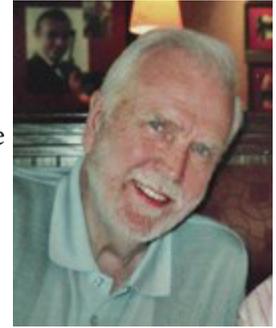


Aero Tribute - William J. "Bill" Wheeler

In late January the Chapter was notified with the sad news that **William J. "Bill" Wheeler** had passed away on January 21, 2020. In 1962 Bill was the one of the original founders of the Canadian Aviation Historical Society (CAHS # 05L). He proudly displayed his membership number on his car's licence plate. Bill was a native of Port Arthur (Thunder Bay) and started his higher education path as a graduate of The Ontario College of Art. He later completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of Toronto. Bill's lifelong interest in aviation began as a boy watching the very active floatplane arrivals and departures at Port Arthur Harbour. This time period was still within the "Romance of Aviation" and really contributed to Bill's passion for "Bush Flying". WWII presented a further inspiration to Bill as he bicycled out to the Fort William Airport to watch the "Yellow Birds" of the BCATP going through their paces.



After graduation from College, Bill worked as a freelance Illustrator during the early 1960s with assignments from de Havilland, Toronto Star Weekly and various others, doing mostly aircraft and ship illustrations. In 1958 he had his first contract with a book publisher, MacMillan of Canada. This assignment was for the illustrations of WWI Canadian aviators in the book titled: "Knights of the Air: Canadian Aces of World War I". This would not be his last connection with book publishing. Bill's attention then turned to the academic field when he joined the Scarborough Board of Education (Now Toronto) as an Art teacher. He would teach for 28 years, serving as head of the Art Department of West Hill Collegiate, retiring from teaching in 1994. Retirement allowed Bill to spend more on CAHS activities, foremost as the volunteer editor of "CAHS Journal". A publication that Bill, as editor over a 45 Year period, would take it from a hand-assembled stapled production to a world-class aviation history journal with a Canadian perspective.

Bill's excellent skills and experience in art production and his never-ending interest in aviation history were prime in the creation of such a publication. In his 45 years as editor, he published 180 editions of the "CAHS Journal", growing the Journal to a readership spanning Canada, extending into the United States, the United Kingdom and beyond. From the early beginnings of the CAHS it was evident that a central figure was needed to create and publish a journal that would be worthy to be recognized by the world aviation community. Bill Wheeler was that person. Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame (CAHF) recognized Bill's achievements by inducting him in 2011. Files from CAHF/ CAHS/ Toronto Star

Celebration of Life for Bill Wheeler

By Gord McNulty

Family and friends gathered at St. Andrew's United Church in Markham on February 6 to celebrate the life of Bill Wheeler. CAHS colleagues included Robert Bradford, CAHS Patron, who was given a ride to the service by Robert Galway; Gord McNulty; and Roger Slauenwhite. Toronto Chapter President Sheldon Benner regretted he could not attend on account of illness but Sheldon, Larry Milberry, Paul Hayes and Tom Nettleton visited the funeral home on February 5.

Eulogies were led by Ted Spence, cousin of Bill's wife, Pat. Ted visited Bill every day he was in the hospital until he passed away on January 21 and recalled many fond memories. Ted noted Bill brought his ever-present sketchbooks to the hospital and shared his many interests conversing with hospital staff. He remembered multi-talented Bill as a man of imposing stature who was an exceptional observer and storyteller. "He always remembered the names of everyone he met," Ted recalled, noting Bill took great interest in the students he taught as Head of the Art Department at West Hill Collegiate Institute for 28 years. As Ted said, Bill had so many positive experiences to draw upon in reflecting on the long life he enjoyed and the perfect match he had with Pat.

Bill's eldest son, Doug, recalled how his father developed a mellow personality over the years. He emphasized Bill's interest in the environment and how he didn't like to see anything go to waste. "He couldn't get enough of the compost heap," Doug said. Bill's son, Chris, described Bill as an inspiration to his students.

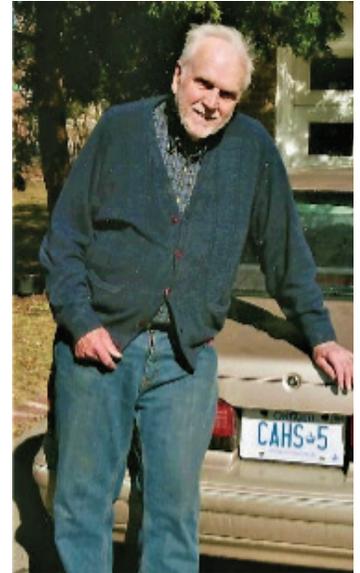
The eulogists recalled how Bill appreciated nature, the great outdoors and camping in addition to his outstanding volunteer contributions as original editor of the CAHS Journal, community service on the local Architectural Conservancy advisory committee and more. He canoed both the Nahanni River in the Yukon and the Stikine River in northern B.C. Bill's granddaughters, Elizabeth and Katelyn, also shared warm reflections at the service, officiated by Rev. Katherine Selby. Everyone enjoyed a reception and sharing memories of Bill's remarkable life and achievements in the church hall after the service.

Remembering Bill Wheeler (Edited for Flypast)

By John Chalmers

CAHS Membership Secretary

Bill was a talented artist, writer and editor, and through his work for the CAHS, Bill came to know personally many important Canadian aviators through publishing their stories. Born November 19, 1931, Bill passed away at Markham – Stouffville Hospital on January 21, 2020 at the age of 88. In an article published in the *Markham Economist & Sun* in 2011, the year Bill was inducted as a member of Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame for his contribution in editing and publishing the *Journal*, CAHS vice-president Gord McNulty wrote, "Wheeler's unassuming nature belies his many accomplishments as a teacher, artist, author and encyclopedic aviation historian. His home is a virtual art gallery of fine renditions of aircraft in flight and albums of illustrations he drew for high-profile clients."



As an author, Bill published four other books about aviation: *Images of Flight*, *Skippers of the Sky*, *Flying Under Fire-Volume One* and *Flying Under Fire-Volume Two*. While at the Ontario College of Art, Bill met fellow student, Pat, whom he married, and later raising a family throughout a long-lasting marriage. Bill was predeceased by son, Donald, and is survived by Pat and sons Douglas and Christopher. Proud of his association with CAHS, Bill had his membership number produced on a custom Ontario licence plate. Bill will be remembered and honoured through the awarding of the CAHS William J. Wheeler Volunteer Service Award.

