

The Pilot's Log

Newsletter of the BNAPS Air Mail Study Group

Volume 14 – Number 3

December 2021

A joint meeting of the BNAPS AMSG and The Canadian Aerophilatelic Society will be held

11:30 to 1:30 Eastern Time on Sunday February 6th.

Alec Globe

Will give a presentation on

How Research Furthers Knowledge about Canada's Semi-Official Airlines, 1924-1934.



"An accountant's comment in 1926 and 27 covers shows that Elliot Fairchild Air Service flew mail into Red Lake from May 24-30, 1926."

Alec Globe's exhibit on *The Development of Pioneer and Semi-Official Air Mail Within Canada 1918-1934*, was displayed in the Court of Honour at the Postal History Society of Canada Symposium in 2019.

Zoom details are:

Time: Feb 6, 2022 Sunday 11:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

The meeting has been set up with a "waiting room" so you do not need a password.

The meeting is open to all. – You are welcome to pass an invitation on to other people who might be interested.

SOME UPDATES ON PREVIOUS ZOOM PRESENTATIONS

GORD MALLET - Walter Hale: the Flying Postal Inspector of the Mackenzie River District.

WALTER HALE'S PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM

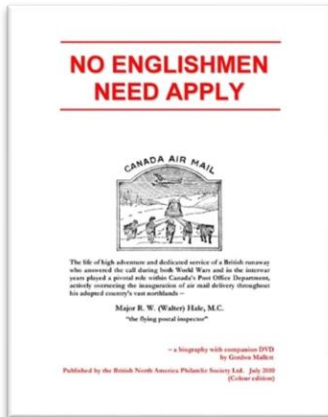
A great feature of Gord Mallett's presentation was the photographs he reproduced from a photograph album kept by Walter Hale. A complete copy of the photograph album on a DVD is included with Gord Mallett's book about Walter Hale - NO ENGLISHMEN NEED APPLY.

Since DVD's are now obsolete, Gord will send a cyber copy of the photograph album to new purchasers of his book, and also to people who have purchased a copy in the past.

NO ENGLISHMEN NEED APPLY is 160 pages, 8.5" x11" spiral bound, and available from BNAPS books c/o Bill Longley at Bill Longley at bill@longleyauctions.com Price is Colour C\$ 35.00, B&W C\$ 19.00 + Shipping

For information on shipping and details of all BNAPS books see the Longley Auctions website: <https://longleyauctions.com/product-category/bnaps-books/>

To contact Gord Mallett email him at gdmall@telus.net



It's not "BNA", but CHERYL GANZ who gave the presentation at our November Zoom meeting has published a new book:

U.S. ZEPPELIN AND AIRSHIP MAIL FLIGHTS

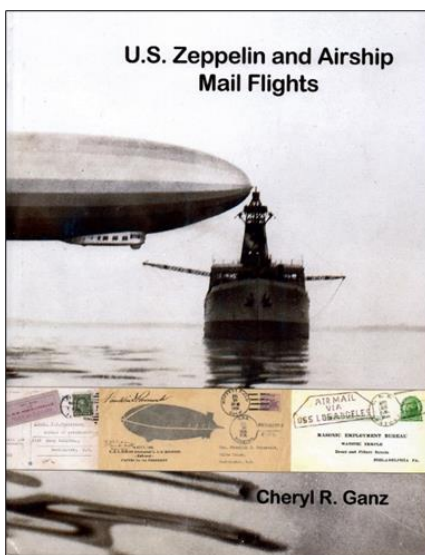
Published by author, 2021, 279 pages, 8 1/2 inch format, hard cover. \$80.00 U.S. + \$37.60 Global Priority mail outside the USA.

Reviewed By Ken Sanford:

This book is all about U. S. Zeppelin and airship mail flights and Cheryl is the perfect person to write it. She has collected, exhibited, researched, lectured and written about airships for many years. Each chapter covers a different airship, starting with the "Shenandoah", and continuing on through the ZR-2, ZR-3, ZRS-4 "Akron", and ZRS-5 "Macon". There is background information on each airship with lots of historic photos of the airships and the people connected with them. Then all types of known covers are shown in color, followed by a flight log of all the flights by that airship. There is also a special event cover list for the "Akron". The final chapters cover Navy airship bases & squadrons, Army airships, and shows covers from those bases, and finally a section on private & commercial airships, which shows all known souvenir covers carried by them, also in color. There is an extensive list of references and a comprehensive index.

For more information and/or to order contact

<https://classic.stamps.org/Publications>



Denny May: 1935 – 2021

Denny was a great guy, and a major participant in Canadian aerophilately and aviation history. In February he gave a presentation for our Zoom Day of Aerophilately about his father “Wop” May and Commercial Airways Limited. The following tribute is a slightly modified version of the eulogy for Denny given by John Chalmers at a memorial Service held for Denny at the Alberta Aviation Museum in Edmonton. Ed.

In Memoriam: Denny May

By John Chalmers



We are gathered here today to pay tribute to our beloved Denny May, who is remembered from coast to coast by more people than we could ever know. Denny left us suddenly and unexpectedly at the age of 86, in October 2021, and we have now come together to celebrate his life.

Denny Reid May was the only child born to his parents Wilfrid Reid May and Violet Aileen Bode on May 15, 1935. Wilfrid May, named for prime minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier, became labelled with the childhood nickname of “Wop,” a name that stayed with him for a lifetime, a name that is still used today.

The first comments I received from a mutual friend when we learned the news of Denny’s passing was the statement that, “He was truly a good steward of his father’s memory.”

Denny did not know that he would lose his father when Denny himself was only 17 years old. So he became a researcher and a scholar about Wop May. Denny has been involved with the publication of two books about his dad. One book, written by Denny’s sister-in-law, Sheila Reid, is a biography appropriately called *Wings of a Hero*, published in 1997. Denny then worked with Sheila to publish an updated version of the book in 2014.

Here in this building, in 2011, during the annual convention of the Canadian Aviation Historical Society held in Edmonton that year, Denny rolled out another book, *More Stories of Wop May*, in which he wrote about his father’s aviation experiences. Denny contacted many people who knew his father personally and asked them for stories about Wop, which comprise a section of the book that makes fascinating reading.

You may also know that Denny produced a web site, wopmay.com, called The Wop May Chronicles, in which he has documented his father's achievements. But Denny did not just record his father's amazing history. Denny himself lived it, and re-created it, and immersed himself in it in so many ways, from countless speaking engagements to being a Life Member of the Canadian Aviation Historical Society.

One of the famous events in Canadian aviation history occurred in January 1929 when Wop May and Vic Horner flew in an open cockpit biplane in freezing weather to deliver diphtheria serum to Fort Vermilion. Fifty years later, in 1979 as a pilot himself, Denny flew in an open cockpit biplane with Vic Horner's son, Bob, and flew the same route from Edmonton to Fort Vermilion, but with no medical emergency, as they were able to make the flight in June.



Another instance of retracing history was when Denny went with Marg, his son David and wife, Kimberly, to visit the exact area in France where Wop May and Roy Brown were involved in the famous aerial dogfight with Baron Manfred von Richthofen.

Recreating special flights were important events for Denny, but not his biggest adventures. His biggest and longest adventure was his marriage to Marg, which lasted for 40 years after they were married on March 17, 1981. Today we are pleased have Jon Hall with us, who was the best man at the marriage and has come from Nova Scotia to be with us today.

Jon and Denny had known each other for nearly 60 years, as Jon was only 12 when he first knew Denny. Jon recalls that in 1975 when he came to Edmonton to take on a job, he called to say hello to Denny at his Scouts Canada office, and was promptly recruited for volunteer work with Scouts, and then Jon soon found himself working full-time with Denny in Scouts Canada.

For Denny himself, working with Scouts Canada was a career lasting some 40 years. His travels for Scouts took him far and wide, and Marg would often travel with him, and attended jamborees with Denny. At other times, Denny would rent an airplane to fly with someone to attend meetings or events. Denny's sense of humour was evident on those flights, because at the end of the flight Denny would give his passenger a certificate from Fly By Night Airlines, and it was signed by Captain Hardly Able!

Another friend, Danielle Metcalfe-Chenail, also now living in Nova Scotia, sent this comment for us. "Denny was a generous and helpful colleague. He and Marg were warm and welcoming to this Edmonton newcomer back in 2010, and I am so glad they stayed in touch even after I moved away." Danielle went on to say, "Denny looked up to his father immensely, but he never let the legend eclipse the man."

Denny's interest in aviation was evident when he attended the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology in Calgary to study aeronautical engineering, knowledge that would serve him well. But he was soon hired by the Boy Scouts of Canada. Before long, he had become the Executive Director of Scouts Canada for Northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories. His interest in scouting had begun when as a young lad, Denny had been a Boy Scout himself.

Denny had a particular interest in air mail, and was a member of the Canadian Aerophilatelic Society. The first air mail in western Canada was flown by a young woman named Katherine Stinson, who flew her one-of-a-kind

biplane from Calgary to Edmonton on July 9, 1918, bringing 259 specially stamped letters. Volunteers here at the Alberta Aviation Museum built an exact replica of that unique aircraft in a project that took over 20,000 hours. Today, as you enter this museum, you can see that aircraft displayed with the likeness of Katherine Stinson. The replica aircraft was ready to be rolled out to meet the public on July 9, 2006. But the rollout would not be just an airplane shown to the public. It was decided to re-enact that famous flight of 1918.

So Denny and his friend, Gordon Mallett, went to work to produce 259 specially stamped envelopes for letters to be carried on a flight in a Cessna light aircraft from Calgary to Edmonton. We recruited Audrey Kahovec, then a flying instructor at the Edmonton Flying Club, to be the stand-in for Katherine Stinson.

Audrey flew the mail from Calgary to Edmonton in her Cessna and then the vintage mail bag with all the letters was placed in the replica aircraft. Volunteers who helped build it then pushed the biplane out to a large and welcoming crowd and delivered the mail to representatives of Canada Post.



June 9th 2006: Audrey Kahovec arrives in Edmonton



then roll out of the Curtiss Special replica

he rollout was so successful, that Denny and Gordon did it again! On July 9, 2018, again with 259 letters and specially-stamped envelopes that Denny helped create, the flight was re-enacted using a twin-engine WestJet regional carrier, a Bombardier Q400 – flown by a woman pilot and a woman first officer.



Gordon recalls what a great help Denny was to him in special projects. "Denny was so generous," says Gordon, "both with his time and his willingness to share valuable artifacts in his possession, and has donated many of his father's possessions to museums and archives."

Next time you are passing through the Edmonton International Airport, look for a display case with Wop May's parka, helmet and gloves that he used in bush flying, which are there as a result of Denny's generosity. Other donations have been made to City of Edmonton Archives, and a great many to Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame, of which Wop May is an original member.

Besides writing and publishing, Denny's talents included his ability as an artist. He has created dioramas depicting historical events in aviation. His paintings have been used on the Christmas cards of Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame, which both Denny and Marg served as members of the Hall's operations committee.



Watercolour "Coming Home" by Denny May from the programme for the 75th Anniversary Re-enactment of the May - Horner Mercy Flight to Fort Vermilion

And now, Denny is remembered in yet another way. A prize-winning 20-minute film about his father, called *Blind Ambition – The Wop May Story*, was recently produced in Edmonton and shown at the Edmonton International Film Festival. Denny encouraged production of that film, visited the set with Marg, and even appears in the film. The film is about Wop, and is now dedicated to Denny. At the end of the Festival, the film received the jury award for Best Documentary Short Film (Alberta).

We can give thanks for being here today in this temple of aviation, a building where Wop May worked and where Denny May remembered his father, and we can give thanks for having Denny May in our lives. In closing, I will share a story with you that you may have heard before. In 1952, Denny was hiking in Utah with his father. At one point on the trail, Wop paused to rest, and told Denny he wasn't feeling well. He told Denny to go on ahead and finish the hike. As he was about to go, Wop asked Denny to take a photo of him. It was the last photo ever taken of Wop May, because when Denny returned, his father had passed away at the young age of 56.

Last Wednesday a friend of Denny said to me, "Maybe Denny and his dad can finish that hike together now." Boy Scout leader, husband, family man, pilot, friend, collector, artist, writer, historian, and a good son, Denny May knew his way around the trails, both on land and in the air, and has now he has joined his father on his final flight.

Happy trails, Denny, we remember you as your spirit soars among the heavens

John Chalmers

The AMSG is operating on a cyber-only basis, so no membership dues are required. - Anybody who would like to be added to the AMSG email/membership list and receive future issues of *The Pilot's Log*, should just send their email and postal address to me at hargreavescp@sympatico.ca

Chris Hargreaves, AMSG Chair/Editor