

## May 1 Dinner Meeting



Presenter Jack Ford

*Photo credit: Neil McGavock*



Speaker / Presenter Don Connolly

*Photo credit: Neil McGavock*

Topic: "Second World War photography and aviation art"  
Speaker / Presenters: Jack Ford and Don Connolly  
Reporter: Gord McNulty

The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual CAHS Toronto Chapter Dinner Meeting proved to be a most rewarding and successful occasion. Forty-four Chapter members and guests enjoyed a highly informative and lively evening at the Armour Heights Officers Mess of the Canadian Forces College. Credit for the success of the event should especially be given to our 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President, John Bertram, who was instrumental in co-ordinating a program featuring two presenters: Second World War RCAF photographer Jack Ford and renowned Canadian aviation artist Don Connolly. John then served as Master of Ceremonies for the evening, which concluded with a special introduction and presentation (more on that later).

The proceedings opened with a pre-dinner exhibition of Jack Ford's singular collection of black and white prints from the final decisive months of the Second World War. Jack, an RCAF photographer during the war, took the powerful images shortly after D-Day. They are part of a growing in-house exhibit at Sunnybrook Hospital. Jack, a master of the war image, was born in 1921 in Oklahoma City, USA, but grew up in Canada. When the war erupted, he enlisted in the RCAF, where he trained as a photographer and was later assigned to RCAF Squadron 414 Photo Unit. Jack and his squadron arrived in France about a month after the Allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944. Jack carried a small accordion-style camera at all times. His job was to document history in action: civilians and children on the roadside, aerial views of bombed towns and sometimes still burning German enemy targets. In addition to taking pictures on the ground, he also developed images from Spitfire reconnaissance aircraft, used to monitor the progress of the bombing campaign and the movement of German troops and arms. Jack would then process the recon films out of a mobile darkroom set up in a truck behind the lines, then pass

prints on to his commanding officers. Once a British photo unit under Montgomery's command came by with film they needed processed and printed. Jack did so, and as with his own pictures kept a second set of contacts for himself.

Seventy years later, these black and white prints --- including images of ships unloading supplies on the Normandy beaches just days after the initial landings, fighter aircraft such as Spitfires and Mustangs, downed German aircraft, bombed-out French towns, and leaders exemplified by a king, a prime minister and a field marshal --- would be on exhibit at Sunnybrook. That's where Ana Seara, an art therapist in charge of their Veterans Photography Studio, has been working with Jack to restore and enlarge the historic images. Together, they discuss different wartime scenes and scan them onto a large iMac computer. The outstanding display of unique and striking images has now been seen in many public exhibits, such as at the Toronto Arts Centre in November, 2015. Jack's most memorable event took place soon after D-Day, when Winston Churchill unexpectedly showed up with Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery and King George VI for a surprise visit near Caen, France. Jack, a kid at the time, was shaking with fear, hardly able to hold the camera steady. Jack's collection opened an intimate first-person window on the sheer size and impact of the Allied invasion. The collection was featured in a *Toronto Star* article June 1, 2014, headlined "Forgotten Normandy photos resurface after 70 years." Jack was quoted in the story as saying the only shooting he did during the war was with his camera. He was issued a gun but was so far behind the front lines he never needed it.



Jack Ford with his camera at the ready  
*Photo Courtesy - Jack Ford*



A destroyed Spitfire following an enemy attack  
*Photo credit - Jack Ford*



Jack Ford showing an enlargement of a bombed-out French town  
*Photo credit - John Bertram*

Ana Seara, art therapist at Sunnybrook Hospital  
*Photo Credit - John Bertram*



After the war, as an advertising executive in Toronto, Jack continued his affiliation with photography, when he worked with images and creative story boards to develop new ad campaigns. For five years, he has lived in the veterans' residence at Sunnybrook. Each week he visits his wife and true love, Joan, who is in a nursing home only a short distance from the hospital. Along with distance, dementia has come between them. Some days she knows Jack is there and other times he's not so sure. "It's not the way I planned things would be, but I've come to accept it," he says. Although he has macular degeneration and has very little sight left now, Jack is enjoying a new passion for photography and bringing the best of his collection back to life. It was an honour for attendees to meet Jack, who was warmly welcomed to the banquet head table with his daughter, Tracy, and Ana Seara. Chapter member Tom Nettleton then said Grace before we enjoyed an excellent meal of roast beef, chicken or vegetarian lasagna, and sweets.



Winston Churchill searching for his matches to light his ever present cigar  
*Photo Credit - Jack Ford 1944 - 414 Photo Unit RCAF*



Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery  
and King George VI at Caen, France  
*Photo Credit - Jack Ford*



*Test Flights Continue at Baddeck -  
An Original Painting by Don Connolly*

*The Warren twins over Dieppe -  
An original painting by Don Connolly*



John introduced guest speaker Don Connolly ([doncon@explornet.ca](mailto:doncon@explornet.ca)), one of Canada's most highly regarded aviation artists. Don's work is widely represented. His paintings are in the collections of the Canada War and Aviation museums in Ottawa, the RCAF museum in Trenton, and in numerous others across Canada and the United States. They are also frequently featured in periodicals such as the *CAHS Journal*, *Aviation History*, and *Aviation Week and Space Technology*. A native of Kingston, Don joined the RCAF in the 1950s. He trained as a navigator, serving on supply flights to Korea during the airlift that supported the war effort. Don subsequently flew on numerous Arctic and trans-Atlantic missions. After more training as a Specialist Navigator, he was assigned in 1957 for two years to the new USAF Academy to serve as a department head in its Navigator training program. On his return to Canada, he was involved with operational research within the Defence Research Board and at Air Force Headquarters in Ottawa.

Like many of his contemporaries, by the mid-1960s, Don had become disenchanted with both the slower pace and the reorganization of the services. So he resigned his commission, and became a partner in a chain of bookstores and picture framing establishments in the Ottawa/Gatineau area. Twelve years later he moved on to become a freelance professional artist. Don has been painting full-time for more than 35 years and numbers his output of original (aviation) works at "well over 2000." He was among the key figures in the formation and administration of the Canadian Artists Association, which was honoured by Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame in 2002 for its contributions to preserving Canadian aviation history. He is also a longtime member of the American Society of Aviation Artists, and of the CAHS. Don continues to work full time from his studio at his and his wife Liane's lake country home just north of Kingston.

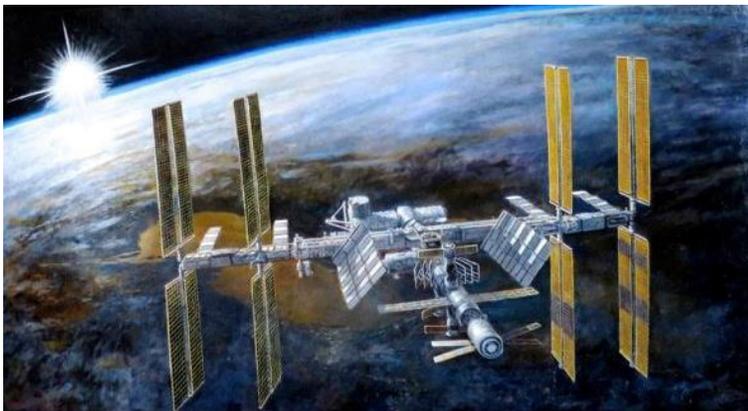
Don presented an impressive and widely diversified display of approximately 100 slides of his art, capturing many pivotal moments and colourful personalities in aviation through the decades. He began with renditions of early aviation dating back, for example, to German-born aeronaut John Steiner's balloon flight at Kingston in 1860, the Aerial Experiment Association formed by Alexander Graham Bell, J.A.D. McCurdy and Casey Baldwin, and B.C. aviation pioneer William Wallace Gibson. First World War illustrations included Billy Bishop in action in an S.E.5a against a Pfalz, and Punch Dickins in a D.H. 9 bomber. Some of Don's choices to illustrate the inter-war period included the first non-stop transAtlantic flight by Alcock and Brown in 1919; the expedition by Admiral Richard Byrd to Greenland in 1925; a Sikorsky S38 on a shuttle run from Toronto to Buffalo in 1929; Wiley Post during his second flight around the world; the 1932 Cleveland National Air Races; and a celebration of the Schneider Trophy Races. Don moved on to the 1930s, with an illustration of scenes at RCAF Station Trenton, including the Siskin demonstration team "dusting off" the historic water tower on the base, and a depiction of a Trans-Canada Airlines Lockheed 14 at Malton in 1939.

Don's Second World War coverage included five illustrations of British Commonwealth Air Training Plan standbys such as the Fleet Finch, Tiger Moth and Harvard. Then he showed art covering the RCAF overseas, paying tribute to fighter pilot stalwarts such as the Warren brothers, Buzz Buerling, and Willie McKnight. Maritime operations were highlighted by an illustration of Ft. Lt. David Hornell, VC, and his crew attacking a German submarine in a Canso



Artist Don Connolly with his painting, Flight, Dream, Myth and Realization at Sydenham's Grace Centre  
 Courtesy - [www.frontenacnews.ca](http://www.frontenacnews.ca)

before Hornell perished, and Lt. Robert Hampton Gray, VC, attacking a Japanese warship in a Corsair before he lost his life. Another illustration depicted a Gloster Meteor closing in on a V1 "buzz bomb." Don portrayed the immediate post-war years by showing everything from a B-24 Liberator of 426 Squadron bringing the men home from the Far East to operations in Canada's Far North with the DC-3, Otter and Twin Otter. Don shared his art from his experience with 426 Squadron on the Korean airlift, with paintings such as a North Star on final approach to the Shemya airport in the Aleutians and facing a strong wind at Honolulu. He paid tribute to 408 Squadron, with a painting of a Lancaster mapping the High Arctic. The squadron's Lancasters were replaced with the C-119 Flying Boxcar, shown over Resolute Bay. A Canadair Cosmopolitan of 412 Squadron was shown over Quebec City.



Artist Don Connolly - The International Space Station (ISS) over Lake Ontario

Don presented a large number of portrayals of Canada's involvement in the Cold War, exemplified by the Lockheed P2V-7 Neptune and the Canadair Argus. The glory days of RCAF fighters such as the CF-100 and the Sabre were illustrated, along with the Banshees, Sea Kings and Trackers of the RCN, and of course the Avro Arrow. The RCAF's Red Knight was shown performing at the CNE air show. More contemporary scenes, such as CF-18 Hornets in action at Cold Lake, and the Snowbirds over Parliament on Canada Day, made an impression as well, as did an illustration

of the RCAF's first Globemaster III being delivered to Trenton with an escort of two CF-18s. Don closed with a depiction showing a montage of flight since the Montgolfier brothers. What an outstanding show! Don's presentation held the attention of the audience from start to finish. He noted that while he has attempted more art showing spaceflight, it is a rather sterile challenge as so many things look the same and an artist is hard-pressed to produce a different point of view or shape.

Chapter President Sheldon Benner thanked Don and presented him with a gift in appreciation. Don also generously donated an original painting of an Anson for the evening and we thank him for his much-appreciated gesture. The winner of the draw for the painting was new Chapter member, David Reppen.



New Chapter member David Reppen was the happy winner of the draw for an original Anson painting as generously donated by Don Connolly  
*Photo Credit - Neil McGavock.*

