

The Tribute

Winter 2021

By John Argue, Chair AFMSA

Hopefully, all of our AFMSA members and volunteers have enjoyed the opportunity to share a joyous Christmas holiday with as many family members as possible in keeping with the restrictions imposed by the Alberta Health emergency in relation to the COVID 19 pandemic. Additionally, I would also like to take this occasion, on behalf of all the AFMSA Board of Directors, to wish our members and volunteers a healthy, safe, happy and prosperous New Year.

It might be safe to proclaim that this last year was one for the record books (not necessarily in a good way) and placing 2020 in our rear view mirror is probably welcomed by all. Although 2021 offers no guarantees of being any better, at least, we can be optimistic and now point to numerous virus vaccines being distributed, improved therapeutic medicines with greater effectiveness and a much broader knowledge base from which to gain the upper hand on this disease. Our health care professionals, first responders, essential workers and all those who stood on the front lines protecting and serving Canada and its citizens are truly heroes. Bravo Zulu to all and thank you.

This past year has been truly difficult; for some of us, we may have family, friends, colleagues and or neighbors that have been grievously harmed by this virus. For others, businesses may have been jeopardized or closed, jobs lost, or employment opportunities sidetracked. Many have witnessed their children or grandchildren face the challenges of circumnavigating a virtual education system or seeing their athletic or artistic pursuits indefinitely postponed. For all of us, even our (somewhat taken for granted) daily routines, from simply gathering socially with our cherished loved ones, to accessing normal health care services, working, shopping, exercising, travelling, getting a haircut, going to a favourite restaurant or attending any entertainment venues have often been curtailed. And yet, we have all adapted and prevailed to the best of our abilities.

The RCAF in 2020 has also suffered a very challenging year from dealing with the fallout of the pandemic that has potentially disrupted operational readiness & training, but most importantly and obviously distressing, is the loss of two aircraft in separate accidents that lead to the death of several Canadian Armed Forces personnel.

In April 2020, one of Canada's newest helicopters, a CH 148 Cyclone was lost off the coast of Greece during a NATO "Operation Reassurance" training exercise, with all crew members perishing in the accident.

Introducing the new AFMSA Chairman, John Argue

Major (Ret'd) John Argue served over 25 years in the RCAF with over 2000 hours in CF-18 Hornets and nearly 1000 hours in RNLA F-16 Falcons while on Exchange in the Netherlands. He conducted armed Stabilization Force (SFOR) missions over the Former Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) during NATO Operation Deliberate Guard 1996-1998. John flew Combat Ops during NATO Operation Allied Force Kosovo (Serbia) 1999 and flew armed Defence of North America post 9/11 during NORAD Operation Noble Eagle, 2001-2004.

John and his wife Elisa have been married for over 30 years, they have one son Bryn and have resided in Calgary since 2014.



The Directors & Staff (<https://www.rcaf.museum/>)

Ken Lett, Honourary Director

John Argue, Chairman of the Board of Directors,
volunteer@rcaf.museum

Don Matthews, Deputy Chairman

Michelle Gerwing, Secretary

Jim Powell, Treasurer

Ed McGillivray, Vice Chairman (fund raising)

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Michael Ricketts, Director (at large)
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Gerry Morrison, Director (at large)

Kenn Nixon, Director (casino coordinator)

Bob Wade, Director (exhibit committee)
b_wade@hotmail.com

Marty Doyle, Manager (facilities)

Chair's update – Contd.

- Capt. Brenden Ian MacDonald from New Glasgow, N.S.
- Capt. Kevin Hagen from Nanaimo, B.C.
- Capt. Maxime Miron-Morin, from Trois-Rivieres, Que.
- Sub-Lt. Abigail Cowbrough of Nova Scotia.
- Sub-Lt. Matthew Pyke from Truro, N.S.
- MCpl. Matthew Cousins from Guelph, Ont

In May 2020, a Snowbird CT-114 Tutor aircraft involved in "Operation Inspiration" crashed shortly after takeoff from Kamloops, B.C. killing the 431 Squadron Public Affairs officer and seriously injuring the pilot.

- Capt. Jennifer Casey, Halifax NS (killed).
- Capt. Richard MacDougall, (Injured).

To the families, their squadron mates and to all CAF service personnel, we offer our sincerest condolences. May they rest in peace and may we always remember them.

To the best information available to me, we have been very fortunate within our AFMSA membership and volunteer cadre in that we have had no reports of anyone being seriously harmed by COVID 19. For this, we can be grateful. However, I must regrettably share with all of you the passing of a long standing AFMSA member. Mr. Jim Kulak (1931- 2020) passed away on 13 June 2020. Jim can be remembered for his passion of all things aviation related and was instrumental in the restoration of our Cold War Exhibit F-86 Sabre, CF-104 Starfighter and the CF-5 Freedom Fighter display that is pedestalled in front of The Military Museum (TMM). Although Jim's passing is not COVID 19 related, the impact of the restrictions and mandatory mitigation efforts precluded us from joining with Jim's family to participate in a celebration of Jim's life. We hope that, in the near future, we will be able to gather together to offer our condolences to the family and for those who knew Jim well, to share stories of his vast exploits. Jim, may you always have blue skies and tail winds at your back.

This past year has been a transitional one for AFMSA. Even though we have been closed to all volunteer participation for a total of 5 of the last 12 months (still closed until at least end January 2021) we have still carried out as much AFMSA business as possible in preparation for our future.

In December 2019, AFMSA Director Bob Wade and his team

presented to the AFMSA Board of Directors a strategic master plan for an estimated \$2.5 million, five year, Cold War Exhibit expansion. The Board selected the course of action to be taken and approved this master plan. In January 2020 the CWE expansion team was off and running conducting all the initial detailed leg work regarding potential land acquisition, fine design/costing of the facility and identifying potential major a/c exhibits. For those of us with previous military experience, we can attest that no plan ever survives fist contact with the enemy. In this case, the pandemic was the enemy which hampered our activities significantly with respect to lost time, projected increases in possible expenses, while also cautiously warning of the challenges we may face in our fund raising goals. In the next month we are going to make minor revisions to the master plan, present it to the AFMSA Board and hopefully re-establish full support for the CWE expansion project.



Jim Kulak (1931- 2020) Dave Lowery photo.

In our next quarterly AFMSA newsletter (circa April 2021), I hope that we can present to the membership the details of the new master plan and the expansion teams' phased plan. More to follow.

The TMM Air Force Gallery and Cold War Exhibit have now introduced "numbered audio stations" at numerous exhibits located throughout our two facilities. Through access via an app which can be downloaded onto your mobile phone at the Google Play Store or the Apple equivalent, visitors can now have an audio story to follow at any time. I would like to thank Director Kenn Nixon and all of his team for spearheading this app audio project and the provision of this significant educational tool that promotes our RCAF history and heritage.

Our AFMSA website found at <https://www.rcaf.museum/visit/virtual-tour> contains our longstanding current virtual tour (VT) and we now recognize the massive reach that these VT's can provide. Therefore, in conjunction with Valor Canada, we will now be pursuing a Valor Canada produced VT that will be available on their website. This VT will obviously give us a much greater reach and significant national exposure. Our Curator, Ms. Alison Mercer, has done outstanding work this past year maintaining all of our exhibits, building temporary displays for TMM, researching, securing and restoring numerous Air Force related artefacts, but now Alison can add the VT's to her portfolio. Thank you Alison & Mara for all that you do and naturally to our IT consultant Mr. Ian Watson who always keeps our websites, computers and projectors up and running.

On 01 July 2020, after a three and a half month closure due to COVID 19, TMM opened its doors again to the public and significant mitigation efforts needed to be reviewed and implemented by our team before our AFMSA venues could be made accessible. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Facilities Manager, Mr. Marty Doyle and Director Dave Lowery for their assistance in getting us up and running again.

July 2020 also saw our AFMA Commanding Officer LCol Jonathon Pilon posted from 1 AMS Cold Lake to Ottawa. Thank you Jonathon for all your support and all that you have done for us these last three years. Replacing LCol Pilon, is LCol Philippe Gibeau and we welcome Philippe and look forward to the day when we can finally meet face to face after this pandemic has abated.

In Sept 2020 our support to the RCAF Association 783 Wing's normal Battle of Britain ceremony was unfortunately curtailed and was ultimately delivered in a virtual format. We hope to see a return to a more in person commemoration in 2021.

Additionally, our normally held June AFMSA Annual General Meeting (AGM) was postponed to September 2020 to allow for an in person meeting. This AGM was, with some simple mitigation efforts, successfully achieved. First and foremost, at this AGM our longstanding AFMSA Chairman Mr. Don Matthews announced that he would be stepping down. Don's significant and superb nine years of leading this organization is very evident in our outstanding reputation, not only within the RCAF, with other service stakeholders at TMM, but also with the community at large and across Canada through the vast number of organizations that we routinely share cooperative efforts. I was honoured and humbled that Don nominated me to replace him

as the new Chair and trying to fill his very experienced shoes will not be an easy task. Fortunately, Don has seen fit to remain on the Board as our Deputy Chairman and will be mentoring me going forward. A future occasion for our AFMSA membership and volunteers to come together socially and express our appreciation for Don's efforts will be conducted as soon as we can do so safely and considerately to his long standing service.

The Sept 2020 AGM also featured several of our Directors up for re-election. All were prepared and happy to continue serving in their current AFMSA Board Director positions and all were overwhelmingly approved by our membership. Going forward, our AFMSA Board sees very little movement other than a change of Chair and for that we will enjoy the continuity of the vast experience and expertise this Board can provide well into the future.

I am also very pleased to report to our membership that as of Sept 2020 our AFMSA is in a solid financial position. This is a testament to the fine sharp pencil work of our Treasurer Mr. Jim Powell and assisted by Director Gerry Morrison. Also noteworthy is the continued diligent work of all our various fund raising committees, lead by Vice Chair Ed McGillivray, Director Gord Todd and Director Kenn Nixon. Most importantly I wish to thank all of the donors and AFMSA members whose continued benevolence and lasting support are pivotal to the AFMSA mission. I must note with some caution, that it would not be unrealistic to expect that our future expenses could rise (carbon taxes etc) while access to fund raising dollars could become more competitive. We need to be mindful of these potential realities and always, as expected, remain fiscally vigilant.

In November 2020, AFMSA attended a reduced Remembrance Day ceremony at TMM and we then hosted public tours of our facilities in a controlled (by TMM) appointment only manner. Naturally, we experienced a much smaller number of patrons than usual and we hope that next year we can return to our normal well attended Remembrance Day ceremonies.

Immediately following the 11 November visits, the AFMSA Board of Directors unanimously agreed to close our facilities to volunteer participation due to the significant rise of COVID case numbers in Calgary. TMM would follow suit, closing three weeks later as a result of the Alberta Health Emergency directives. Of note, we are currently still under this closure order and I hope to see us reopening within the next few weeks/months, fingers crossed. Also, as part of all these closures our usual highly anticipated AFMSA and TMM volunteer Christmas parties were unfortunately required to be cancelled. However, even throughout this latest closure period, we have still had a volunteer team of Gary Watson and Phil Conroy working on the refurbishment of a North Bay air weapons controller radar console and the CF-18 lighting project. A future quarterly AFMSA newsletter (this year), will provide an update on all of their respective project work. (Please see pictures included.)

Finally, in November 2020, the AFMSA Board of Directors, on behalf of the Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) and the CEO of Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare System (CFMWS), had the opportunity to personally present awards of recognition to two of our very deserving Directors.



Panel lights from the radar console being worked on at Gary Watson's desk. All the wires had been cut so Gary rewired it for a new power supply . . . among other things. Gary Watson photo.

Mr. Don Matthews was recognized nationally by the Minister VAC for his long standing and continued volunteer support to numerous community service efforts.

Mr. Jim Powell received the CAF Museums Volunteer Recognition Award. This award is presented each year to only one recipient who is selected from across Canada in their service to CAF Museum entities.

Congratulations Don and Jim for your outstanding service. (Please see pictures included.)

In closing, I would like to thank all of our volunteers for your efforts this year, your cooperation/understanding with the implementation of the imposed mitigation efforts and your patience throughout all of these closure periods. Our volunteers are the cornerstone of what we do in the AFMSA and we look forward to the day when we can all return to meeting our public face to face without the need for social distancing, masks and other COVID related restrictions. In a world that finds itself in somewhat polarising ideological times and as we begin to emerge from the pandemic, Canadians of all walks of life might be seeking to reconnect with those value systems, its people and organizations that have historically bound us close together as proud Canadians. In our own small way, but in an intrinsically significant way, we at AFMSA can play a role in our national recovery through the sharing of our RCAF history and heritage and the service and sacrifice of our fellow Canadians both past and present.

For the New Year, I will borrow a simple but appropriate one word toast from our French brethren.

Santé, John.



Don Matthews (left) was recognized nationally by the Minister VAC for his long standing and continued volunteer support to numerous community service efforts. Dave Lowery photo.



Jim Powell (left) receiving the CAF Museums Volunteer Recognition Award. Dave Lowery photo.