



Sunshine Valley Ratepayers Association

Post Office Box 2104 • Hope, BC V0X 1L0

24 March 2007

Sunshine Community Co-operative Club
71737 Meadow Road
Hope, BC V0X 1L5

Board of Directors:

In February we received correspondence from a person expressing an interest in giving a local history presentation to residents in Sunshine Valley. Chris Weicht is a historian and author of five books on aviation history. In his latest book, "Trans Canada Airway", there is a chapter on the history of the Hope Slide and Sunshine Valley. Mr. Weicht is planning to give presentations in each of the B.C. communities mentioned in his book and would like to give a short PowerPoint presentation to residents in our community.

Our board feels that such a presentation would be of great community interest and would like to know if the SCCC would be interested in co-sponsoring this event by donating the use of its recreation centre. The presentation itself shouldn't last more than two hours and will most likely include a light lunch. Mr. Weicht is requesting a \$100 honorarium, for which our board has already agreed to provide, plus a small contribution towards gas. A tentative date of June 3, 2007 has been chosen by Mr. Weicht as he will be travelling through our area on his way to Princeton to give a presentation to residents there.

A brief personal biography of Mr. Weicht and a promotional flyer of his latest book are enclosed with this letter. We hope you will agree that this presents a unique opportunity for residents in Sunshine Valley to learn about their local history and can join us in bringing this event to our community. I look forward to hearing from you!

Yours truly,

Barb Bell
President, Sunshine Valley Ratepayers Association

Enclosure

cc: Robert Hughes, SCCC

TRANS CANADA AIRWAY

VOLUME FOUR IN A SEVEN VOLUME
SERIES OF AVIATION HISTORY IN THE
NORTHWEST

A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO
RECORDED WESTERN CANADIAN
AVIATION HISTORY

THE BOOK

The Canadian Air Board originally conceived a Trans Canada Airway in 1920 as a development of the trans-Canada-flight from coast to coast, which was successfully completed in that year.

The infrastructure of airfields and navigation aids necessary were non-existent at that time and it was not until 1928 that the Civil Aviation branch of the Department of National Defense decided to survey possible routes and sites for the construction of airfields for the British Columbia section of the proposed airway.

In October 1932 Prime Minister Bennett approved a proposal to use workers from the Unemployment Relief Scheme to construct airfields along the airway, and a workforce of over 2000 men began to clear and construct airfields every fifty miles between Lethbridge, Alberta and Vancouver, British Columbia.

By mid 1936 the Department of Transport had been created and assumed control of civil aviation in Canada. The airfields at this time were largely completed resulting in the Relief Scheme projects being phased out.

In 1936 the Department of Transport began the development of a radio range airway along the route with the first station completed at Vancouver in 1937 and the entire airway by 1939.

The construction of a chain of airfields along the route together with a system of radio range navigational aids across southern British Columbia could not have been timelier. With the advent of war in 1939 came a significant increase in the amount of air traffic across the Rocky Mountains from the coast to the prairies.

In the post war years aircraft sophistication resulted in the intermediate airfields receiving little use and many were abandoned. But even seventy years after the depression it is possible to find evidence of their existence.



THE AUTHOR

Chris Weicht is a retired professional pilot with over 17,000 hours of flight experience, including over 6,000 hours in floatplanes and flying boats. Chris has flown in the Arctic, the Yukon, and Alaska, as well as the Caribbean and South America. He has flown in the bush and in floatplanes, airliners, and corporate jets.

In retirement, Chris travels extensively, lecturing on the history of his first love - aviation. During his travels throughout the northwest, he researches this history for inclusion in his forthcoming books.

In 1997 he published his first book, JERICHO BEACH AND THE WEST COAST FLYING BOAT STATIONS that became a Canadian bestseller. The first of a seven-book series on the aviation history of northwest Canada and Alaska, NORTH BY NORTHWEST was published in 2004 and has received wide acclaim. In 2005 PACIFIC AIRWAY detailed the aviation history of the west coast from Seattle, the BC coast, and southern Alaska. AIR ROUTE TO THE KLONDIKE was published in 2006 and tells of the early aviation pioneers in the Yukon. TRANS CANADA AIRWAY is the latest book in the series and outlines the early attempts to create an air route from the prairies to Vancouver BC and gives a detailed, well illustrated history of each community along the way.

At age 67, Chris retired from commercial aviation and in September 2002 he celebrated the 50th anniversary of his first solo with a flight above the coast mountains of British Columbia.

ABOUT CHRIS WEICHT

Chris Weicht the son of an R.A.F. Officer and former journalist was born at London, England in 1935. In 1948 he immigrated to Vancouver, B.C. with his parents.

In 1949 he joined an Air Cadet Squadron and rose through the ranks to Warrant Officer. In 1952 he was presented his wings on completion of a flight scholarship. In 1953 he enlisted in the R.C.A.F. at Jericho Beach, later serving at R.C.A.F Station Comox.

In 1956 Chris was hired by Pacific Western Airlines and served on D.E.W. Line operations in the North West Territories.

A vision problem caused Chris to leave aviation in 1960, but he utilized this time to advance his education and four years later he was hired in a management position with an oil company.

Chris was advised to apply in the United States for an F.A.A. licence. This application was successful and he immediately obtained employment as a pilot flying on U.S. Forest Service operations. In 1967 he was successful in an appeal to reinstate his Canadian medical and was hired as base manager at Dawson Creek, B.C. on a contract for the B.C. Forest Service. Chris returned to the B.C. coast in 1971 as a pilot for Air West Airlines, and in 1978 he became Chief Pilot for a corporate aviation department.

In 1980 he became an instructor for an Air Cadet Squadron at Abbotsford, B.C. and in 1982 he was promoted to Captain and became the Commanding Officer. In 1983 he founded a flight scholarship program that eventually gave sixty-five teens an Ultra Light Pilot licence.

In 1984 an economic slowdown resulted in the closure of the flight department that employed Christopher and he subsequently was hired as Chief Pilot and Operations Manager for a First Nations airline operating Navajo, Beech 99 and D.C.-3 aircraft. In 1987 he joined Airlift Canada as Chief Pilot IFR and flew charters throughout North America. In 1991 Chris returned to support the Air Cadet movement, serving for three summers at C.F.B. Penhold, Alberta as a tow plane officer pilot on the cadet glider program.

At this time Chris became aware of plans to permanently close the military base at Jericho Beach in Vancouver. Chris contacted the Chief of Staff B.C. District with respect to writing a history of the long-standing military presence at Jericho Beach. Captain Christopher Weicht was appointed Special Projects Officer and dispatched to Ottawa to carry out preliminary research. Chris received substantial support from both Air Command and Land Forces Western Region. In 1997 Jericho Beach and the West Coast Flying Boat Stations was published and was an instant success with over 5,000 copies printed. In 1999 Air Command honored Chris by appointing him Associate Air Force Historian.

In 1995 at age sixty Chris allowed his instrument flight rating to lapse but took a position in the Queen Charlotte Islands flying a deHavilland Beaver in support of logging activities. In 2002 at age 67 he retired from commercial aviation with over 17,000 hours of flight time. On September 27, 2002 he celebrated the 50th anniversary of his first solo by a flight above the Coast Mountains.