

September 2013 Issue 3

CATCA



NEWS



CATCA FINISHES ITS INTERVIEW SERIES WITH ITS LONGEST SERVING MEMBERS. *RALPH JOHNSON, FROM YWG ACC*

1. Why did you decide to become a controller?

From a very young age, I was fascinated with aviation. It was when I was in Grade 10 in 1961 that I came upon a recruiting poster for the 406 Sqn. RCAF Reserve at RCAF Stn. Saskatoon and I jumped at the chance to enter the military and become involved in aviation while still in high school. Through a succession of events over the next 6 years, I became aware of the air traffic control service, made application, was selected and "sworn in" Aug. 19, 1968.

2. If you hadn't been a controller, what would you have done instead?

I would have tried another avenue to be involved with aviation – aero radio, or airline dispatch.

3. Where has been your favourite place to work and why?

I have worked in 3 units, all in the Winnipeg area – AV Tower, WG Tower, WG ACC. I have great memories of each one, but WG ACC has been the longest tenure, and where I have seen the greatest change.

4. Why was CATCA needed?

CATCA gave the air traffic control profession a "voice" in the aviation industry, both in Canada and throughout the world, and fought for the betterment of air traffic controllers.

5. Where do you see the future of air traffic control?

Very much as it is today, with more automation to come.

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Winnipeg Tower

6. Was there a particularly difficult on-the-job instance that comes to mind?

Yes, definitely! I still shudder at the memory of a heavily-laden British Midland B707 departing for EGKK on Rwy18 over the city in the middle of a warm summer night in July 1974 and rotating at the second last runway lights, and not visibly lifting as he passed the threshold lights of Rwy36. I had my hand about 12 inches from the "crash alarm" and was running over the initial actions that I would need to take if that aircraft did not make it. In those years we worked alone on midnights, and I knew that I would need to call down to the ACC, located on the 2nd floor, for someone to come and help in the event of an emergency. Fortunately, he stayed airborne, and when he was about 2 miles off the end of the runway, I flipped the approach lights for Rwy36 "on" to see if they were still intact! Approximately 5 miles out and still low on the horizon, the pilot came on the frequency and said in a voice strained with emotion "Winnipeg Tower, Thanks". I knew what he was referring to – The noise abatement runway that night was Rwy31 (8700' long) but with a light wind from the southwest and his all-up max. weight he needed every foot of concrete available on Rwy18 (11,000' long); indeed, even though "rolling take-offs" were not authorized, when the flight crew radioed "Ready for take-off" while still on the taxi several hundred feet from the runway, I knew what he wanted, so I issued take-off clearance, then listened as full power was applied while still on the taxi! That aircraft had a take-off roll of about 11,500' on a 11,000' runway. I knew at that moment that this was going to be memorable! It is still vivid in my mind!

7. What are the biggest challenges facing air traffic controllers today?

The same as they were years ago – working conditions, labor issues (which impact family life so greatly), and automation (training on new equipment which necessitates new procedures).

8. How does it feel being one of our longest serving members?

Has it been that long, already?! The years have flown by (as evidenced by the myriad of changes in the working environment and my family environment)! When you enjoy what life has brought along, like I have, then the passage of time seems so swift!

9. In your opinion, what is the greatest contribution CATCA has made to the field of air traffic control?

Long before privatization was realized and NAV Canada was established, CATCA began the process of separating the air traffic control service from the federal civil service by passing a resolution at a national convention either in Winnipeg (CATCA 73) or Vancouver (CATCA 75). A working committee to study the proposal was set up, and tasked to report to the membership at the next convention. Obviously, the Federal Government was not interested in the outcome; hence, it took another 2 decades for the privatization of air traffic control to become a reality!

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CATCA continues to expand its social networking reach. Join us and get in touch with members from across the country!

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CATCA **NEWS**

10. What has been the greatest technological advance in the field of air traffic control?

Computerization – NADS, WINS, RAMP, JETS, GAATS, RDPS, CAATS, VSCS, NARDS, IIDS, EXCEEDS, and other platforms supporting these systems.

11. Which conventions did you attend? Any particularly fond memories?

I was at CATCA '73 in Winnipeg, and was a delegate at CATCA '83 in Ottawa. At CATCA '83, Richard Weston, a lawyer from the U.K., was in attendance as a special guest of CATCA and made an honorary lifetime member of CATCA in recognition of his outstanding accomplishment in achieving the release of Gradimir Tasic, the Yugoslav controller from Zagreb ATC, who was imprisoned for the mid-air collision over Vrbovec near Zagreb, Yugoslavia (now Croatia) on Sept. 10, 1976. These horrific events were all detailed in the book *Zagreb One Four: Cleared to Collide?*, written by Richard Weston and Ronald Hurst. Richard Weston went on to become one of the best legal advocates for air traffic controllers in the world. It was an honor to listen to this outstanding authority on legal issues in aviation, and to be present at this award!

12. What committees were you involved in? Did you ever take part in the bargaining process?

I served as WG Branch Vice-Chairman for one term, and during that time I also assumed the duties of both WG Branch Chairman and Central Region Director for a period in 1983 when the incumbents withdrew from their positions because of career promotions. I was never on the bargaining committee, but during this time the CATCA Board of Directors began the process of acquiring a building for the National Office.

13. What advice do you have for future members?


Be involved - learn what has been accomplished in the past and build upon that for the future benefit of controllers that will follow in your footsteps.


14. What advice do you have for someone interested in pursuing a career as a controller?

By all means, check into it! If you have the aptitude and motivation, and have an underlying interest in the aviation industry, then pursue your ambition! For the right individual, it is a rewarding career!


Congratulations to the Pacific, Central, and St-Laurent RVPs

Elections were held in June for the Pacific, Central and St-Laurent Regional Vice President positions. Scott Shields was acclaimed to the position of Pacific RVP and Peter Duffey was acclaimed to the position of Central RVP. Eric Vezina of Montreal ACC was elected RVP for the St-Laurent region. Congratulations to Scott, Peter, and Eric. We wish you all the best during your terms.

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Update from the YCC



The New NAV Canada Pension Plan

As a result of our recent arbitration ruling, new CATCA employees hired after January 1, 2014 will be placed in what is today referred to as the Option 'B' Pension. Many people may know of its existence, or have some broad stroke knowledge about the plan. Here are a few more details about Option B.

Option B, like today's plan, is a defined benefit pension. The pension benefit is based on an average of your best five consecutive years of earnings. Where today's legacy plan pays 2%, the pension benefit in Option B pays 1.1% per year of service. For example, if you work 35 years pensionable time, Option B pays you 38.5% of your best five year average.

One major difference with the Option B pension plan is that the employee makes zero contributions. While Option B pension members will have a greater responsibility to save money outside of the pension plan for their retirement, they also take home the 9.5% that current legacy plan members have deducted from their pay.

Another major difference is indexing of the plan. In retirement, Option B plan members have their pension indexed on an ad-hoc basis. That indexation has to be approved by the NAV Canada Board of Directors.

There are other small changes as well, such

as the calculation of unreduced pension age, early retirement reduction, and survivor pensions that are best left to be explained by your pension advisor. NAV Canada holds pension seminars every year in many cities and after 10 years of service, employees and their spouses are welcome to attend for free. Time off is the responsibility of the member. These are not limited to members whose retirement is imminent. This information is valuable for people to plan well in advance and can make the burden of saving and investing less severe. Feedback from members who have attended these seminars has been excellent and they are well worth attending.

For more information on your pension, please read the annual Pension Plan reports, your Total Compensation Statement, or consult your pay and benefits specialist.

