



# The Probe

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## Vintage Wings

A year ago, **Charlotte Gray** told us about Alexander Graham Bell's experiment with flight at Kittyhawk, Nova Scotia. In January, one of the *Vintage Wings* **Michael Potter** talked about was the P-40 Kittyhawk.



*Michael Potter descending from his Spitfire*

Michael has turned a hobby into a foundation and created a vibrant museum of WW II aircraft. He gave us a rundown on all the planes owned by the *Vintage Wings* Foundation illustrated with photographs of the machines - most of them in flight. The affection he has for these aircraft was obvious throughout his talk. His basic philosophy is that a static exhibition is just not enough and it is necessary to fly the machines to know them and to understand more about the men who flew them in

### **PROBUS' Vital Purpose ...**

**To stimulate thought, interest and participation in activities at a time in life when it is easy to become complacent and self-centred.**

wartime. He spoke of the Spitfire Mk XVI being 'like a sports car'. He described the Mustang Mk IV as the finest fighter of WW II but which has vicious stall characteristics. In a stall test he took 4000 ft to recover. An experienced Mustang pilot then showed him how to do it in 200 ft! That kind of knowledge which will be lost if the planes do not keep flying. His personal favourite is a Harvard Mk 4 trainer which is great for aerobatics - a view endorsed by his 9 year old who loved being in the plane when it was put through its paces.

One of the regular displays which can be seen over Ottawa is the Battle of Britain anniversary every September. One of the great pleasures is to have veterans sitting in the planes they flew in wartime.

*Vintage Wings* operates out of a hangar in Gatineau. It has a small permanent staff and a corps of about 90 volunteers. They are always looking for more people to work at displays as well as on the aircraft.

**Wib Neal**, an RCAF veteran, introduced Michael. In offering our thanks, George Toller commented on the memories it brought back for all of us. It was also a reminder that flying is not just sitting in a bus with wings complaining about the food.

## Meet the Prez

Wib Neal joined Probus in October 2003, became Vice-president early last year and was elected President last November. We caught up with him at a recent Management Committee meeting.

*Probe: Wib, let's start with the basics, where are you from and what is Wib short for?*

WN: 'Wib' is for Wilbert. I was born and raised in Essex County in South-western Ontario.

*Probe: We know you are ex-RCAF, tell us about your career.*

WN: I joined the RCAF in 1951 from High School. Over the next 32 years I had two tours with NATO in Europe, a UN tour in Egypt and assignments at several bases in Canada - Greenwood, North Bay, Downsview, Bagotville and Moose Jaw.

*Probe: Tell us about your European tours.*

WN: From 1955 to 1957 I was in 421 Squadron, 2 Wing

**The President - Wib Neal** *(continued)*

in Grostenquin, France and from 1964 to 1969 I was in Marville, France, and Lahr, Germany, with 109 Communications Flight. The year in Egypt was with the United Nations in 119 Transport Flight.

*Probe: Is this the time to ask about family?*

WN: I met and married my wonderful wife, Edeltraud during my second NATO tour. Then we were stationed in Moose Jaw for seven years where she gave me two fine boys - Derek is currently a Professor at Nipissing University and Alan is host on two CBC radio programs here in Ottawa.

*Probe: When did you move to Ottawa?*

WN: In 1975. I was transferred to Air Force HQ here and completed my career in 1983.

*Probe: You were still a young man. What came next?*

WN: After the military I stayed with DND as Quality Assurance Manager - Eastern Ontario with the Directorate of Quality Assurance. One of my last big jobs was to do a quality and environmental audit of the old DEW line in Canada's north. I retired again in 2004.

*Probe: What do you do now to keep busy?*

WN: Hobbies did include flying - as a private pilot - golf, skiing, curling and radio controlled aircraft. I volunteer at the Canadian Aviation Museum and with several other organizations and participate at veterans gatherings several times a year. I also have a passion for reading about military history. I am a trustee with Dominion Chalmers United Church and a member of the Air Force Association - and, of course, Probus.

*Probe: Well, we are very pleased about the latter and hope that you will continue to contribute for many years to come. Thank you.*

**Spring Luncheon 2009****Join our Organizing Committee!**

I know that many of us are looking forward to Brockville's Spring Social this May 28<sup>th</sup> that brings together members from 26 Probus clubs in eastern Ontario. Did you realize that we will be hosting this event in Ottawa next year, Tues., May 26, 2009 to be exact? It's true and we are now in the process of deciding the location, menu and cost for this event. That's the easy part. We will need to have our club members assist in Publicity & Communications, Venue Decorations, Entertainment & Door Prizes, Registration and Greeting Hosts. If you've had experience or think you could contribute in any of these areas, please let any member of your club's management committee know. Sub-committee work will begin in earnest in Jan 2009 but we need to know now who is willing to help make the Probus Spring Gathering of 2009 a great success. I look forward to hearing from you!

Thanks!

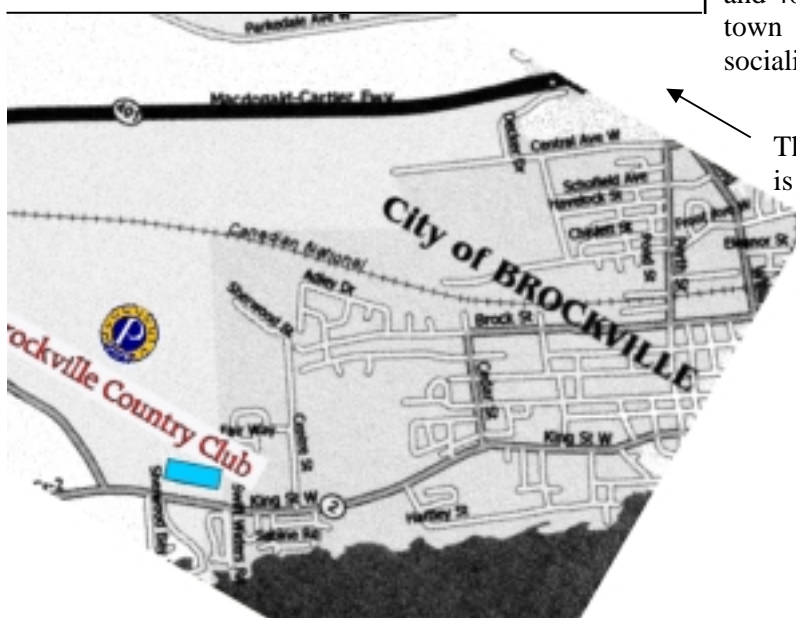
**Ed Borza**

**A visit to Brockville**

Wib Neal and Ed Borza visited the 2008 Brockville Organizing Committee and came away with useful information for our club to build on when we host the 2009 luncheon and a sense that the Brockville event is going to be a good one!

**Spring Luncheon - 2008**

If you are going to join your fellow Probeans and Sir John A. Macdonald at the Spring Luncheon in Brockville, it's a pleasant hour's drive via Highways 416 and 401. Allow a little more time to navigate through the town but if you are early, 'So What! More time to socialize.



The exit from Hwy. 401 at the 1000 Islands Mall is at this corner of the map.

Take Stewart Street south, turn right onto Central Avenue West then left onto Perth Street. After the railroad tracks, the next main street is Brock, turn right. At Cedar Street, turn left then right on King Street West to the Country Club.

Alternatively, continue on Stewart south to King in the heart of downtown.



**Ducks Unlimited Canada**  
Conserving Canada's Wetlands

## Barry Turner

Barry Turner was brought up in this area and started out by asking if anyone knew what was on this site before the church. That was easy meat for a Probus group and the answer came quickly - a vegetable garden - which merited the first of three prizes he handed out. Getting into his talk on the importance of wetlands conservancy he surprised most people by telling us that Ducks Unlimited has 400 staff and a budget of \$80 million in Canada and half as much again in the US.

The organization was started over 70 years ago by hunters with a keen interest in conservation. Initially its thrust was physically reclaiming wetlands with back hoes and bulldozers but in the 60's it moved to a more scientific approach. Over the same time there has been a shift in priorities from wildlife towards ecology.

Wetlands are, generally speaking, the riparian areas adjacent to bodies of water - bogs, fens, marshes, lakes and swamps. Their importance is as a natural water filter and carbon absorber as well acting as a climate modifier and buffer against drought. Where they are allowed to exist they can provide a buffer against flooding. Building on the 'buffer zone' was a major contributor to the Katrina disaster in New Orleans.

Forested wetlands are important to waterfowl, including scoters, scaup, loons, whooping cranes and trumpeter swans.

Barry used some examples from Alberta whose wetlands are home to 21 rare plant species, 214 bird species (13 endangered), 16 mammal species (3 endangered) and 61 fish species (4 endangered). He quoted some alarming statistics on the amount of wetlands being lost to development.

There were many question at the end of his talk. *What is the value of the beaver?* Ducks love them, farmers hate them. They are 'friends' of Ducks Unlimited and, on balance, they are providing a service. *How can we convince farmers to stop draining when crop prices are so high?* They are thinking short term. There are some incentives to landowners, although the emphasis on ethanol is causing more crops to be planted. *Is there an ecological balance - I don't see it?* Environment Canada does not have any jurisdictional responsibility but they try to balance rules and regulations with the economy. *What is the situation of the 'Mer Bleu'?* The 'Mer Bleu' is protected but we need to think about its surroundings

to continue to protect it. *What is Mexico doing?* Not a lot. *How does Ducks Unlimited work?* We try to work with people. We are not a confrontational group - we don't take to the streets. Our approach is to educate and persuade. *Geese?* The goose population has shifted from rural areas to the cities where they are a pest. There are too many geese and the hunting quota is too low.

In introducing Barry, **Joyce Wright** referred to the time he was the Member of Parliament for this area and to his work as a game warden in Africa. **John Wright** thanked him and presented the Probus pen.

## May 28th - Dr Lilly Koltun

The Portrait Gallery of Canada has its focus on portraits of people from all walks of life who have contributed and who continue to contribute to the development of Canada. The Gallery has been in the news recently not for the portraits but for the controversy over where it should be housed.

Dr. Lilly Koltun is the Director General of the Gallery and we have asked her to tell us about the collection - perhaps not all the collection, there are 20,000 paintings, drawings and prints, 4 million photographs, several thousand caricatures, and ten thousand medals and philatelic items!

## June 25th - Patrick McGahern

Browsing through 783 Bank Street is one of Ottawa's little pleasures. I found some fascinating 'high-tech' text books which were old when I was in school and two novels by an author I had not read since my teens - now I know why!

Patrick McGahern has owned and operated this book store since 1969. While he has a full range of old and antiquarian books it is evident that his specialty is Irish history. Doubtless that will get a mention when he talks to us about his work and his vocation.

## Probus Web Site

[www.probus.org/canada.htm](http://www.probus.org/canada.htm) will take you to the Canada pages of the Probus web site. You can find information on the history and organization of Probus, a listing of clubs - ours includes our latest newsletter - full information on Rendezvous 2008, the Probus Song and much more.

The club directory is particularly useful if you are going travelling and want to visit a Club at your destination. If you are going overseas drop the 'canada.htm' to get to the international site - [www.probus.org](http://www.probus.org)



## Poetry Corner

Just in case you have not had your fill of the white stuff, **Martin Wickham**, a sometime guest, offers Archibald Lampman's (1861-1899) view of it.

### Snow

White are the far-off plains, and white  
The fading forests grow;  
The wind dies out along the height,  
And denser still the snow,  
A gathering weight on roof and tree,  
Falls down scarce audibly.

The road before me smoothes and fills  
Apace, and all about  
The fences dwindle, and the hills  
Are blotted slowly out;  
The naked trees loom spectrally  
Into the dim white sky.

The meadows and far-sheeted streams  
Lie still without a sound;  
Like some soft minister of dreams  
The snow-fall hoods me round;  
In wood and water, earth and air,  
A silence everywhere.

Save when at lonely intervals  
Some farmer's sleigh urged on,  
With rustling runners and sharp bells,  
Swings by me and is gone;  
Or from the empty waste I hear  
A sound remote and clear;

The barking of a dog, or call  
To cattle, sharply pealed,  
Borne echoing from some wayside stall  
Or barnyard far afield;  
Then all is silent, and the snow  
Falls, settling soft and slow.

The evening deepens, and the gray  
Folds closer earth and sky;  
The world seems shrouded far away;  
Its noises sleep, and I,  
As secret as yon buried stream,  
Plod dumbly on, and dream.

## How to find us

We meet on the 4th Wednesday of each month except December (2nd Wednesday) in the Hall of Pleasant Park Baptist Church, 414 Pleasant Park Road in Alta Vista.

Our meetings start at 10 but members begin to arrive soon after 9:30 for coffee and chat. Try it - you'll like it!



Included with this copy of *The Probe* is a registration form for Rendezvous 2008. More details are posted on our notice board and we will add to them as more information comes in.

If you are thinking of going, please let the organizers know as early as possible so they have firm numbers with which to plan the events. It is advisable to book your hotel as soon as you can.

## Chair Men & Women

Thanks to all members who responded to our request for help in stacking the chairs. One word of caution - gray chairs and brown chairs do not mix. If they are stacked together they jam and are hard to get apart.

## Russ's Travels

Our President-Emeritus Russ Hammond has been travelling - and keeping late hours! While in Florida he stayed up to watch a shuttle launch at 2:18 am. When we spoke to him some weeks later he was still bubbling over at the experience. Ask him to describe it.

Russ also gave us a copy of the March newsletter for the Probus Club of Greater Moncton. They are clearly enthusiastic about Rendezvous 2008 - "It also provides us the opportunity to be hospitable and show those from other provinces what a beautiful Province New Brunswick is."

The newsletter gives some *Kids Quotes*.

Q: Name the four seasons.

A: Salt, pepper, mustard, vinegar.

Q: Explain the process by which water can be made safe to drink.

A: Flittation makes water safe to drink because it removes large pollutants like grit, sand, dead sheep and canoeists.

I was always taught to respect my elders but it keeps getting harder to find one.