

Flying Fire Trucks

The History of Aerial Fire Fighting in Canada

UPDATE 19 - 2010

2010 started off early with the arrival of my son, Ryan. This of course put my writing on hold but I was able to steal away and make some phone calls and do some interviews.

My wife finally challenged me to figure out just how big I was going to let this book get. After much soul searching and thinking I was forced to admit that no matter how hard I try and how fast I work, its only going to get bigger. So, when the clock strikes midnight on December 31, 2010 it will mark with it the cutoff for Flying Fire Trucks. A squadron of fire bombing 747s could arrive in January but they'll have to wait for Volume 2 (don't hold your breath). *(Looking back from 2011, with all the interesting new tankers coming into service I wonder how long I'll actually hold myself to this limit).*

Right now, there are a number of chapters that need to be researched and written but I think its safe to say that I should have about 200 letter-sized pages of text. My dream is to combine this with another 200 pages of photos.

In March I met Bob Petite, probably the most knowledgeable person on Canadian helicopter history. Not only did Bob invite me into his home but he shared his knowledge on a variety of fire-related topics. It shouldn't be surprising that he also offered to assist with my explanation of the intricacies of bird dogging - he's been an Air Attack Officer with the province of Alberta for decades.

As many of you know the 2010 fire season started off with a fatal accident in New Brunswick. I met the pilot, Ron Clowes, during my 2002 whirlwind tour and my condolences go out to all of Ron's family, friends and coworkers. Unfortunately Ron wasn't the only casualty this season. Tim Whiting and Brian Tilly also lost their lives when their Convair 580 crashed in BC. Although I never met these gentlemen, my condolences to their families and friends as well. I truly hope these three men will be the last names to appear on my memorial, which currently stands at 102.

A safe, healthy and prosperous 2011.

Trevor McTavish

Book Review:

Fire Bomber Into Hell

Linc W. Alexander (2010)

When it comes to fire bombing, few pilots can claim the experience that Linc Alexander can. Starting in open cockpit Stearman in 1960, he graduated to TBMs, F7Fs, A-26s, Trackers and DC-6s. Linc quite literally wrote the book on the subject - *Air Attack on Forest Fires* - the first and definitive instructional text on fire bombing.

In *Fire Bomber Into Hell*, Linc looks back at his 37 year career, combining his personal experiences with an authoritative description of the challenges each fire bomber pilot faces. From turbulence and winds, to bosses playing favourites and bureaucrats building procedural walls and laying down political land mines, Linc tackles them all.

This is not an in-depth history (hey that's what mine book is all about), but a fantastic book that will easily entertain and educate readers about the dangerous world of air attack and the risks these special pilots take every summer.

Highly recommended.

