

Flying Fire Trucks

The History of Aerial Fire Fighting in Canada

UPDATE – 2006 & Spring 2007

Recently several of you have contacted me asking about how “Flying Fire Trucks” has been progressing. Looking back, my last update was posted just before Christmas 2005. Maybe its time for another.

2006 was spent on a number of projects NOT related to fire bombing. My wife and I were expecting our first child so a good portion of the year was spent preparing for this (including painting a nursery). We took a couple vacations before the responsibility of a child slowed us down. There's very little Canadian fire bombing information available on the beaches of Cuba, so I had to content myself by laying in the sun and drinking beer. I know, it sounds so tough.

The time I did spend writing in 2006 was devoted to a biography about my family's past in aviation. 2007 marks the 70th anniversary of my late-grandfather's private pilot's license, and this story chronicles our involvement since. When this its complete, it'll be available on my website (www.TrevorMcTavish.com). I also took overhauled the appearance and content of my father's website, which is devoted to the Twin Navion airplane (www.TwinNavion.com).

In July I was able to take a week off and fly to Ontario for the Red Lake Norseman Festival –an event I've wanted to attend for years. Since I knew we'd be in the same general area, I took a couple days and visited Dryden where I met with Hicks & Lawrence and became familiar with their bird dogging operation. Unfortunately the fire season was in full swing so I wasn't able to meet up with some of my contacts in the MNR who were based in Dryden. I learned years ago that's the nature of this beast, and why I mostly perform off-season meetings and interviews by emails.

Our daughter, Kayla, arrived in October, a full month early. Because of some health issues she was in the hospital for the first two months. She's recovered from her surgery and behaving like any other 'normal' baby. This of course means very little free time for mommy and daddy, but we're surviving. Now she occupies herself with toys, so I've been able to start working on “Flying Fire Trucks” once again.

I've been able to meet with people from Avalon Aviation, Air Spray and Conair. Last month in fact, I was able to meet the President and VP of Conair out in Abbotsford. As I expected, it began raining when it came time to break out the camera, but I did get some nice pre-season maintenance shots. Conair welcomed me back, which is fortunate as they have a huge archive that will take days to search through.

This summer I'd like to get out to Saskatchewan to see the Trackers in operation, so plans are in place to find contacts in that province's Air Service.

I'm also searching for contacts to interview from the following companies; Forest Patrol Ltd., G&M Aircraft, Norcanair Ltd. and Norfolk Aerial Spraying. I'm also seeking confirmation that Quebec-based Conifair DID NOT fire bomb in Canada. I know they had an agreement with Bombardier for foreign contracts with the CL-215. If you know someone who worked with any of these companies please pass along their name and contact information. I'd really appreciate it.

Trevor McTavish