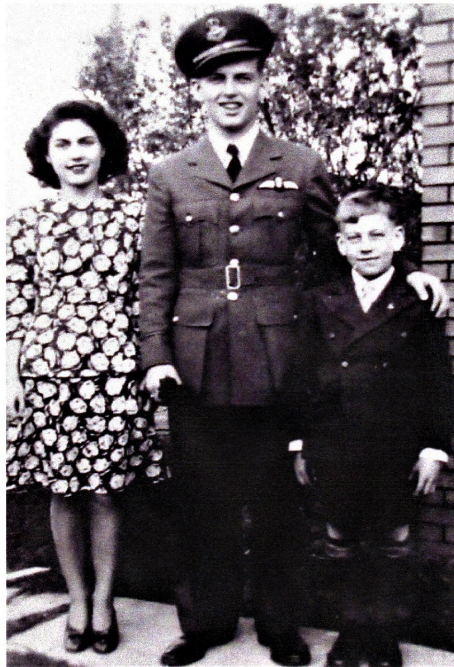


REMEMBERING A FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR'S STORY

By Robert Williamson

On Remembrance Day we are asked to remember the dangers that were faced by our veterans in war zones. We seldom give a thought to the dangers faced while under training. Accidents, particularly when flying, are invariably deadly as the cemeteries associated with the 107 British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) airfields located across Canada will attest. The Canadian Government sponsored this war-winning plan which produced 140,000 airmen and 45,000 ground crew. One such training center was located on the Hamilton Mountain at Mount Hope. In St. Paul's Glanford Anglican Church Cemetery on Highway # 6, located below the eastern runway approach to the airport, are the graves of airmen who lost their lives while under training. Sixteen airmen are faithfully remembered in a memorial garden there, but how do we venerate the trainers who put their lives on the line several times a day as they supervised novice trainees in the realm of flight?



One such instructor was Hamilton's Flying Officer Daniel George Seagrove. Born in 1923, he attended Delta High School and became interested in flying when he found a free pass for an aeroplane ride. He is shown here at age 19 in this 1942 photo upon completing flight school training in Toronto. He proudly wears his new wings insignia standing beside his younger sister, Phyllis and little brother Allan. Daniel was married in 1943 and his youngest of three daughters, Elizabeth "Liz" Rayworth, now age 71, still lives in Aldershot where the family moved in 1956. She remembers that her father did not talk much about his war service because as a flying instructor, he was never sent overseas. However, he may have seen action as a stunt pilot. "Liz" believes that he became a member of the RCAF Harvard Trainer aircraft display team that developed into an air show program, perhaps a forerunner of the "Snowbirds". This would have been a logical postwar progression for the BCATP flight instructors. "Liz" also provided this photo of him sitting in the cockpit of a Mustang fighter as a member of the post war 424 City of Hamilton Fighter Squadron, RCAF Reserve, while employed in real estate sales and management.

In 1957 he put his flying skills to work operating an air service called "Commander Aviation Ltd." selling, servicing and flying a popular American built *Aero Commander* aircraft designed for corporate business travelers.

According to "Liz", the only thing that her father loved more than flying was boating. He owned a 42 foot Sheppard built yacht on which the family took many excursions or spent the summer weekends at Toronto Island. He enjoyed playing Country and Western music on the guitar and organ. He passed away in 1997 and is buried in Woodland Cemetery.



Mountain Memories by award winning writer Robert Williamson appears monthly for the Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society. Story source: daughter Elizabeth "Liz" Rayworth (nee Seagrove) and nephew Phil Seagrove.