

ELECTIONS ARE COMING!

Everyone should watch their inboxes for voting instructions. The instructions will be sent to you by June 1st.

MEMBERS WILL HAVE BETWEEN JUNE 1ST AND JUNE 15TH TO SEND IN VOTES.

CHAPTER NEWS

A big YIPPEE!!! for Lynne Harrison who is now a LICENSED PILOT! Congratulations!

A big YIPEE!!! for Michelle Bassanesi of Italy who is now an instructor at Rome Aero Club, Rome Urbe Airport! She received her new flight instructor's uniform on May 1! You go girl!!!

WAY TO GO Ambassador Chapter 2008 AE SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS!!!!

** Linda Berlin -- Boeing 737 Type Rating

** Kirsten Brazier -- Forest Service Approved Mountain Course (she's doing the course in a Bell 206 helicopter)

** Gwen Davis -- New Pilot Award of up to \$1500 towards completion of any first pilot certificate, including the recreational, sport or private pilot certificate.

MEETING MINUTES

No one attended the last meeting in May (except for Kirsten Brazier) so there are no meeting minutes.

Notes from the North – Sharing the Gift...By Kirsten Brazier



Since I began flying in 1992, I have taken many people (and Dogs!) for their first flight. Most often it is the kids that I enjoy the most – answering their many questions and watching the awe and amazement as we become airborne and they experience the magic of flight for the first time.

However, there is one first flight that made a deep and lasting impression on me, and brought incredible joy and happiness to someone I loved – in the last years of her life. In light of my recent AE scholarship award, which will add skills to my Commercial Helicopter rating, I'd like to share this story.

In the fall of 2001, I found myself once again unemployed at the end of a season flying a Beech 18 and Otter on floats for a company in Northwestern Ontario. Through a government employment assistance program, and with a lot of research and preparation, I applied for, and was awarded, a grant for half the cost of a Commercial Helicopter add-on to my Canadian Airline Transport License.

Upon learning the good news, I immediately phoned my Nana – my Dad's Mom – who was living in Abbotsford BC - where I would be doing my training on the Bell 47 helicopter. Now you have to understand, my Nana had always been merely politely interested in my career, and responded to most updates on my flying adventures with a *"That's nice dear"*. I always thought this was rather odd considering that though bush planes were out of the realm of reality to most people; she and Poppa had raised my Dad and Uncle Greg in northern Manitoba, where bush planes abounded.

So when I told her about receiving the grant, and my intentions for training that winter, nothing prepared me for her reaction. Not only did she understand perfectly well the impact of what I was telling her, she was so ecstatic I thought she was going to climb through the telephone receiver! I couldn't understand it - I had never heard her so animated about my flying career!

Not long after, I got in my car and drove halfway across the country to begin training. For two and a half months, I commuted an hour each way to school, 6 days a week, where I would remain from early in the morning and fly or study until late in the evening.

Since I had left Vancouver to begin my flying career many years ago, I could rarely afford to get "home" to see my family so I made a point of visiting Nana in the nursing home several times a week. I would give her updates on my progress, and tell her all about the school, the students

and general goings on at the airfield. It was a great time for both of us and I was glad to be able to share the whole experience with such an appreciative and attentive audience.

Though I had visited infrequently over the past several years, I always enjoyed celebrity status among the residents when I was able to get to BC for a visit. I was reverently known as “the Pilot”, and my dog Brie was equally popular – visibly cheering up almost all who met her when she was allowed to visit the residents at the nursing home. But this time around I became promoted to “Helicopter Pilot” and my Nana made the most of my revised fame!

My Dad was quite excited about the training as well, and made arrangements to fly from Toronto to Abbotsford to visit Nana and I once my Commercial flight test was complete. Since my Dad has flown in many of the aircraft I piloted over the years, he naturally inquired if he could pay for an extra flight in exchange for a ride in the Bell 47. The school was not in the habit of renting aircraft outside of training, and the owner agreed with some reluctance. As Dad and I made plans for this big adventure, I pointed out that Nana had never flown with me and was unusually interested in my helicopter rating. At 87, her health had been deteriorating for some time, along with her spirit. Since my arrival in BC, she seemed incredibly rejuvenated, and though still frail, she was vibrantly alive with interest – so much so that I dreaded leaving.

I asked if Dad if he would be willing to take a shorter flight in order to sponsor a ride for Nana as well. The only helicopter she had ever been in was back in 1961 when my Dad fell on the ice, injuring his spleen, and the Hudson’s Bay Mining and Smelting Company gave her a ride to the hospital in their Sikorsky S-55. Dad thought this was a great idea, but when we contacted the school, the owner drew the line – no rentals, too risky! She was willing to allow the one flight, but not two. I asked her if she would take my Nana for a brief circuit herself, and she agreed.

We kept our surprise top secret – all we told Nana was that I would be taking Dad up for a flight and we simply asked her if she would like to come to the school and watch. Of course she agreed! Animated and jubilant, it was all she could talk about for days.

On the morning of the flight, I checked the weather and everything was a go. We stopped at the residence to pick up Nana, and made our way to the school. When we got there, I was the one who got the surprise! Cathy had re-considered her decision, and given the special circumstances, had decided that I could do both flights! Still we said nothing to Nana.



After getting the machine ready, I went inside to ask her if she would like to see the helicopter I would be flying. Of course she did, and as we assisted her out to the aircraft, we asked her if she would like to go for a ride with me as the pilot. She was thrilled!

Without hesitation she practically sprinted to the helicopter, beaming from ear to ear. I had brought along a wool blanket to protect her legs from the draft, and tucked it around her while belting her in and giving her a safety briefing.

It wasn't to be a long flight, and besides at 87, I didn't think my Nana could have taken much more excitement. But that single short flight was the most moving, and rewarding gift I could have ever shared with someone. She was in complete awe as we lifted away from the ground and departed the airfield. We flew over the part of Abbotsford, where she had lived for so many years with my Poppa before he died, and over the nursing home which had become her new residence several years earlier. I passed over several times so she could take pictures, then back to the airfield we went.

For financial and other reasons, I had to put aside my helicopter aspirations for several years, but my Nana never minded. For the remainder of her years she still referred to me as the Helicopter Pilot and even though she was already well liked by everyone, she still managed to eke a lot of additional mileage with the staff and residents over her helicopter adventure. Even as her memory, and finally her health faded, she kept the picture of herself in the helicopter, and the aerial view of the care home, as a reminder of that special day.

That was the last time I saw my Nana – she died in October 2005. I still have the blanket she had tucked around her legs that memorable day, and it still brings back happy tears.

