

The Tribute

By John Argue, Chair AFMSA

Chairman's update

Winter 2025

Happy belated New Year with best wishes to all and a welcome to our first edition of *The Tribute* Air Force Museum Society of Alberta (AFMSA) quarterly magazine for 2025.

Before launching into our plans for 2025, it would be worthwhile to give you a brief synopsis of this past year for the AFMA/AFMSA.

BLUF: Bottom-line upfront, we achieved some great milestones this past year, but unfortunately suffered some lows that have (in some cases) already been captured in previous reads.

On a very positive front, the Cold War Exhibit expansion

project is finally out of planning stages as we enjoyed a successful execution and full completion of the phase one concrete installation on TMM grounds. This over \$2 million phase one includes the full engineering work and concrete pour with incorporated hydronic piping for eventual future heating of the new and current facilities (hence the large cost). Additionally, Gord Todd and team brought in the last (of three) major aircraft exhibits to fill the new expansion. In fact, we brought in two complete CF-100's (although in a dissembled state-puzzle pieces) which will be ultimately recrafted to create one museum quality exhibit. Thanks to Bob Wade, Bob Perry, Gord Todd and all of your team members in spearheading and delivering these fantastic efforts.

Not to be outdone, the RCAF 100-year anniversary team, lead by Kenn Nixon, created numerous celebratory/memorial events that reflected, in part, on Calgary and the surrounding areas contribution to the RCAF over this last century of our existence. Notably, the composition of Kenn's team included several members from the AFMSA, the Hangar Flight Museum, 783 Wing RCAFA, Nanton Bomber Command Museum, the local RCAC units, and the Canadian Legion. This aptly demonstrated the breadth of cooperation that currently exists amongst the numerous and varied organizations that support our RCAF here in Calgary and Southern Alberta. Lastly and most importantly, Canadians of all walks of life within our communities have been provided the opportunity to

experience and learn about the history and heritage of the RCAF. To Kenn and your team of volunteers, we pass along our sincere appreciation for all that you have accomplished in this endeavour. Thank you!

As usual, our volunteers at AFMSA have continued to be the envy of all the other museums within TMM. Not only in sheer "number" quantity of our docents, but truly in the quality of the product that we deliver on a daily basis to the visiting public. Numerous accolades, letters and on-line testimonials routinely are sent directly to me by TMM staff and other organizations,

commenting on our volunteers' dedication to the Air Force Gallery and CWE via their in depth interaction with the patrons. To all our volunteers, a huge thank you for your service in 2024 and we hope to grow and expand our operation further in 2025.

The low points for 2024 are in the passing of several of our volunteers, members and our CWE visionary and main benefactor. Colin Catley, Glenys Goosens, Paul Tobolski, Grant Whitson and MGen (Ret'd) Kenneth Lett. We have shared many of their stories over the last year in *The Tribute* and may they RIP.

Unfortunately, there is one additional person who we need to recognize as having left us. On 26 December 2024, Mr. David Peabody, the director of TMM, was tragically killed in a climbing accident in the Kootenay National Park region of BC. On Saturday, 25 Jan 2025 David's

Regiment "The Calgary Highlanders" held a military funeral parade at the Mewata Armory Calgary and in his honour.

Dave and I met approximately three years ago when he stepped into the director position of TMM. We became instant colleagues and fast friends. He had great energy and brilliant ideas to clean up a museum that was in much need of a refresh. Through his arrival, a 2020 pandemic start, budget and HR issues quickly enveloping TMM, it was Dave's intelligence, force of character and much of his own sweat equity that kept the museum functioning at a very difficult juncture. Often, I would drop into Dave's office for a quick 10-15 chat on what the Air Force museum was planning.



Dave Peabody, 18-Sep-1976 - 26-Dec-2024. Julie Vincent photo

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

Ken Lett, Honourary Director

John Argue, Chairman of the Board of Directors,
jeargue@shaw.ca

Don Matthews, Director (at large)

Michelle Gerwing, Secretary

Bob Parkinson, Treasurer

Ed McGillivray, Vice Chairman (fund raising)

Alison Mercer, Curator,
alison@themilitarymuseums.ca, Tel: 403-410-2340 Ext 2661

Gordon Todd, Membership Director
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Jim Parker, Maintenance Director, jmparker439@gmail.com

Dave Lowery, Communications Director, newsletter editor
dave@betherraces.com

Michael Ricketts, Director (at large)
michael_j_ricketts@hotmail.com

Gerry Morrison, Honourary Director

Kenn Nixon, Director (casino coordinator)

Bob Wade, Deputy Chair
b_wade@hotmail.com

Toby Prigione, Manager (facilities)

Jim Powell, Honourary Director

Lee Obst, Director (at large)

Stuart Craig, Operations Director sscraig@gmail.com

Tim Strocel, Deputy Ops and Scheduler trstrosse@gmail.com

Often, I found the both of us still talking an hour later over issues, or grandiose future visions for TMM and then, of course, guitars.

Dave was a big fan of what our air force team was creating at TMM and fully supported almost every initiative (exception, a certain picture in the Founders Gallery that was actually artfully displayed – story for another day). Dave, his wife Angela, and daughter often attended air force events and even our volunteer bowling events. Dave bowls like the army, all muscle, down the middle, but no true aim or strategy (lol). Dave was the right man, at the right time as director TMM and he will be sorely missed. RIP Dave.

Last, but not least, we wish our long time curator Alison Mercer good luck and Godspeed in her new position as Army Museum of Alberta head curator and de-facto TMM head curator. Losing Alison will be a great loss to AFMSA, but professionally this is a great leap forward with this promotion. I said to Alison recently, that I will someday be able to say that “I knew you when” as she takes the reigns of the National War Museum, or the Smithsonian. We both laugh just a little now, but somehow; given Alison’s natural abilities and intelligence I am seriously looking forward to that day should it come to pass. This time you’re buying lunch



Alison (haha). Glad that you will be close at hand in TMM to keep advising us. Go get em!

As 2025 begins a new chapter and era for the RCAF, it is also a pivotal year for AFMSA and the many challenges that await us. With our current team of volunteers and staff, I am convinced we are well positioned to grow our brand and meet all these challenges head on.

As usual, the start of a new calendar year marks the occasion when our board of directors set new focus areas for the coming twelve months. Our recent meeting on 17 Jan 2025 set the table and without many surprises we have four old/new focus areas.

1. CWE expansion – We are heading into a brief hiatus period (estimate between 6-18 months) between the end of phase one: concrete pour and the start of the phase two: new facility erection. AFMSA can utilize this time to continue fund raising, restoration of major a/c exhibits, and the creation of extensive plans for the sub exhibit displays (pictures, verbiage and small artefacts) that cover the remainder of the CWE space.

2. Current AFMSA facilities and exhibits refresh/restoration – The hiatus period also offers AFMSA the chance to overhaul some of our exhibits and upgrade software and hardware components that have become obsolete or unsupported. Basically, make sure that our current facilities, and exhibits, still provide a suitable experience for our patrons as we transition to the expansion.

3. Education and training – An opportunity may exist to focus on volunteer recruitment, grow the team and provide initial training, and, or, annual refresher training for all our docents. Develop an in house education package for student visitors as part of the CWE expansion mandate.

4. AFMSA board of directors – reorganization and TOR development for future incorporation. This is in progress and in actual practical trial application as of this writing.

For AFMSA, 2024 was by most metrics a great success and we plan to keep this energy and enthusiasm alive and thriving for 2025. I am proud to continue serving with all of you and look forward to an exciting dynamic year.

Per Ardua Ad Astra
Sincerely, John

Exhibits

By Bob Wade. Photos by Stuart Craig

A significant milestone in the construction of the Cold War Exhibit expansion was achieved on November 8th with the pouring of the 11,865 sq foot floor and foundation. Mild weather conditions allowed for the laying of the cement without additives and delays. The anticipated 12-hour pour was completed in eight hours with outstanding results. Sprung Structures primary contractor Shane Morris from Calibre Construction has been outstanding in his support and professionalism towards completing this project on time and on budget. The expanded structure incorporates underfloor heating as can be seen with the green piping in the following picture.

The crews that worked so hard during that eight hour non-stop cement pour were amazing to watch. It is so good to see that work ethic and professionalism in today's labour force.



Above photo supplied by Gary Watson.

Phil Sprung from Sprung Structures is our general contractor and has been our biggest fan in bringing this project to fruition. The original two structures of the Cold War Exhibit were built by Phil and his team back in 2015. Phil and I can be seen in the following picture speaking with the media as the cement pour is taking place.



John Argue, Phil's nephew Maclean, daughter Shelby, Phil and Bob Wade.

As a not-for-profit-society we are totally dependent on public funding sources to raise money for projects like this Cold War expansion. Media coverage is an important step in getting public attention towards achieving our goals. This project will run just shy of \$6 million to complete and we are now getting close to achieving that objective. A big thank you to Dave Lowery on our board of directors for coordinating the media coverage for all our activities.

Curator update - So long . . . sort of!

By Alison Mercer

As many of you know, I will be moving on to a new role at The Military Museums this year. Back in February 2024, the senior curator position opened up and after a lengthy application process last fall, I was fortunate enough to get the offer.

As pleased as I was, this has been a tough decision. At the end of the day, the problem wasn't the longer days or the comparatively unglamorous field of army history, it was the issue of leaving the AFMSA team.

Coming on as curator back in 2010 when the AFMA/AFMSA was in its infancy, we were all pretty green: brand new museum, brand-new board of directors (some with experience from the Aerospace Museum), and brand-new curator. I feel like we all got to figure out this air force museum business together.

The most valuable experience, bar none, was the expert project management, people management, leadership, and innovation I bore witness to over these past fourteen-and-a-half years. Working with the AFMSA board and Fred McCall Jr. on our Royal Flying Corps Centennial exhibit back in 2012 was the first taste of what we could all do together. It wasn't a big show but it was planned down to the finest detail and opened with a nice reception in TMM's atrium. With Fred Jr.'s buy-in and a buffet of RFC primary sources that were, at once, cavalier, terrifying, jaunty, humorous, and often deeply raw, it wasn't hard to compile some quality exhibit content.

The AFMSA team tackled bigger ticket items in the coming years: the Ken and Roma Lett Cold War Exhibit (which started life as a push to display our CF-18 on the patio between the navy museum and the army side of TMM), the Cold War Expansion, and lately the RCAF Centennial. Throughout this, the determination,

ideation, and gritty, tenacious optimism displayed by AFMSA board members and volunteers has been infectious and edifying.

Outside of that, the stories have been the cherry-on-the-top here. Working behind the scenes, you occasionally get bonus content that probably shouldn't go in exhibits ("a submariner and I got caught swimming naked in the pool at staff college with some girls" or [slightly tamer] "one time in France, we found an unexploded artillery shell from WWI, put it in my buddy's trunk, and drove back to the base with it.")

The meat, of course, is stories of flying patrols over the Persian Gulf or changing navigation lights on Avro Yorks in -50C up on the DEW Line. Technically, I'm a Canadian army historian since all my 'official research' has been army-based but, man, you just don't get content like this anywhere except for the air force.

As well, it's rare to find museums that have so much daily input from their subject matter and I adamantly believe this input makes us the world-class institution that we are. Reviews of The Military Museums on Google and Trip Advisor repeatedly mention AFMSA volunteers by name and thank them for the tours and insights they provide. It's certainly made my life easier: need to know what kind of work test pilots do? Chances are there's someone in the CWE right now who can tell you.

So on the one hand, yes, it's a new job. On the other, I'll still be here at TMM and personally, that's been the biggest relief. The passion and energy brought to the table by the entire AFMSA team is infectious and I can't imagine a life in museums without it. Thanks for sharing your history with me over the years. Stay awesome.



RCAF centennial mess dinner

By Bob Wade

The RCAF centennial celebrated throughout 2024 was concluded with a mess dinner on 19 October 2024. This dinner was coordinated as a joint venture between 783 Wing of the RCAF and the AFMSA. Lieutenant General Blaise Frawley, Deputy Commander of NORAD was our guest of honour and presented an outstanding talk on the roles of NORAD and the ability of the RCAF to complete those missions. Lieutenant General (Ret) Scott Clements and Major General (Ret) Skip Armstrong were also official guests at the head table.



Right: Lieutenant General (Ret) Scott Clements, Major (Ret) Harry Chapin and Major General (Ret) Skip Armstrong

What a ride! Story and photos by Stuart Craig

2024 was a blockbuster year by most every metric, though this comes as no great surprise with it having marked the RCAF centenary. While we have addressed the overall RCAF 2024 committee program in the past issues of *The Tribute*, a brief recap is worthy before moving on to AFSMA/AFMA specific initiatives (recent past, current and near term). Both of these streams were the culmination of thousands of hours and volunteer determination. The possible and seemingly impossible have been achieved, for which we can be fiercely proud!

RCAF 2024

For purposes of brevity – and in sticking with the old adage of ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’ – the best means of conveying RCAF 2024 achievements is by way of the photos below.



12th March 2024 Whiskey, Gin and Beer Tasting Kick Off Event
Sheila and Gerry Morrison (AFMSA), John Argue (AFMSA) and
Brian Lewis (783 Wing)



24th March 2024 Air Force Gallery re-opening / Great Escape exhibit
opening, sons of Great Escape prisoners Paul Tobolski, above, Barry
Davidson, below



While we were close to crossing the finish line in mid-October, there were still a number of broader and deeply significant activities that took place in November.

Field of Crosses RCAF Sunrise Ceremony - 01 November 2024

TMM Remembrance Day Ceremony - 11th November 2024

In light of today’s uncertain world, there is no better time to appreciate the importance of the role that the RCAF (indeed, all branches of the military) played and continues to play in giving us the privilege of a nearly unparalleled quality of life.



Gord Todd (AFMSA) laying wreath

AFMSA/AFMA activities

We were approached in October by a local choir group – Cool Choir – to see if one of our volunteers could speak at the launch of their musical composition *Pride of the World* in honour of the RCAF Centenary. Our very own Keith



The Cool Choir.

“Coyote” Hunt gave a very insightful and moving speech that truly touched the souls of the 700 members of the audience and 250+ strong choir standing behind him. Over and above his talk, Keith also arranged the photos that were projected. To you, Keith, a heartfelt thank you! My friend, if you are in need of a booking agent – I’m just saying!

John Argue and Bob Wade will have addressed the CWE expansion plan as one of our four focus areas for 2024. If not already mentioned by them, the project plans, the debates, the lobbying, the endless meetings, the approvals, the negotiation of

contracts and the execution of work would not have been possible without the undeterred efforts of the AFMSA board, national and provincial parties and the collaborative spirit and generosity of the contractors. Mountains were moved and even the weather gods cooperated during the early-November pour.

Now that phase one of the expansion project is complete – and while we wait for the spring thaw and critical funding for phase two and three – the CT-33, CF-100(s) and CF-101 will require considerable work. If you find yourself with a few spare hours per month to offer, then please contact Gary Watson (cf104@shaw.ca) and/or Phil Conroy (pconroy@shaw.ca). This invitation applies equally to any outside parties interested in aircraft restoration – on a voluntary basis of course!

What's planned for 2025?

We entered the New Year with our Annual AFMSA Volunteer Appreciation on Saturday 4th January for a night of bowling, F&B and conversation. We had good attendance this year. Fear not, we have further get togethers in the near future:

- we will be holding a training/cleaning day for all of our Air Force Gallery and Cold War Exhibit Volunteers on either Thursday 20th or Friday 21st March (full confirmation closer to the time)

- following just a week later, we will be holding a “Beer Call” on Thursday 27th March

I will close out by expressing my deepest appreciation to each and every one of our volunteers for their time and dedication over the past year. To our scheduler, Tim Strocel, a deep thank you for taking on my previous role and helping to keep our Air Force Gallery and Cold War Exhibit operations running smoothly.

A very Happy New Year to all.



Keith Hunt (AFMSA) delivering speech



Annual AFMSA Volunteer Appreciation Saturday 4th January. Ron Beirnes showing his usual prowess

Air Force Museum looking for partner to complete expansion

by Dave Lowery

On Friday, November 8 beginning at 0700, cement was poured to lay the concrete pad for the new 11,865 sq foot Sprung structure at the Air Force Museum Society's (AFMSA) Ken & Roma Lett Cold War Exhibit (CWE).

In addition to the three aircraft already on display, the F-86 Sabre, CF-104 Starfighter and CF-18, the CWE will house three new aircraft already acquired: a CF-101 Voodoo, CF-100 Canuck and a T-33 T-bird. The completed concrete pad will support working space to restore the newly acquired aircraft now parked on the military museum's southern boundary.

The limited funds raised by the AFMSA permitted an engineering study and concrete pad with in-floor heating system installation in phase one for a cost of nearly \$ 1.9 million.

Critically important is an additional \$4 million is necessary to complete the total expansion.

The first phase in the expansion program was completed in 2024, Canada's 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

This project would not have been successful without the continued support from the Military Museum (TMM) and personnel from CFB Cold Lake who provided invaluable labour and expertise with the CF-101 Voodoo, T-33 and CF-100 relocation and reassembly.

The existing two Sprung structures have housed guided tours provided by approximately 70 volunteer docents for the past eight years which have proven to be in the top five Calgary tourist attractions according to TripAdvisor. Sprung has been the number one supplier of fabric structures to DND Canada since the early 1970s.



About Sprung Structures

Founded by Philip Dorland Sprung in 1887, Sprung Structures is an innovator and global provider of tensioned-membrane structures in the pre-engineered construction industry. A family-owned, Alberta-based company, Sprung Structures has completed more than 12,000 projects in over 100 countries and leads the way in providing durable, flexible and affordable building solutions for a variety of sectors, including military, education, health care, sports and recreation, energy, manufacturing, warehousing, aviation, community, film, hospitality and more.

A contract with Sprung Structures was awarded in late January 2024 for phase one, two and three as well as the engineering study.

For additional information about Sprung Structures, please visit <https://www.sprung.com/>



Restoring the Clunks

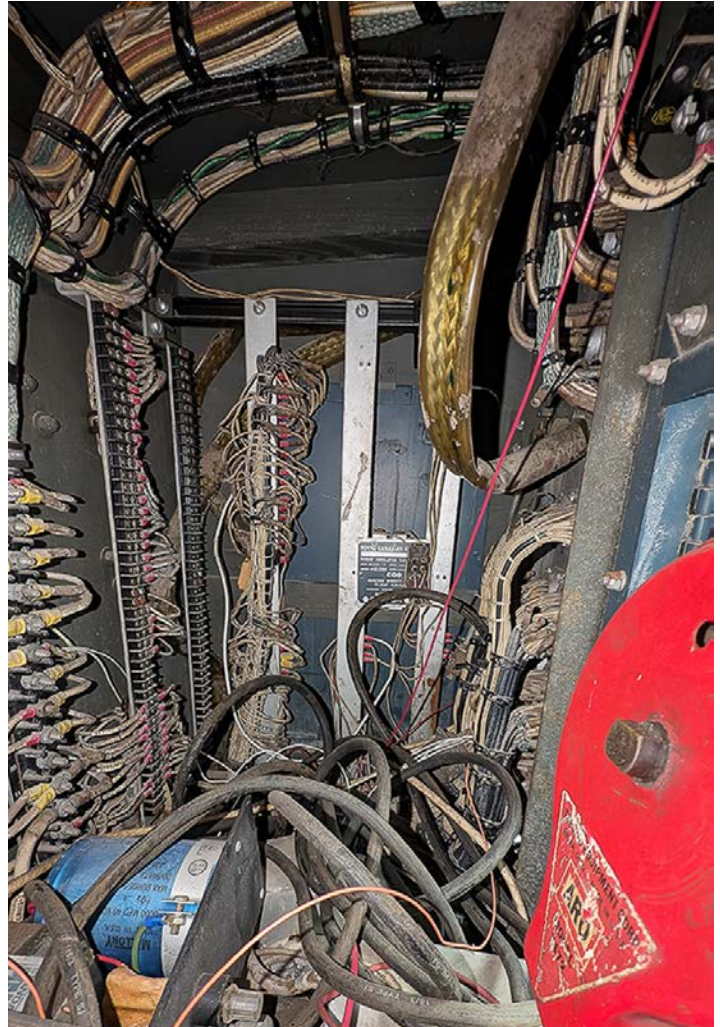
By Gary Watson, CF100 restoration lead

Winter has prohibited working outside on our two CF100s. However, a small group has been busy in the Cold War Exhibit behind the CF-18, dismantling the CF100 simulator as it is not viable to restore it as a functional sim, because the deteriorated wiring made it unsafe to apply electrical power.

Fate has given a secondary life to the sim. All the instruments, controls, switches and ejection seats will be restored over the winter and installed in one of the CF 100s once it is situated on the new pad with a roof.

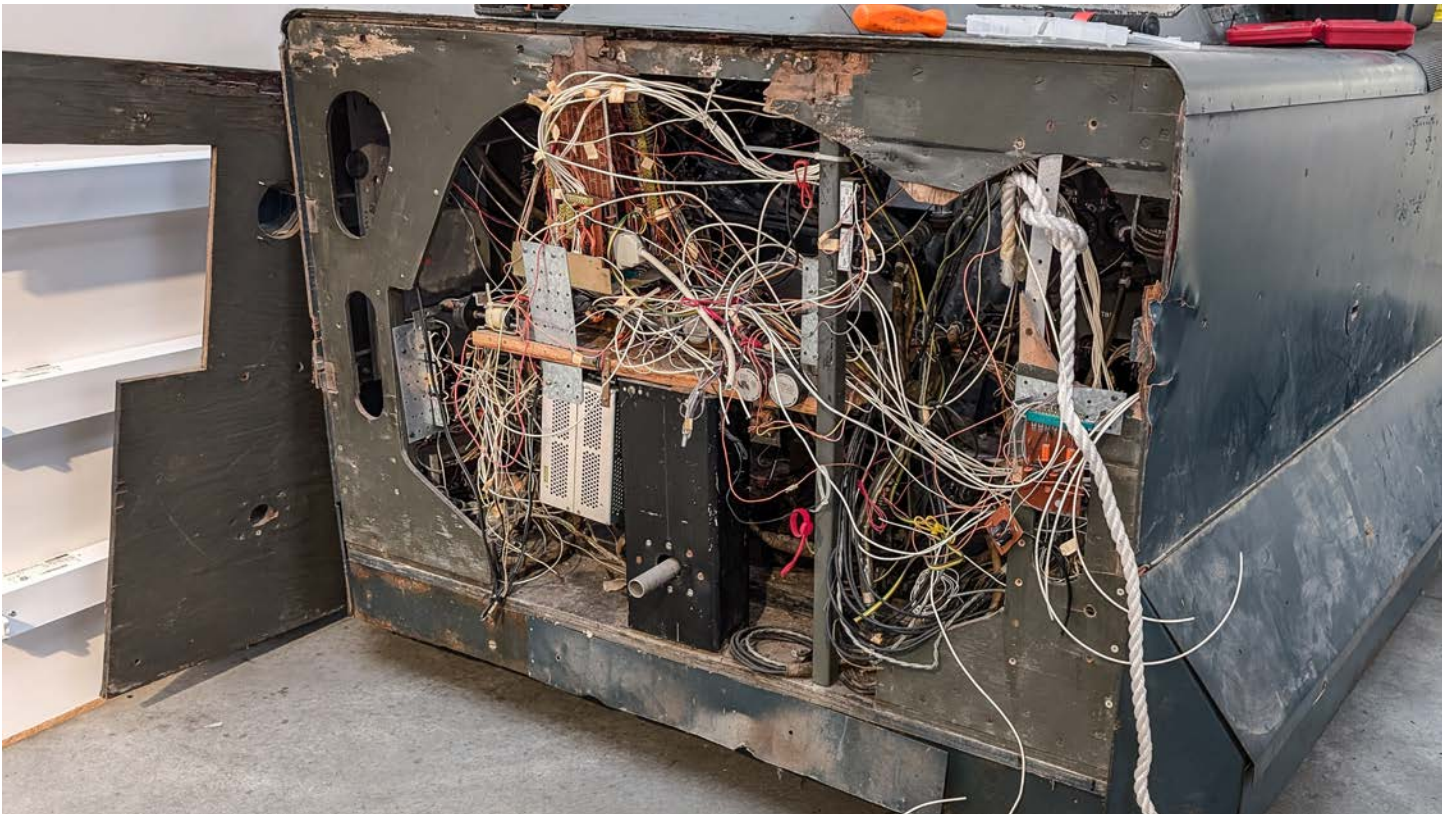
The first task was to remove the pristine canopy, which has been stored behind the Nene 10 engine. With the canopy removed, the insides of the sim were opened up to start removal of the innards. To date, the hardest part was pulling out the ejection seats, but two members, (Roy and Rusty have previous experience of similar seats which helped immensely), and with the additional help of Tom, Toby and Devon, the two seats were extracted from the fuselage rails.

Once the two seats were removed, items in the fuselage were removed. This process requires removing a lot of wire bundles and some of the sim's structure itself. As each item is removed it will be put aside to be refurbished. All wiring is being removed, providing more space to reach numerous components and brackets. The front instrument panel was removed and repainted. The instruments have been cleaned and repaired, as necessary. Soon the front instrument panel will be re-populated with instruments and placed on a temporary stand to create a display of parts of the 1950s cockpit. To date over 200 hours have been utilized.



Right and below: CF 100 simulator wiring.





Above: CF 100 simulator nose.

Below: CF 100 radar.



Above: CF 100 radar seat.



Left: Rusty, Gary, Devon (with toque) and Toby.