

MY PAL, CHARLEY FOX, DFC & BAR, CD



I first got to know Charley Fox when we were both members of the 427 (London) Wing of the Air Force Association of Canada. We were working together on a Committee to raise \$40,000 to build a monument to a George Cross recipient by the name of LAC Spooner.

I'm not sure that, at that time, I knew who this gentleman was or what he did during the war or even that Charley had a direct hand in changing the course of history. Eventually I learned that this gentleman had an impressive war record. Fox trained a hell of a lot of pilots in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) in Canada before going overseas.

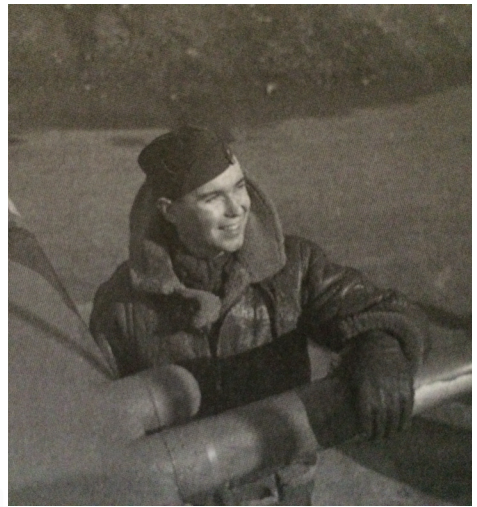
On D-Day, June 6, 1944, he flew three sorties with 412 Fighter Squadron. By May, 1945 he destroyed some 153 enemy vehicles, 22 locomotives, four enemy aircraft and on July 17, 1944 was credited with strafing and damaging the staff car of Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, wounding him in the attack. Rommel was the commander of German forces in Normandy at the time and was shortly thereafter implicated in a plot to assassinate Hitler. Rather than face a trial for treason, Rommel was permitted to commit suicide and his death was reported as a result of the wounds suffered in the air attack.

What I did learn about Charley over the ten years or so that I knew him, was that he was a man who was always thinking about serving others. Whether he was talking about someone he kept the faith with or his long ago wingmen or was just saying thank you, Charley put others first – a rare trait in today's society. I have witnessed him in local malls, on various occasions, with either famed Canadian Historian Terry Copp or accomplished author and broadcaster Ted Barris, not missing a beat, recounting episodes of various WW II Operations, and explaining to their listeners what the war was really all about.

Charley himself, brought these stories alive to the youngsters – and he loved to be with those who would listen to his vignettes of the war as he brought them alive. Charley was one who truly promoted heroic examples and hoped that by telling his stories, he would help pass the torch to future generations of young Canadians.

Following six years of post war service with the RCAF Auxiliary, he retired from military life only to return as Honorary Colonel of 412 (Transport) Squadron, located in Ottawa. He was, without doubt, one of the busiest Air Force speakers available and did his level best to cede to every invitation.

On more than one occasion, we sat in conversation sipping our scotch-on-the-rocks together. Sadly, he died in a car accident in October, 2008, returning to London after attending a meeting of the Harvard Association. We sorely miss our buddy Charley – We Will Remember Him – and I'll hoist another drink each Remembrance Day for old time sake!



*The following submission comes from long time Royal Canadian Legion and Air Force Association of Canada member, Sam Newman of London Ontario. Sam participated on two Royal Canadian Legion Pilgrimages of Remembrance in 2009 and 2013. He is a dedicated and active proponent of Remembrance through his efforts at his RCL Vimy Branch 145 in London, Ontario, working with Cadets, and his AFAC duties. Sam is also a keen chronicler of Canada's military past and his first anthology of stories, called *The Scribbler*, can be found at (<http://www.vimylondon.ca/index.asp>). A second volume entitled, *The Scribbler Too* is forthcoming.*