canada. In the late 1990s, he convinced the government to put 20436 in the Canadian Air Force Heritage Flight, flying in formation with a Silver Star and a Tutor. The idea was approved by Lt. Gen (Retired) Allan DeQuettville, Commander of Air Command from

1995 to 1997, and guest speaker at the anniversary banquet at Bill's suggestion. Pat visited Bill about seven years ago, when Bill told him there wasn't any way he wanted 20436 to go to the U.S. and probably lose its Canadian identity. At the time, Harvards were selling for about \$200,000, beyond the CHAA's means. Six months later, Bill came up with a very generous five-year payment plan that the CHAA agreed to. They acquired the Harvard in January 2008. Flown from Oregon to Tillsonburg, it arrived on 19 April, 2008, re-registered as C-FWLH. This Harvard was also one of the Goldilocks Aerobatic Team while based at Moose Jaw and DeQuettville had flown it in 1964. DeQuettville thoroughly enjoyed his own '60<sup>th</sup> anniversary' ride in the Harvard during the gathering. In fact, he wore white gloves for the occasion.

Many air force veterans, from as far as Vancouver Island and Winnipeg, attended the event. One veteran, Walter Irwin, 97, of London, was thrilled to be given a ride in a Harvard by former astronaut Bjarni Tryggvason, a CHAA Director. Irwin learned to fly the Harvard in 1942 and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross after completing 60 operations as Halifax bomber Pathfinder pilot. He had not climbed into in a Harvard since 1945. It looked like a challenge, as Walter was in a wheelchair, but as Pat noted, "I'm telling you, a properly motivated veteran will do anything. He got out of the wheelchair and walked over to the airplane by himself, without a cane." Walter had a huge grin on his face and recognized the smell of the engine even after 60 years. It was the personal highlight of the weekend for Pat. Walter's experience was part of a CBC-TV National news report which can be found by Googling "Harvard Heroes."

Another veteran, Ray Babineau, came from Rockford, Illinois. Now in his eighties, he flew Harvards and Silver Stars at Cold Lake. He also flew with Bob Hewitt, the CHAA's first president, in the T-bird at Cold Lake and enjoyed riding in the Harvard again. Ian Sibbald had 2,000 hours as an instructor pilot, including about 50 hours in CHAA Harvard Mk 4, 20422/C-FWLH. Bill Lamon came all the way from Oregon. He turned down a ride in his former Harvard as he was overwhelmed by the memories. As Pat noted, much of the CHAA's purpose in demonstrating its BCATP/RCAF Harvards is to be "the caretakers of history," flying these aircraft on behalf of the veterans and airmen who sacrificed their lives in training and went on to combat overseas. It's costly to maintain and fly these aircraft – a Harvard paint job costs about \$40,000 these days – but the CHAA continues to make a remarkable contribution to preserving a significant part of Canadian aircraft history.



Rick Volker flew aerobatics in his Harvard Mk 4 during the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary Harvard fly-in at Tillsonburg, June 20-22, 2014.

*Photo credit - Gord McNulty*

In addition to the CHAA Harvards, the fly-in was attended by well-known, advanced aerobatic pilot Rick Volker in his newly acquired Harvard Mk 4, 20247/N1811B, based in Niagara Falls, NY. A 1989 Grand Champion warbird at Oshkosh, Rick's beautifully finished Harvard sports dayglow trim as used by the RCAF in the 1960s. Rick flew a fine aerobatics demonstration during the gathering. Other attendees included Olivier Lacombe of Mascouche, Quebec, in his Harvard Mk 4, 20352/C-GBQB. Finished in primer, the aircraft carries the markings of a Hawker Typhoon that flew with No. 438 Squadron RCAF.

Don Stamp of Salem, Ohio, brought an SNJ-5, N645DS. Dan Springer of Sault Ste. Marie came in Harvard Mk 4, 20432/N432JL. Alf Beam of Fort Erie brought his Harvard Mk 2, 2591/C-FMTA. Hannu Halminen of Oshawa arrived in his Harvard Mk 4, 20404/CF-VFG. Jim Mattice of nearby Nixon also came in a Harvard Mk 4, 20382/C-DVIJ, formerly based at Dunnville Airport, now closed to flying. The always impressive Harvard Aerobatic Team made its first public appearance with a fourth Harvard, flown by former Snowbird pilot Marco Rusconi. The Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, in addition to bringing its Harvard Mk 4, 20213/CF-UUU, thrilled spectators with a flypast of the Mynarski Lancaster in its temporary VR\*R Ropey markings. Danny Richer took the program another notch by flying his beautiful BAC Strikemaster, C-GXDK. A Beechcraft T-6C Texan II (Harvard II in Canada) demonstrator flown in from Wichita by Michael Rambo represented state-of-the-art trainers.