

THE FREE PRESS PEOPLE

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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2000

PHONE 564-0005

Community NOTEBOOK

► Crafty X-mas schedule

Christmas season craft fair schedule:

- November 11 and 12 starting 10 a.m. both days, the DP Todd Craft Fair is held for the Heritage-Meadow Community Association's school enhancement projects.
- November 18 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., St. Giles Presbyterian Church (15th & Edmonton) holds a bazaar and luncheon.
- November 18 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Salvation Army Community Church holds their Fall Luncheon & Sale at the citadel (777 Ospika Blvd).
- November 19 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Pineview Hall (6470 Bendixon Road) take in the Pineview Christmas Craft Bazaar.
- November 19 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. take in the 14th Annual Ferndale Craft Fair at the Ferndale Hall (3595 Upper Fraser Road). Call Doreen (963-9181) for table info.
- November 25 and 26 starting at 10 a.m. both days, the 15th Annual Christmas Craft Fair at Kelly Road Secondary, sponsored by KRSS Dry Grad and North Nechako Lions Club.
- December 2 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the United Native Nations holds a craft fair at the Native Friendship Centre. Call 562-6555 to book a table.

► Hosts needed for students

Host families are needed for January 2001 to welcome in foreign students coming to Canada through the EF Foundation. Anyone interested should call Raquel at 962-7048.

► Elks celebrate 75

Prince George Elks celebrate their 75th birthday on November 25 with a dinner party. Tickets on sale now at the Elks Club (\$20 each). Entertainment, dinner, presentations and more. Cocktails at 6 p.m., dinner at 7 p.m. Tickets must be purchased by November 15.

► Help with words

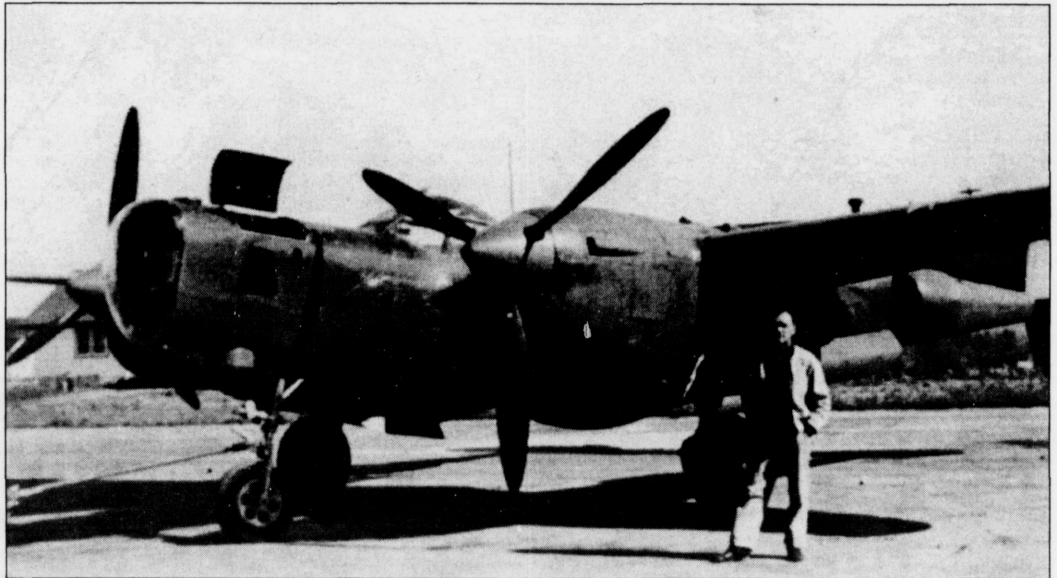
The Prince George Dyslexic Support Society / Learning Difficulties Centre holds their annual general meeting on November 29 at 7:30 p.m. at 144 George Street. Call 564-8011 for further info.

► Help with addiction

Al Anon meets at St. Michael's Anglican Church (5th & Victoria) every Thursday at 7:30 p.m. Use front door, go downstairs.

► Why we live where we live

The PG Housing Coalition has released "Sticks, Straw, Bricks: Why We Live Where We Live", a survey of housing conditions in the city. Compiled by UNBC planning student Jayleen Philips, it is a look into the lives of Prince George people in their very homes. Find it at local book outlets or call 563-6112.



Ray Barrows poses in front of the P-38 Lightning that pilot Frank Pynn would later crash into the cutbanks in 1956 - Prince George's most famous and mysterious plane crash. DICK LAWRENCE PHOTO

... And in the air

Local historian traces PG's roots in WWII's battles of the sky

Up in the sky, in the ether over Europe, citizens of Prince George fought for freedom. When our men and women of the World Wars went to fight, they didn't just disappear into chaos, they were integral cogs in the history machine. None of them speak of it as heroic, none of them regard war as humanity's better moments, not their part in it. But they were there on the front lines, and in the air. A new chapbook by Prince George flight historian Stephen Bathy (the World War II aerial battles he saw above his childhood home in Hungary kindled his fascination with WWII planes) details the lives of four Prince Georgians and their part in World War II's air conflict.

"It only took me 30 years to do it," Stephen laughs. He has been researching planes, air force activities, and pilots themselves for at least that long. The four local airmen he focused on - Jim Lang, Syd Pozer, John Mill and Emil Weinmann - he also conducted several interviews with, and much of the book is in their voices.

"The only one who didn't talk about his war experiences much was John Mill. It took me 20 years to get what little I have in there about him, but I don't blame him. He got hit in the air and it was not a pleasant experience. It must have been very traumatic," Stephen says. The outgoing Jim Lang and Syd Pozer filled in a lot of the holes, he says, and each one has a chapter to themselves complete with bibliographies and a sketch by Stephen, who is a recognized model aircraft expert.

One of the book's triumphs is the story of Emil Weinmann, who was a decorated pilot for the German Luftwaffe. He survived the war and moved to Prince George

in 1957 to take up the same line of work his family had in Europe, in the lumber industry.

"Emil didn't mind to talk about it at all (but) I don't think too many people in town knew he was a night fighter pilot," Stephen says, and tells of a time Emil met a Canadian air force veteran while working out in the local bush. "The other guy was a tail-gunner and after talking about it for a while they came to the conclusion that they were probably in the air on the same night in the same area. Emil's point to me was how wasteful the war was, wasteful of young life. He said to the guy in the bush, look at us now. We can be out here in the bush and talk and be friends and work together, and a few years back we were supposed to kill each other."

The relationships between pilots were close, on both sides of the battle line. They were also recorded very well. The two Luftwaffe pilots who shot Syd Pozer's Wellington airship down came to visit him in the prisoner of war hospital. Jim Lang was shot down in 1942, and 60 years later he got a letter from the Netherlands that historians had tracked down the exact pilot who shot him down, but he had not survived the war. "Jim was actually upset about that - that the guy hadn't lived through the war. He was very sorry to hear that, and it was the guy who shot him down!"

Those stories are intermingled with mundane air force details, personal impressions of the pilots, chronology, and punctuated by the harrowing experiences that turned their ordinary lives into exceptional ones. We've all had bad days at the office. Jim Lang's happened at the end of a nighttime bombing run over Frankfurt. His navigator incorrectly called out the

numbers for the distance home instead of the course home, so their Mosquito Bomber was merrily flying unarmed into the sudden glare of searchlights from the heavily armed Nazi ground forces of the Ruhr Valley! Jim did the only thing he could think of - drop down to rooftop level and run for it. He could see Germans diving for cover thinking the plane was trying to strafe them. They didn't know the "attacking" Mosquito was out of ammo.

"With all hell breaking loose around us," Jim recalls, "I felt for the first time that I really was gonna die...It's hard to relate what that felt like but it seems to be something that is not as terrifying at that point as one would imagine it today."

But it wasn't over for the scrambling Mosquito. They finally got away by pointing the nose of the plane straight up in the sky and flying vertically for about 15 minutes, then arching back across the channel to England where they arrived into the middle of German bombing raid! They had no radio or visual contact with their airfield. They had to put the plane down on a remote airstrip 100 kilometres from base where the personnel thought they were a German attack plane coming in.

And how was your day?

Stephen could hardly write a book about Prince George's World War II flight history without discussing the ill-fated P-38 Lightning piloted by Frank Pynn, who crashed it spectacularly into the cutbanks back in 1956, after several fly-bys of the downtown. It was a mysterious and surreal crash that killed Pynn and his 15-year-old passenger Jimmy Clarke. Stephen knew the story had a place in his book as well. The chapbook is available exclusively through Stephen (call 563-4063) for \$15.

Words Frank Peebles ▲ Photo by Dick Lawrence