

New book chronicles area's aviation history

Bernice Trick
Citizen staff

For more than 50 years, the skies above Prince George doubled as an air highway with flying machines ranging from open cockpit biplanes to high winged mono-planes to four-engine propeller jobs.

That aviation period from 1920 to the 1970s when the jet age arrived has been written and recorded in a new book, *Aviation North*, by Trelle Morrow.

It's all about "flying frontiers in northern B.C." and how the aviation industry has developed in Prince George and region.

The book cover is a rendition of an open cockpit Dehavilland biplane from the first world war that stopped here in 1920 on its flight from New York City to Nome, Alaska. The landing strip on Central Street (between 10th and 18th avenues) was staked out and readied with excitement of the arrival.

"The plane was damaged upon landing and the visitors were here for 12 days," said Morrow.

"It was a military expedition to prove the feasibility of a flight line to Alaska from the lower U.S. states. In those days a flight from New York to Nome and return to New York

took four months."

That's Morrow's favourite story in the book, and his second favourite involves pioneer aviator, Grant McConachie and bush pilot Sheldon Luck who together formed Yukon Southern Airways which started the first official government air mail service "to places like Fort Ware, Germanson Landing and Finlay Forks," said Morrow, who, as an avid air mail collector and aviation history buff was inspired to write their story.

"My other inspiration was in knowing five local contributors to the book. They are Jack Milburn, Tommy Norton, Jack Corless, Cherry Corless and Greg Temperley, an aero mechanic.

"I wanted to record their stories and experiences while they are still able to do so," said Morrow, who noted Jack Corless recently celebrated his 90th birthday.

"There are still a lot of aviation buffs around and bits and pieces of history floating around, so the book is an attempt to pull it all together. To my knowledge, it hasn't been done, and I felt it should be," he said.

Readers will learn about character bush pilots like Luck and Russ Baker and McConachie "who was forever going broke, but such a good promoter and talker he al-

ways survived."

"One time he got three aircraft from the CPR for \$1 a day on lease or rent or something like that," said Morrow.

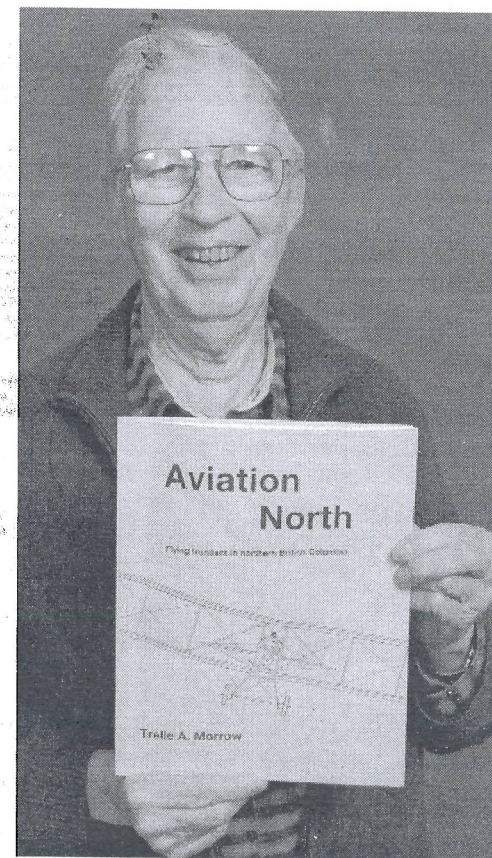
In Morrow's opinion, a fellow called James Richardson was not only the "the most notorious of them all" but also the biggest influence on aviation in Western Canada.

Owning more than 100 aircraft, he was the man behind Western Canada Airlines which became Canadian Airways after 1930, Morrow said.

"Since 1920 and up to today, Prince George has always been a destination point for the northwest area of the continent. During world war two, it was a focal destination point on the Inland Staging Route from Vancouver and Seattle to Prince George, and from here they went on to Juno. Whitehorse or Fort St. John. Prince George was the key to connecting coastal communities to Alaska."

Morrow is pleased with the development of the new extended runway and the airport terminal.

Prince George has established itself in the aviation industry and will continue to develop. Who knows what will be here in 50 years," said Morrow.



Trelle Morrow shows his new book about the history of aviation in northern B.C.

Citizen photo by David Mah

Aviation North, costing \$27.95, is available at Books and Co. and the College of New Caledonia Book Store.

btrick@pgcitizen.ca