

# Brigadier General William F.M. Newson DSO DFC and Bar

***Bill Newson had an extraordinary career with the Royal Canadian Air Force. The flying ranged from light bi-planes in the 1930's to Sabre jets in the Cold War. During the Second World War he flew off of Canada's west and east coasts, escorting convoys on anti-submarine patrols, flew a small 'flying boat' across the Atlantic, and flew on fifty-two operations with three Canadian Bomber Command squadrons, two as the commanding officer. He remained in the RCAF following the war, flying a wide variety of aircraft and serving in a number of senior positions.***



**W/C Bill Newson while commanding officer of 431 Sqn RCAF**

## **PRE-WAR SERVICE**

William 'Bill' Newson was born in 1917 in Calgary. He spent his early years in Edmonton and then enrolled at Kingston's Royal Military College in 1936, graduating in 1939 with a degree in civil engineering. Upon graduation, Bill joined the Royal Canadian Air Force on 5 May 1939. Under instruction by the Toronto Flying Club, he began flying training on 14 June on de Havilland Moth and Tiger Moth bi-planes. He soloed on 13 July and completed his '50 hour test' and preliminary training on 23 August. During this period, Bill was commissioned and received and received the 'Sword of Honour' award.

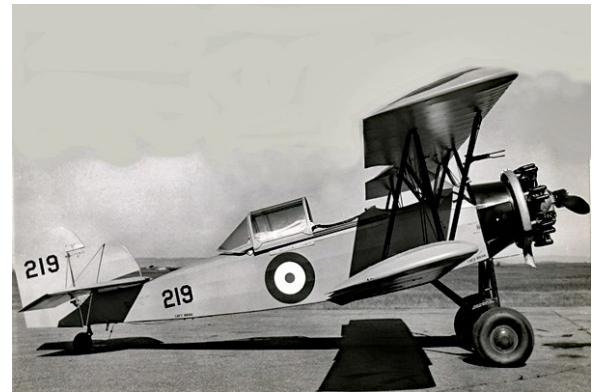
Bill then began 'Intermediate Training', flying both Fleet Fawn biplanes and Airspeed Oxford twin-engined aircraft under RCAF instructors at Camp Borden, Ontario, completing this phase on 21 October and receiving his RCAF flying wings. As he was completing his training, Britain and Canada declared war on Germany and the Second World War began.

Posted to RCAF Trenton on 31 October, Bill began 'Advance Training', continuing to fly Airspeed Oxfords and completing his work on 15 December 1939. The officer commanding the 'Advanced Training Squadron' noted that Bill was 'Above Average' in the four aspects of his training -pilot, navigator, bombing, and air gunnery.

A navigation course at Trenton was next for Bill, from 18 December to 26 February 1940. His only flying during this period was on 9 January -two flights as a navigator aboard a Norseman aircraft.

Bill was then posted to 11 Bomber Reconnaissance Squadron on 14 March 1940, arriving at Dartmouth, Nova Scotia on the 16th.

Formed as a Bomber Reconnaissance unit at Rockcliffe, Ontario on 3 November 1939, 11 BR. immediately flew to Dartmouth, Nova Scotia from which the squadron flew Hudson and Liberator aircraft on East Coast anti-submarine duty until May 1945. It



**Fleet Fawn**



**Airspeed Oxford**

began service based at Dartmouth on 3 November 1939 and was the first squadron to fly Hudsons on wartime operations.

11 BR was operating fifteen Hudson Mk. I aircraft when Bill made his first flight with the squadron on 18 March 1940 as a 'passenger' in Hudson 786, a 'test flight'. On 29 April, Bill flew in the right-hand seat of the Hudson as a second pilot, apparently under the instruction of F/Lt Leigh. During May, there were more training flights and Bill soloed on the Hudson on 29 May.

During these two months, as well as being the 'second pilot' at times, Bill was involved with a variety of duties. Some of the flights were operational 'convoy' escorts, generally between five and six hours in length. 11 BR Hudsons took turns flying patterns extending from Nova Scotia's south shore to about 250 miles out to sea, their maximum fuel distance. Once the convoy had left their air-coverage zone, the Hudsons returned to base at Dartmouth.

There was also a four hour 'ice patrol', a flight to observe submarine operations, exercises with HMS Revenge, and a flight to Ottawa.

During his first months with 11 BR Squadron, Bill made a good impression. On 10 July, a senior officer wrote of him,

*"An outstanding officer, above average in both flying ability and professional knowledge. More than the average initiative for an officer of his age. Smart in appearance."*

As Bill acquired more time on the aircraft he began to fly as 'captain' or first pilot more often. From 19 April 1941 until his last flight with 11 BR on 19 June, he was the first pilot on all but two of sixty flights.

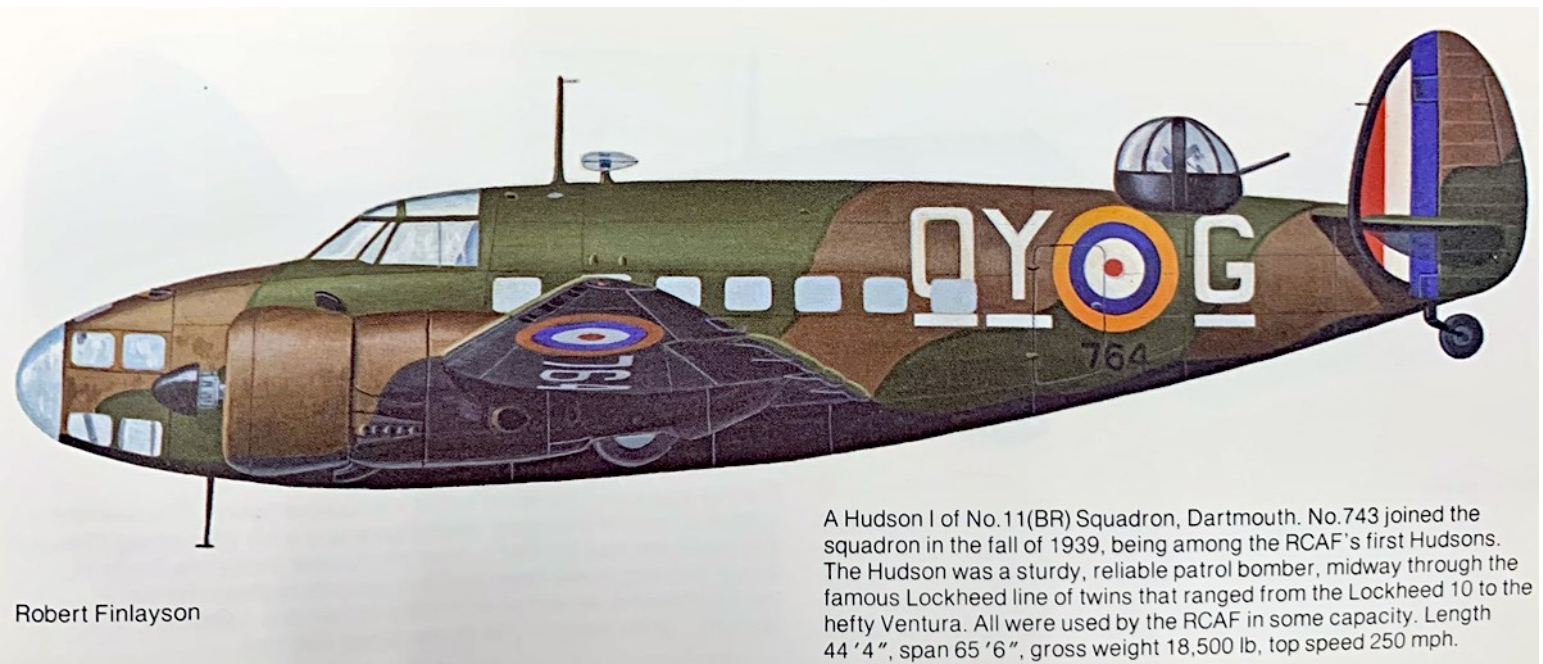
During his time with 11 BR, Bill flew on 58 'OAS' flights, the longest being 6:50 hours. The term OAS stands for 'Outer Anti-Submarine'. These were generally long and right to the maximum of the Hudson's six-hour range. They were protecting convoys either coming into Halifax or Sydney or departing to head east.

His last flight with 11 BR was on 19 June 1941. Prior to his departure, S/L P.G. Baskerville, a senior officer wrote,

*"Very efficient type of officer. His flying ability is above the average, and he has always set a fine example to the officers serving under him."*



**Lockheed Hudson**



Robert Finlayson

A Hudson I of No.11(BR) Squadron, Dartmouth. No.743 joined the squadron in the fall of 1939, being among the RCAF's first Hudsons. The Hudson was a sturdy, reliable patrol bomber, midway through the famous Lockheed line of twins that ranged from the Lockheed 10 to the hefty Ventura. All were used by the RCAF in some capacity. Length 44'4", span 65'6", gross weight 18,500 lb, top speed 250 mph.

#11BR Records

SECRET

INSTRUCTIONS FOR  
OUTER ANTI SUBMARINE PATROLS

(Issued in conjunction with E.A. Command Operation Inst. No. ...)

Instruction No. A. 353  
# 11 (HEL) 3/23/44

Date ...

CONVOY DATUM: Lat. 44° 21' N. Long. 69° 30' W.  
 TIME CONVOY LEAVES DATUM: 1300 hrs.  
 SPEED OF CONVOY: 10  
 NUMBER OF SHIPS IN CONVOY: 40  
 MEAN LINE OF ADVANCE OF CONVOY: 000° until hrs.  
 MEAN LINE OF ADVANCE OF CONVOY after: hrs. 090°  
 POSITION OF TURN: Lat. N. Long. W.  
 DISTANCE OF TURN FROM BASE: Miles.  
 NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT REQ'D PER PATROL:  
 SECTORS: 4 each.  
 LENGTH OF AIRCRAFT BEAT: 30 miles.  
 DEPTH OF PATROL: 20 miles ahead of Convoy.  
 CONVOY CALL SIGN: W.M.A.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

Aircraft are to continue patrol until relieved or E.T.A. base is 5 1/2 hrs. from take off or darkness ensues. Aircraft are to return within visual signalling distance of convoy every 40 to 50 minutes. Aircraft on being relieved are to inform W.M.A. by V/S. using W.M.A. to that effect. W/T. SILENCE TO BE OBSERVED. In an emergency, providing aircraft are NOT near the convoy a request for a D/P. position may be transmitted to Dept. of Transport D/P. Stations. Relieving aircraft will exchange call signs with relieved A/C by V/S

AIRCRAFT TIME TABLE

AIRCRAFT		TAKE OFF BASE	CONVOY			ARR. AT BASE	DIST. FROM BASE AT DEP.	REMARKS
A	B		ARR.	RELIEVED	DEP.			
		0730	0815	1130	1345	1300		3/23
		1015	1130		1415	1545		3/23

F/Lt. Newson then flew Anson aircraft at No. 1 Air Navigation School in Rivers, Manitoba from 30 May to 22 September, completing a course in 'Specialist Navigation', following which he was assessed as 'Above Average'.

Bill's next flight was on 7 October 1941 at Patricia Bay, British Columbia as part of 13 Operation Training Squadron. This RCAF unit was responsible for training aircrew in the operation of various aircraft types. The airfield was also home to other military units such as No. 3 Operational Training Unit, No. 32 Operational Training Unit, and No. 149 (Bomber Torpedo) Squadron that flew anti-submarine patrols off Canada's west coast.

Bill's service while based at Patricia Bay included flying a variety of aircraft including Hudson, Norseman, Lockheed Electra, Bolingbroke, Cessna Crane, and Northrop Delta. Much of the flying was as an instructor, generally on Hudsons, and navigation exercises, but also included search operations, naval 'co-operation' flights with both Royal Canadian Navy and Royal Navy warships. Later during his time with 10 OT, there was less instructing and more variety of flights including two trips to eastern Canada, one in a Northrop Delta and a second in a Bolingbroke.



**Bristol Bolingbroke**

Like many airmen who were posted to non-combat roles in Canada such as instructing, perhaps Bill was longing for an overseas role with Bomber Command. On 15 December 1941, S/L Z.L. Leigh, a senior officer with 13 Squadron, wrote,

*"This officer is a good navigator and a good navigation instructor. He is a good, reliable pilot. Good knowledge of drill and service procedure. He is not very energetic and at times shows a lack of interest generally."*

On 2 June 1942, following fifteen minutes of 'dual' instruction and a 45 minute solo flight, Bill flew a Hampden bomber on a seven hour flight to Winnipeg. He then carried on to other locations in eastern Canada, returning to Patricia Bay by train and ferry.

Bill completed his service with 13 Operational Training Unit on 9 March 1942.

RAF Ferry Command was formed during July 1941 to fly urgently needed aircraft from their place of manufacture in the United States and Canada, to the front-line operational units in Britain, Bill was posted to this unit on 29 July 1942 to fly Consolidated PBY Catalina flying boats which could only operate from water. The PBY Catalinas were built in San Diego, California and those destined for the UK were initially flown to a Ferry Command detachment in Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

Bill began his brief service with Ferry Command by travelling to Elizabeth City from which he was to fly as a Catalina second pilot with F/Lt. Virr, The two flew a Catalina from Elizabeth City to Montreal, landing on the St. Lawrence River near Dorval on 21 August 1942, a flight of 5:45 hours, Eight days later, they flew a second Catalina to Montreal from Elizabeth City. They then flew this second Catalina to North Sydney, Nova Scotia, Gander Newfoundland, and finally a fifteen-hour flight ( 6:30 hours of this flight were during daylight; 8:30 hours were at night) across the Atlantic Ocean to Greenock, Scotland. The cruising speed of the Catalina was only around 105 knots.



**Consolidated PBY Catalina**

## **BOMBER COMMAND SERVICE**

Bill was not destined to become a Ferry Command pilot. Following his arrival in the UK, he was to become part of Bomber Command.

Almost all RCAF pilots who arrived in England to serve with Bomber Command were posted to an Advanced Flying Unit, for further training and to become used to flying over landscapes and in weather that they were not used to after training, in most cases on the prairies of western Canada. They would then be posted to a Bomber Command Operational Training Unit to become familiar with flying an operational bomber, generally a twin-engined Wellington.

But Bill's experience flying from both Canada's east and west coast and on wartime operations made none of this necessary and his first posting was to 1652 Heavy Conversion Unit at Marston Moor in North Yorkshire. Here he spent two and half weeks learning to fly the Halifax Mk V four-engined bomber, equipped with Rolls-Royce Merlin engines. It appears he had no difficulty doing so as he was assessed 'High Average' at the end of the course. Three days after he left the HCU, a crew from the squadron he was about to join was killed while training in a new Halifax. Service with Bomber Command was much more dangerous than any flying he had done previously.

Bill was then posted to 408 Squadron based at Leeming in Yorkshire, arriving on 8 October 1942. His posting corresponded to a major change for 408 Squadron that had been flying twin-engined Hampden bombers since its creation on 24 June 1941. The squadron's last operation with this aircraft was on the night of 14/15 September and the following day was ordered to move from Balderston to Leeming. When Bill arrived, the squadron was very busy with the move and ground training related to their new aircraft. Their first Halifax Mk V (a new variant with square empennage and wingtips but still powered by Merlin engines) arrived on 11 October, just three days after Bill's arrival.

It appears that Bill (having been promoted to Squadron Leader) was a highly regarded addition to 408 Squadron because, upon his arrival on 15 October, he was taken aboard a one hour 'local' flight piloted by the squadron c/o, W/C Ferris, and the second pilot was G/C Graham. During the first three weeks of November, Bill flew the new aircraft eight times, the flights being noted in his logbook as 'Air Firing', 'Fighter Affiliation', and local and cross-country familiarizations.

Next in his preparation for Bomber Command operations, Bill spent six days at RAF Driffield on a BAT (Beam Approach Training) course utilizing the Airspeed Oxford aircraft, with which he was very familiar. 'BAT' was an early system for guiding the pilot onto the runway. If he was too far left, he heard a series of dots, if he was too far right, he heard a series of dashes, and if he was on course, he heard a continuous note. Bill flew each day for about an hour, utilizing this technology as he made approaches to land. Bill returned to Leeming on 26 November, at the controls of a Halifax.

Then, much to the surprise of the squadron, they learned that the thirteen Halifax Mk. V's that they were training on were to be replaced with Halifax Mk. II's -an older variant with triangular shaped vertical stabilizers which, as was confirmed later, caused the aircraft to become unstable in certain circumstances and caused heavy losses. So further training was required once the Mk. II's arrived at Leeming.

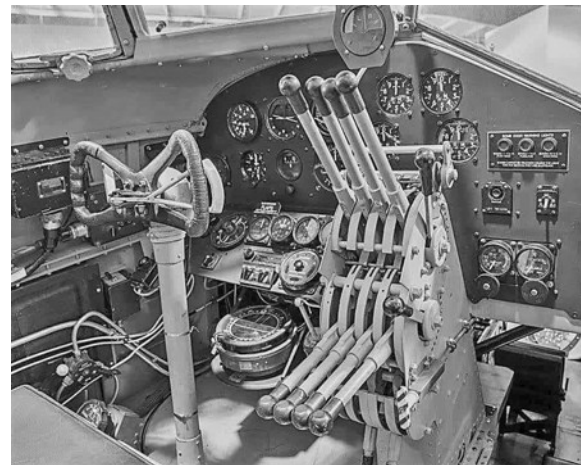
Prior to flying operations with their own crew, new pilots were sent as 'Second Dickies' with an experienced crew to observe a bombing operation. Bill's first 'Second Dickie' flight was on 9 December with F/O Milnes of 102 Squadron, the target being Turin, Italy. However, the aircraft returned early after 2:35 hours. A



**Handley-Page Halifax Mk. II**

second, 'Second Dickie' flight, an operation to Duisburg on 20 December was completed. During this operation Bill was exposed to enemy action -an attack by an enemy fighter which was 'claimed' by the air gunners as a 'probable' and the bomber sustained minor flak damage.

On 9 January, Bill flew his first operation as captain of his own aircraft with his own crew -F/O W.V. Harris, Sgt. W.K. Naylor, F/Lt. A.J. Jarvis, Sgt. A.R. Johnston, Sgt. D.M. McCarter, and Sgt. M. Martin. The 4:35 hour flight saw the crew deliver two 1500 pound sea-mines from 700 feet on a so-called 'gardening' operation to the shipping lanes near the Frisian Islands to the west of Denmark.



**Halifax cockpit**

Bill went on to complete eighteen. operations with 408 Squadron over the next five and a half months. During this time, he was a 'Flight Commander', in charge of half of the squadron's crews. His logbook recorded details of some of the flights:

-14 February -Attacked by an enemy aircraft during an attack on Cologne on 14 February.

-16 February -G/C Dunlop, the Leeming Station Commander, accompanied the crew to Lorient. A note 'Special Recco' was noted.

-28 February -During a flight to St. Nazaire Bill's aircraft was 'coned' by searchlights.

-5 March -Bill's aircraft was 'coned' by 40-50 searchlights over Munich. As well they were hit by flak and attacked by an Me210 fighter near the target -a 9:20 hour flight.

-29 March -An operation to Berlin (known to the crews as 'The Big City'). However, several problems led to an early return -Port engine cut-out on take off, severe icing, Air Speed indicator and compass failed.

Being 'coned' was terrifying. In his book, 'Boys, Bombs, and Brussels Sprouts', 408 Squadron pilot Doug Harvey wrote,

*"I had just closed the bomb doors when I went blind. Absolutely blind. Terrified, I realized we had been coned. The world was a dazzling white, as though a giant flashlight was aimed directly into my eyes. I couldn't see my hands on the control column, couldn't see the instrument panel, couldn't see outside the cockpit. I was naked, totally exposed, helpless. We were a very bright and shiny target in the apex of fifty or more beams that were radar directed. They weren't going to let go easily."*

Nine of Bill's operations with 408 Squadron were noted in his logbook as 'Special Recco'. It is not known what this refers to.

Although it is not mentioned in Bill's logbook or the 408 Squadron Operation Record Book, it seems that his aircraft was badly damaged during two of his operations with 408. During one of these, he was Injured and became a member of the 'Guinea Pig Club' at East Grinstead. This was a hospital where pioneering work was done in the treatment of burns to air force personnel. In a book about Canadian 'Guinea Pigs', his fellow 'guinea pigs' referred to him as, "an enormous, gentle, and unassuming man."

On 12 January 1943, Bill's work as a flight commander with 408 Squadron was recognized at 6 Group Headquarters, the squadron commander writing,

*"Outstanding Flight Commander. Very efficient and good leader. Recommend promotion. Make good squadron commander."*

Following his service with 408 Squadron, S/L Newson was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the citation reading:

*"This officer has completed numerous operational missions and has won the admiration and respect of all the members of his squadron. His aircraft has been twice damaged by anti-aircraft fire but in spite of*



**In this remarkable photo, a Bomber Command aircraft has been 'coned' by a dozen or more searchlights. Anti-aircraft guns are directing flak which can be seen exploding near where the searchlights are converging.**

*this he has returned to base on each occasion and effected a safe landing. Squadron Leader Newson is an ideal leader whose courage and devotion to duty have been a fine example."*

On 26 June 1943, S/L Newson was promoted to the rank of Wing Commander and posted to 431 Squadron as its commanding officer. He was replacing W/C J. Coverdale who had been killed leading the squadron on a raid to Krefeld on 21/22 June and had commanded the squadron since its formation on 1 December 1942. The squadron was operating Wellington bombers and was based at Burn.

When Bill arrived at Burn, planning was in process for 431 Squadron to be re-equipped with Halifax aircraft and, as well, to move to Tholthorpe. Its last operation with the Wellingtons was on 12 July and the squadron made the move to Tholthorpe on 15 July. The first Halifax Mk. V arrived on 21 July and training began so Bill was involved in a process similar to that he experienced upon his posting to 408 Squadron.

For the next two and a half months, the aircrew flew numerous training operations as their new Halifaxes arrived and the ground crew learned how to service and maintain them. During that period, Bill flew five times, the longest flight being a 3:40 cross country.

Finally, on 3 October Bill led twelve 431 Squadron Halifaxes on their first operation, a 6:15 hour trip to bomb Kassel. One of the aircraft failed to return. Bill's crew included F/O W.J. Harris (navigator), P/O W.K. Naylor (bomb aimer), W/O A.R. Johnston (wireless/air gunner), P/O W. Conley (mid-upper gunner), P/O D.M. McArter (rear gunner), and F/L R.M. Martin (flight engineer). The mid-upper gunner was new to Bill's crew, the others having been posted to 431 with their pilot.

At 6 Group Headquarters, Bill's leadership qualities were being recognized, A/V/M G.E. Brooks writing on 4 October 1943,

*"A splendid officer doing excellent work as CO of No.431 Squadron."*

Bill flew seven operations in the Halifax Mk. V, the same Rolls-Royce Merlin V-12 engine powered aircraft that he had flown with 408 Squadron. His third was on 22/23 November to Berlin. Although Bill had been over Berlin during his time with 408 Squadron, this operation was the beginning of what became known as the 'Battle of Berlin'.

In 1943, Berlin had a population of 4,000,000 people. It was the second largest city in Europe and the capitol of the Third Reich. A major industrial centre, Berlin produced iron and steel, machine tools, chemicals, tanks, guns, and aircraft. Arthur Harris saw it as the ultimate target for Bomber Command and he unleashed a relentless attack. The bomber aircrew referred to Berlin as 'The Big City'. But it was a challenging target, to say the least. For one thing, Berlin was about as far from the Bomber Command airfields as a city in Germany could be. It was defended by 11,000 flak guns, over 3000 searchlights, and several hundred night-fighters.

The Battle of Berlin was a series of sixteen major attacks by Bomber Command that took place from November 1943 through March 1944. Although much damage was inflicted on the enemy's capital, the effort failed in its object of inflicting a decisive defeat on Germany. More than 7000 aircrew and 1047 bombers, 5.1 per cent of the sorties flown, were lost. As for the Canadian Squadrons, 1249 bombers attacked Berlin in this period and 76 failed to return, a loss rate of 6.1%.

When Bill returned from Berlin on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November, it is interesting to note that he wrote the name of the target in a larger 'font' than his other entries and in all capital letters. He understood the significance of the target.

Another move for 431 Squadron took place on 10 December, this time from Tholthorpe to Croft.

His last operation on the Halifax Mk. V was on 23 March when he recorded a 'second pilot' in his logbook, Air Commodore Roy Slemon.

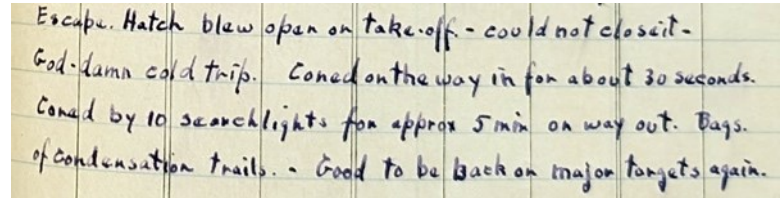


Then, on 24 March 1944, he flew the Halifax Mk. III, powered by the 14 cylinder radial Bristol Hercules engines and square, rather than somewhat triangular vertical stabilizers/rudders. Bill liked the Mk. III, noting in his logbook, "Very nice aircraft". He flew five operations with the Halifax Mk. V, his last with the squadron being on 7 May, his thirtieth combat operation.



**Handley-Page Halifax Mk. III**

A trip to Dusseldorf on 22 April appears to have been very significant to Bill, in that he wrote considerably more detail into his logbook than on any previous operation. A complication was that the escape hatch in the nose of the aircraft blew open on take-off and could not be closed, making for an extremely cold and draughty 5:25 hour trip.



**A note from Bill's logbook regarding his flight to Dusseldorf**

Bill's final trip with 431 Squadron was on 7 May 1944. By this time the 'Battle of Berlin' had ended, and Bomber Command was focussing on pre-invasion targets, in this case coastal guns at St. Valery. His logbook noted this operation as his 'First pinpoint, precision target'.

1664 Heavy Conversion Unit was based at Dishforth, and Bill was posted with that unit from 4 May until 5 June 1944.

Bill was recommended to receive a 'Bar' to his Distinguished Flying Cross -essentially a second DFC, the citation reads,

*Since his association with Bomber Command in August 1942, Wing Commander Newson has displayed the highest qualities, both on operations and as a leader, particularly as Squadron Commander of No.431 (RCAF) Squadron. He has led the squadron from Wellington aircraft to Halifax Mark Vs in September 1943, and recently converted it to Halifax Mark IIIs.. He has, during all this trying period, shown the highest efficiency in operations, and his administrative ability as Commanding Officer of the squadron has marked him as a fearless and inspirational leader. His capacity to get the best out of his men has been done with a devotion to duty deserving of the highest praise. Since being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, this officer has completed eleven sorties as captain of aircraft, which included against most heavily defended enemy targets (Berlin, Stuttgart, Magdeburg, Dusseldorf, etc). On all occasions he has performed his mission in the highest and most gallant manner. On two occasions, to Berlin and Stuttgart, while still recovering from a wrenched back, he pressed home his attack, though suffering pain throughout. In addition, Wing Commander Newson has completed 477 hours 40 minutes on Coastal Command (Hudsons) with No.11 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia and No.13 (Operational Training) Squadron, Patricia Bay, British Columbia. I strongly recommend Wing Commander Newson for a Bat to the Distinguished Flying Cross*

This recommendation was received by Air Vice Marshal C.M. McEwen, Air Officer Commanding, No.6





Group who wrote,

*I concur. A very fine officer and squadron commander whose qualities of leadership, resolution and courage have set an example to all. Recommend the non-immediate award of a Bar to the Distinguished Flying Cross.*

On 5 August 1944, Bill was awarded the 'Bar' to his Distinguished Flying Cross. The citation reads:

*Wing Commander Newson has shown marked ability both as a squadron commander and as a captain of aircraft on operations. Since the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross he has completed attacks on such targets as Berlin, Magdeburg, Stuttgart and Dusseldorf in a most gallant and efficient manner. His courage, leadership and resolution have set a fine example to all.*

Bill was then placed in command of RCAF Station Leeming for two months during which he made nine flights, all but one were in light, twin-engined aircraft, apparently related to administrative duties. In two cases, he flew and accompanied senior 6 Group officers, such as A.Cdr. Slemon and G/C Ferris to various locations.

However on 9 November, he flew his thirty-first operation, a raid to Le Havre. By this time, Bomber Command was focused on supporting the Allied armies as they advanced across France. Bill was not impressed with this flight, possibly because it was his first in daylight. His logbook entry reads,

*"First daylight; not impressive; required two runs."*

Bill's last wartime posting was to Gransden Lodge on 9 October 1944, taking command of 405 Squadron which operated under 8 Group, the 'Pathfinder Force'. The idea of having an elite corps of crews with proven navigational abilities evolved from the somewhat limited accuracy of bomber crews during the early years of the war, together with the development of more sophisticated and difficult to use electronic navigational aids such as Oboe and H2S. Hand-picked crews from operational bomber squadrons were transferred to the Pathfinder Force (PFF) which was officially formed on 15 August 1942.

Bill would have had to become familiar with the variety of techniques for marking targets that were used, the type being dependent on cloud conditions. Green, red, and yellow Target Indicator (T.I.) flares were utilized. Generally, an initial marking of the target was improved upon or altered as the raid progressed. Often a 'Master Bomber' would circle over the target, transmitting radio instructions to other Pathfinders as well as to the main force aircraft. As well, Bill would be flying the Lancaster Bomber with 405 Squadron.

Bill flew nineteen operations with 405 Squadron, five of them as 'Master Bomber' during which he would circle above the target, giving directions over the radio to the other pathfinders and the main force bombers as well.

405 Squadron was the only Canadian unit to be involved with 'Operation Manna', the dropping of food supplies to the starving Dutch, who had suffered under Nazi occupation since the beginning of the war and remained under their occupation until the final days of the war. He flew a single flight on 1 May 1945, referring to it in his logbook as a 'Mercy Flight' and 'Quite a Thrill'.

Bill's 405 Squadron crew included navigators F/O Cope and F/L



**Avro Lancaster**



**Lancaster cockpit**

Martin, F/O Naylor (bomb aimer), F/S Giblin (wireless operator), S/L MacLeod (rear gunner), F/S Ririe (mid-upper gunner), and Sgt. Catlin (flight engineer). F/O Naylor had been with Bill on 408 Squadron and 431 Squadron and Bill would have made arrangements for his transfer to 405 Squadron.

Bill remained as c/o of 405 Squadron, flying Lancaster KB976 (LQ-K) back to Canada, part of the journey being a 7:30 hour flight from the Azores to Gander, Newfoundland. Interestingly, this Canadian-built aircraft still exists – although in pieces and stored at ‘Fantasy of Flight’ in Florida.



Bill (left) and a fellow 405 Squadron airman

Following the war, Bill received the Distinguished Service Order, the citation reading:

*This officer has a long and varied career of operational duty. After completing a tour of duty with Coastal Command in Canada he was appointed to command a squadron in this country. He has taken part in many sorties since the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross, many of them in a most important role. The success of a number of sorties, against such heavily defended objectives as Chemnitz and Zweibrucken, has been due in no small measure to his work as master bomber. Group Captain Newson is an outstanding officer who, by his keenness and efficiency, has set a fine example.*

<p>G.983 G/O Newson W.F.M. DFC &amp; BAR, 1745 2247          J.28702 F/O Cope J.L., RAF/127850 F/L          Martin G.A. DSO DFC, AHS/103405 F/L          Giblin D.W.T. IFC, R.202642 W/O Ririe          S.L., AHSR1091 S/L MacLeod L.L. IFC,          RAF/186791 F/S Catlin R.H.,          J.17272 F/O Naylor W.K. IFC          Bombload:- 1 x 1,000 T.L. Red,          1 x 1,000 T.L. Green,          2 x 1,000 T.L. Red (L.B.),          2 x 1,000 T.L. Green (L.B.),          4 x 500 MG. TD. 025.</p>		<p>* K * MASTER BOMBER:- Clear visibility. Bombed Aiming Point at 2012:48 hours from 10,000 feet. On run in, Illuminator Flares started falling at 2010 hours. Aired for illumination. Mosquito Red T.L.s seen cascading. These fell, one slightly North of A.P. and one further East. Dropped Red/Green T.L.s and saw these overshoot slightly. Orbited and saw a second lot of Red/Green T.L.s fall. These undershot ours and they were on A.P. Directed bombing on Red/Greens and later Green T.L.s centred on Red/Greens, and changed directions to bomb Green. Within three minutes Aiming Point was obscured by smoke and told Main Force to bomb centre of smoke. Other bombing very concentrated. Just one Green T.L. slightly off target, North-East, otherwise marking good. Smoke rising to 8,000 feet. The following instructions were given:- 1951, contact winked, no cloud; 2002, time check; 2003, W/O O13/17; 2010, Blind Illuminators please, also Visual; 2013, Undershoot Reds by 100 yards; 2014, Bomb Red/Greens, do not undershoot; 2015.5 (same as 2014, repeated; 2016, bomb Greens now cascading; 2016.5, do not undershoot, ignore Green T.L.s; 2017.5, bomb centre of smoke; 2018 and 2019 (repeated instruction given at 2017.5); 2019.5, bomb Greens now cascading; 2020, bomb centre of smoke, four seconds overshoot; 2021, (same as 2020); 2022, Marlow 2 "How's it look?"; "Go on home"; 2023, bomb centre of smoke; 2024.5, fullhouse; apple pie. Aircraft returned to base.</p>
---	--	---

Operations Record Book entry for one of Bill's flights as a 'Master Bomber'

<p>OPERATIONS: HAGUE (Marking for Supply Dropping) 6 Aircraft Detailed (Daylight)          Six aircraft dropped 12 x 250 T.L. Red. Clear sky with good visibility. All aircraft identified Race-Course with White Cross in the centre, but no Red light was seen on the Cross. The T.L.s appeared to be falling in good concentration 400 to 500 yards beyond White Cross. One aircraft reported a load of groceries dropped on markers. Nil defences. All aircraft returned to base.          Operational Flying Time:- 13:35 Hours (Day)</p>
--

Operations Record Book entry for Bill's 'Operation Manna' flight

## POST-WAR SERVICE

W/C Newson remained in the post-war air force, commanding RCAF Lachine, Quebec. He later attended RCAF Staff College and also served at Air Force Headquarters in Ottawa. In 1949, he was named commanding officer at RCAF Station Centralia, Ontario, and then commanding officer at Training Command Headquarter, Trenton and eventually commanding officer of 2 Fighter Wing in Grotzenquin, France. In 1959, he was commanding officer of RCAF Station Namao, near Edmonton, Alberta, and in 1960 was commandant of the Air Force College in Toronto. The year 1964 saw him become commander of the 36<sup>th</sup> NORAD division, Topsham Air Force Base, Maine. By August of 1968 he was Assistant Chief of Staff Air Operations at Allied Forces Central Europe, Burnssum, Holland.

Through all his post-war administrative assignments, his logbook makes it clear that he never stopped flying including many flights in Beechcraft and Dakota transport aircraft and T-33 and F-86 Sabre jets.

The following RCAF documents relate to his post-war service.

*“Wing Commander Newson has completed a tour of duty as Air Cadet Liaison Officer, a task which calls for a superior degree of energy, initiative and tact. He has carried out these duties to my complete satisfaction. In all his work he has ably upheld the service side of the RCAF - Air Cadet League partnership - and at the same time has gained the complete confidence of the League officials. I consider that he has amply proven his worth as an operational leader, as a station commander in difficult times (Lachine 1945-46) and as a Staff Officer.”* -Air Commodore J.G. Kerr, AFHQ/AMOT, 5 May 1949.

To this the following is added:

*“Concur in above assessment and remarks. In all respects a fine officer whose high ability, energy, initiative tact and universal popularity have justifiably earned his recent promotion to Group Captain rank.”* -A/V/M C.R. Slemon, 5 May 1949

*“During the short time that G/C Newson has been Commanding Officer Station Centralia he has performed his duties in an efficient manner.”* -Air Commodore W.W. Brown, Training Command Headquarters, 15 September 1949

*“Group Captain Newson is one of the outstanding officers of the RCAF. His supervision of and his direction of his subordinates are excellent. In his official duties and in his social life he wins the approval and respect of all persons with whom he comes in contact. He keeps in excellent flying practice, holding a green ticket.”* -Air Commodore W.W. Brown, Training Command Headquarters, 16 January 1953; concurred in by A/V/M J.G. Kerr

*“For three years this officer has carried the heavy responsibilities of Senior Air Staff Officer Training Command. The success of our training operations is due in no small measure to his efforts.”* -A/V/M J.G. Kerr, Training Command Headquarters, 10 August 1954

*“Be pleased to have him in his present rank. Be satisfied to have him in next higher rank. Group Captain Newson is thoroughly capable. He took over 2 (Fighter) Wing which had become unruly and is well on his way to making it a disciplined station. If anything, G/C Newson, as Commanding Officer, is probably too severe in his punishment of officers, but not to the point where any difficulty arises. Administration on the station is very good. He is being posted into Air Division Headquarters as SASO and I believe he will turn out a good job of work. I would like to see him stay as station commander longer. This officer has kept himself completely current on jets.”* -A/V/M H.B. Godwin, No.1 Air Division, 1 March 1957

*“Particularly desire him in his present rank. Be pleased to have him in next higher rank. G/C Newson is completing his tour overseas this summer and has served very successfully during this tour as CO No.2 Wing and for the last two years as SASO Air Division Headquarters. He has a very wide grasp of all the considerable intricacies of operations in the European theatre and he has been most successful in directing our combined operations with other air forces. His position has called for patience, tact and long hours, all of which he has supplied in full measure. Both he and his wife have been fine social assets to our organization and their lively interest in our activities will be missed. During periods of absence of either the*

Air Officer Commanding or Chief Staff Officer, G/C Newson has stepped into the position and has shown very adequate ability to carry out an Air Commodore's responsibilities. I consider that this officer is ready for increased rank and that he is fully worthy of promotion." -AN/IM L.E. Wray, Air Officer Commanding, No.1 Air Division, 1 March 1959

"General Newson performs these duties in a superior manner. His knowledge and experience in the employment of air power has contributed immeasurably to the development of plans and concepts of operation for the Air Forces in the Central Region. He has a straightforward approach to problems and speaks his opinions frankly. General Newson efficiently operates the most active section in this headquarters. His efforts have resulted in the development of a conventional war option for Allied Command Europe. He was also responsible for AFCENT reconnaissance, fighter and air defence competitions - with highly significant results of great benefit to this international environment. The Commander-in-Chief, AFCENT, depends upon General Newson's key decisions during exercises and evaluations of subordinate units. He is a most effective team leader, and I depend upon him to fill my position of Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations and Intelligence, during my absence. He has continually accomplished all of these functions in an outstanding manner. General Newson is an asset to my staff, and I am proud to have him as a member of our seven-nation international team." -Major-General Gordon F. Blood, USAF (DCS/Ops and Intelligence, HQ AFCENT) 31 December 1970

Bill Newson retired in 1972 with the rank of Brigadier General.

In 1977 Bill became executive director of the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame. According to Mone Stour, a former general manager of the Hall,

"Brig. Gen. Newson was instrumental in transforming the exhibit from a collection of old photos to a repository of knowledge of 'the human aspects of aviation'. Thanks to Brig-Gen Newson, the files of 117 inductees are filled with glowing descriptions of their contributions to flying in Canada. But when he himself was inducted in 1984, his file was conspicuously lacking in laudatory detail. Says Mr. Stour: "He was not one to talk about his honour" Do the job, Give it your best. No big deal."

Bill Newson died in 1988.

SINGLE-ENGINE AIRCRAFT				MULTI-ENGINE AIRCRAFT							PASS- ENGER	INSTR/CLOUD FLYING [Incl. in cols. (1) to (10)]		TR
DAY		NIGHT		DAY			NIGHT			DUAL		PILOT		
DUAL (1)	PILOT (2)	DUAL (3)	PILOT (4)	DUAL (5)	1ST PILOT (6)	2ND PILOT (7)	DUAL (8)	1ST PILOT (9)	2ND PILOT (10)				DUAL (12)	
91.50	231.35	.45	4.55	153.40	3225.40	410.40	10.30	936.40	55.00	286.15	247.20	532.50		

The final 'totals' from Bill Newson's logbook

# RECORD OF SERVICE

UNIT	DATES		UNIT	DATES	
	FROM	TO		FROM	TO
Entered RCAF	5.6.39				
Toronto Flying Club. [Ab Initio]	14.6.39.	26.8.39.	CENTRALIA ONT [COMMAND]	1 JUN 49	4 NOV 51
Camp Borden. [Intermediate]	2.9.39.	31.10.39.	TRENTON TCHQ/SASO	5 NOV 51	30 Aug 54
Trenton. [Advance Training]	31.10.39.	15.12.39.	NDC KINGSTON	1 SEP 54	22 JUL 55
Trenton. [Navigation Course]	18.12.39.	26.2.40	TRENTON [T33 Conversion Trng]	25 JUL 55	18 SEP 55
Dartmouth [11 B.R. Sqd.]	14.3.40	25.6.41.	CHATHAM NB Sabre II Conty	19 Sep 55	1 Oct.
Rivers Man [1 A.N.S.] <small>#5 SPEC W COURSE</small>	29.6.41.	2.10.41.	GROS TENQUIN FRANCE	18 Oct 55	8 JUL 57
Patricia Bay B.C. [130TSq]	6.10.41.	25.7.42.	Air Division HQ's Metz France	9 JUL 57	25 JUN 59
R.A.F. Ferry Command.	29.7.42.	6.9.42.	RCAF STN NAMAO	24 JUL 59	19 DEC 60
Balderton Nots Eng. [408Sq]	15.9.42.	22.9.42.	RCAF AIR FORCE COLLEGE COMMANDER	30 DEC 60	26 Aug 64
Marston Moor Yorks. [1652 Con Unit]	23.9.42.	8.10.42.	Bangor Air Defense Sector ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF	27 Aug 64	
Leeming Yorks. [408 Sqn]	9.10.42.	21.11.42.	AIR OPERATION APTCENT BRUNSBUM NETHERLANDS.		
Driffield [1502 BAT Flight]	28.11.42	28.11.42.			
Leeming Yorks [408 Sqn]	29.11.42.	26.6.43.			
Burn. Yorks. [431 Sqn]	26.6.43.	15.7.43.			
Tholthorpe Yorks [431 Sqn]	15.7.43.	10.12.43.			
CROFT. YORKS. [431 Sqn]	10.12.43.	9.5.44.			
Dishforth Yorks [1664 HCU]	9.5.44.	5.6.44.			
Leeming Yorks. [Station H.Q.]	5.6.44.	9.10.44			
Gransden Lodge Beds [405 Sqn]	9.10.44.	26.5.45.			
Linton-on-Ouse Yorks [405 Sqn]	26.5.45.	16.6.45.			
Greenwood Canada [405 Sqn]	18.6.45.	28.7.45.			
Lachine P.Q. [Command]	29.7.45.	1 SEP 46			
RCAF STAFF COLLEGE	3 SEP 46	22 FEB 47			
A FHQ / AMOT / ACHD	1 MAR 47	31 MAY 47			

'Record of Service' from Bill Newson's logbook

AIRCRAFT	ENGINE
D. H. Moth.	Gypsy III.
Tiger Moth.	Gypsy Major.
Fleet.	Kinnear.
Fleet.	Civet.
Oxford.	Cheetah X.
STINSON -105.	A-75 CONTINENTAL
NORTHROP-A-17	850. TWIN ROW WASP
HARVARD-1	550. WASP JUNIOR
TOMTIT.	AMSTRONG
MKI, V LOCKHEED HUDSON	MONGOOSE. Twin Row Wasp CYCLONE 1100
Noordyn Norseman.	Wasp 550.
10A	Wasp Jr.
Lockheed Electra 10B	Wright J6E3. 950.
Bolingbroke MK II.	Mercury XV
Cessna "Crane"	Jacobs. 225.
Delta, Northrop	Wright CYCLONE 800.
Lockheed "12"	Wasp 450.
Hatifax II III V	<del>XII</del> Merlin XX
Hampden.	Pegasus XIII
Lancaster III, IX.	Merlin XXVIII
<b>BEECRAFT</b>	
Dakota	PRATT. WHITNEY 1530
T33	
Sabra I+II	Oranda Continental
Cessna USA	0-470-M- 240 HP.

'Record of 'Aircraft Flown' from Bill Newson's logbook

**The following article was published in the magazine 'Alberta Report' on 11 April 1988.**

# The passing of a true hero

*Brigadier-General Newson leaves an unsurpassed record of courage and service*

**T**hough he would probably have denied the accolade himself, Brigadier General William Francis Montgomery Newson was a war hero. His decorations and reputation as Canada's most outstanding bomber pilot of the Second World War prove it beyond a doubt. What the record doesn't show are the exploits and feats of derring-do that earned him the name and the medals. He didn't talk about the war himself, not even to his family.

Those who flew with him don't talk about it either. "If you ask to hear a bunch of war stories," says George Kercher, a long-time friend and wartime comrade, "that just shows you don't know anything about Bill Newson or the men who flew in the war. When one of us got a medal it was understood that it wasn't for one man but for the whole crew. And you didn't talk about it." Do the job, give it everything you have, no big deal. That simple ethic guided Brig.-Gen. Newson's distinguished career until his death last week in Edmonton following a heart attack at the age of 70.

He was born July 19, 1917 in Calgary, the son of career Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman Henry M. Newson. The family moved around quite a bit until Lt.-Col. Newson accepted his final posting as the first commander of the RCMP's K Division. Friends remember Bill as a tall strapping kid

with an outgoing personality and a passion for sports.

In fact, the Newson's other child, Christine Charles, 66, remembers that her brother's devotion to the Garneau High football team and competitive badminton nearly cost him his future. "He had his heart set on going to the Royal Military College in Kingston. But he spent so much time at badminton that he missed a lot of classes," she says. "So half-way through his final year [1935] the principal told him he wasn't going to make it if he didn't improve his marks." Friends and family began warning him about the great opportunity he was passing up. The Great Depression had struck and an education at RMC was virtually cost-free, but competition was tough. "He just told everyone not to worry, to leave him alone," recalls Mrs. Charles. "The rest of that term he began shutting himself in his room to study." His marks improved. That summer a letter of acceptance arrived from Kingston. He also became Alberta junior badminton champion that year.

In the fall, Bill Newson entered the Royal Military College, an institution imbued with British military tradition. His son Michael, also a graduate of the college, recalls that things didn't change much between his father's day and his own. "The senior cadets were given a very free hand in the disciplin-

ing of [first year] recruits," he says. Even the slightest violation of military procedure would result in punishment. Push-ups, drill, or revocation of leave were standard. A more imaginative punitive ritual was the practice of "reporting wet." The offending recruit would be ordered, regardless of the weather, to begin his day with a dive into the lake and then to present his soggy self to the senior cadet. Recruit Newson spent a lot of mornings soaking wet. "My father once told me," says Michael, "that he would have been expelled if he hadn't been on the football team."

This, however, was likely a bit of false modesty. However disinclined to military fastidiousness he may have been as a freshman, his performance at the end of four years was good enough to earn him the "Sword of Honour" as top graduating cadet. In addition to this kudo, he left RMC with a diploma in civil engineering and his pilot's wings. He immediately entered the Royal Canadian Air Force as a commissioned officer.

Pilot Officer Newson's first military posting was in Dartmouth, N.S., where he flew escort planes for Atlantic convoys. In July 1942, he was transferred to his first overseas combat position as flight commander of RCAF 408 Squadron. A year later he received his first medal for bravery, the Dis-

tinguished Flying Cross. The only surviving record of what he did to earn it is a terse item in the *London Gazette*: "Flight Commander Newson has completed numerous operations and won the admiration and respect of his squadron. His aircraft has been twice damaged by anti-aircraft fire, and he has returned to base each time and made safe landings."

That same summer he was promoted to squadron commander of 431 Squadron where he began flying longer-range bombing missions deep into the heart of Germany. In August of 1944, he earned a bar (equivalent to a second medal) to his DFC. Again the newspaper account only hints at the magnitude of his achievement: "Since the award of the DFC he has completed flights on such targets as Berlin, Stuttgart and Dusseldorf in a most gallant and efficient manner." After completing a tour (around 30 missions) with the 431st he had a short stint as a flying instructor. But in October 1944, now at the rank of group captain, he entered the most dangerous phase of his military career as commander of 405 Squadron, the only Canadian unit in the famed Pathfinder Force.

The Pathfinder Force had its genesis in 1943. Marshal Arthur Harris, head of the United Kingdom Bomber Command, believed that the war could be won by bombing alone. Dump enough high explosives and incendiaries on Germany, he said, and the enemy's industrial capability and fighting spirit would be destroyed. But because bomb sights and navigational instruments were crude and Germany's industrial heartland so well defended, bombing missions had a low success rate.



Then an Australian air vice-marshal by the name of Don Bennett came up with the idea of skimming off the cream of the Commonwealth bomber force for extra training in navigation and bomb aiming. On each mission one such elite crew, the Pathfinder, would precede a regular bomber squadron to the target and drop huge phosphorescent flares on it to mark it for the others. The idea seemed simple enough. Indeed it was instrumental in improving the accuracy of Allied bombing raids. The only drawback was the appalling number of men who got killed doing it. Brig-Gen. Newson estimated that the force's casualties were nearly 80%.

The members of the Pathfinder Force faced all the dangers and discomforts of a regular bomber crew and then some. First, there was the sheer grinding agony of having to spend as much as 11 sleepless hours in a cramped, cold airplane. It must have been particularly bad for Group Capt. Newson. The cockpit of a Lancaster bomber was never designed for his six-foot, three-inch frame. Friends say he walked with a slight stoop for the rest of his life.

Once in German airspace, the pain would be replaced by numbing fear. As the Allies stepped up their bombing attacks, Germany beefed up its defences. The industrial heartland of the Ruhr Valley—"Happy Valley" to the airmen who flew missions there—was thick with searchlights, barrage



**With his navigator in Dartmouth in 1941:** *They escorted Atlantic convoys.*

balloons and anti-aircraft guns. Once near the target, the Pathfinder crew had to break away from the main force, making it a prime target for the German guns. On the final bombing approach, the pilot had to stop his evasive zig-zagging and fly straight and low. Germans soon learned that knocking out the scout plane would both reduce the ef-

fectiveness of the raid and wipe out the best Allied aircrews.

According to Pathfinder veterans, the worst fear was "getting coned," or being caught in the apex of a giant cone formed by dozens of searchlights. Anti-aircraft gunners had only to sight up the line of one of the light beams while the pilot, blinded by the



**Commanding at the NORAD desk:** *He had a warm spot for the Salvation Army.*

glare, dove and pitched in a vain attempt to escape. Says Mr. Kercher, who served underneath Wing Commander Newson in the 431st: "It was a rule of thumb that if an anti-aircraft gunner could manage to get off three shots at a single plane, he'd be guaranteed a hit." On top of all this, the aircraft they flew, Wellingtons at first but later Halifaxes and

Lancasters, were sitting ducks for fighter planes.

Few survived their first tour of duty. Fewer still volunteered for a second. Group Capt. Newson completed three tours. It was during his service as a Pathfinder that he was awarded his Distinguished Service Order. The citation states: "The success of a num-

ber of sorties against such heavily defended objectives as Chemnitz and Zweibrücken has been due in no small measure to his work as Master Bomber." Like the other citations, this passage leaves much to the imagination.

Years after the war, Michael Newson was eager to get a fuller picture of what it was like for his father in the war. "Since he would never talk about it, I asked him to give me his old log book," he says. "But when I looked up some of the missions named in his citations all I saw was one line that said something like 'Bombed Zweibrücken. Experienced heavy flak.'" Friends speculate that the heart attack that killed him two weeks ago might have been due in part to the lingering effects of wartime stress.

Group Capt. Newson's war was not all flak and fighters, however. While commanding 405 Pathfinder Squadron in Leeming, England, he met his future wife, Alice. It was the stuff of Hollywood. She was the beautiful widow of a Danish airman and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force flight lieutenant in charge of an entertainment revue. He was the dashing, decorated flyer Michael Newson remembers a story of their courtship: "They had decided to marry as soon as the war ended, but there was a rule that if service people wanted to get married they had to get permission from the command-

ing officer of the base. Dad was CO and he made mom come to his office to ask permission. She played along until he asked her for the full name of her intended. She said she didn't know his middle names and Dad told her she had to find out before he'd grant permission." Fortunately he managed to chase her down and appease her.

Though he rose steadily through the ranks to the near pinnacle of the military elite, the picture that emerges of Brig.-Gen. Newson is not, as one might expect, that of relentless drive and single-minded ambition. His family remembers him as a fun-loving father who always had time for his wife and children. "I remember when my father was with NORAD in Maine," says Michael. "He used to carry around a red phone, a 'hot-line' just like in the movies. One day we were out on the golf course when it rang and I thought 'Oh no, a national emergency.' But it was just Mom calling to tell him to stop by the store on the way home."

His eldest daughter, Janet Maisen, 40, sums up their home life: "A lot of military men run their houses like the military. It was never like that in our house." Mr. Kercher, too, spoke of Brig.-Gen. Newson's ability to switch easily from the icy military reserve essential for a commander to the easy familiarity of friendship. "When he was on duty he was Group Capt. Newson and you'd better respect that. But when there wasn't a job to do he was Bill and the best guy you could ever know."

Group Capt. Newson was not just a hot pilot. In addition to his bravery, each of his medal citations mentions his skill as an administrator and a leader. This fact was not lost on the RCAF command. Immediately after the war he was sent to Staff College in Toronto where he was groomed to enter the senior ranks of the air force. In 1947, he left the Staff College for a posting at Ottawa headquarters, where he was responsible for the peacetime organization of the Air Cadet League of Canada. After two years at HQ he put his flying talents to work as an instructor. His first such post was at the RCAF's main training station in Centralia, Ont. With the outbreak of the Korean War, he began training European and Canadian pilots at the NATO flight school in Trenton, Ont.

In 1954, he was selected for training at the National Defence College in Kingston, Ont., a kind of prep school for generals. At the end of the nine-month program he was elevated to a number of senior administrative posts in France, first as commanding officer of Number One Air Division in Metz, and later as commanding officer of Gros Tenquin Air Base. In 1959 he came back to his hometown to serve as commander of the brand-new air base at Namao, 13 miles north of Edmonton.

He was only at Namao a year, though, before he was asked to return to the RCAF Staff College, this time as commandant. According to his family, the post was largely a protocol position, a reward for past service. But

the respite was short-lived. Three years later he moved another rung up the air force ladder when he was appointed commander of the North American Radar Air Defense (NORAD) 36 Division in Brunswick, Maine. There, he was in charge of the defence of the entire Maritime/New England region. He was also the first Canadian to command a NORAD base on American soil.

In 1968, the armed forces were unified and his rank was changed from the air force rank, air commodore, to its army equivalent, brigadier-general. That year also saw his final posting, Assistant Chief of Staff for Central European Air Operations, Brunssum, The Netherlands. As the second-ranking RCAF officer in Europe he was, according to his resume, "responsible for the planning of the air defense of Central Europe and, if necessary, its air offensive program." He retired on his 55th birthday.

After his retirement he had more time for hunting and fishing but he wasn't content with a life of leisure. In 1976, the Salvation Army asked for his assistance in organizing its Red Shield Appeal. Says Robert Chapman, a boyhood friend and then-chairman of the Salvation Army's advisory board: "Like most former military men Bill had a warm spot in his heart for the [Salvation] Army. He wasn't so much involved in the religious aspect as the social work. He always said that your charity dollar went farther with us than anyone else." In 1987 Brig.-Gen. Newson succeeded Mr. Chapman in the chairmanship of the Army's advisory board, where he remained until he died.

In addition to the Salvation Army, Brig.-Gen. Newson was a member of the Sir Winston Churchill Society, the University of Alberta Senate, and a handful of other veterans' and community organizations. But his most active involvement since his retirement has been with the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame. In 1977 he was asked to take on the job of executive vice-president. From that point until 1984 he wrangled with Edmonton City Hall to have the aviation hall moved from a temporary location in a corner of the courthouse to its current site in the Edmonton Convention Centre.

According to Monte Stout, general manager of the Hall of Fame, Brig.-Gen. Newson was instrumental in transforming the exhibit from a collection of old photos to a repository of knowledge of "the human aspects of aviation." Thanks to Brig.-Gen. Newson, the files of 117 inductees are filled with glowing descriptions of their contributions to flying in Canada. But when he himself was inducted in 1984, his file was conspicuously lacking in laudatory detail. Says Mr. Stout: "He was not one to talk about his honour." Do the job. Give it your best. No big deal.

—Gree Heaton