

PATERSON, Daphne

Commercial rating *Intel Oct 6/81 Trenton - Broag*

Canada's first woman pilot took 10 years to find a job

By RICK HOBBS
Staff Reporter

TRENTON - The two women now serving as pilots at CFB Trenton are living proof that women make good pilots, says the first female commercial pilot ever licensed in Canada.

Daphne Paterson, 75, of Trenton received her commercial pilot licence in 1930 but for the next decade she wasn't able to find a job.

Sitting in her Trenton apartment Monday afternoon Miss Paterson recounted some of her experiences as a pilot during the years of the 1930s.

"It was Ground Hog Day, Feb. 2, 1929 when I took my first flying lesson at the Montreal Flying Club."

She said after her first lesson "I was hooked" and she soloed within a month.

"One thing about the airplanes then was they didn't have any heat for the pilot. They didn't have slacks for women until later in the 1930s so I had to wear a skirt."

Miss Paterson said any woman who wanted to fly in the 1920s and 1930s was considered to "be a little crazy."

She said her first lesson was with the chief instructor at the Montreal Flying Club.

"I later found out he was a male chauvinist. Apparently he felt that any woman who wanted to fly should go with him. Then he would try to scare them with his flying."

"After I came down from that first flight I told my brother that the flight was more exciting than any roller coaster I had ever been on."

Miss Paterson said she is not the first licensed female pilot in the country but is the

first female commercial pilot.

In 1930 when the first commercial licences were being granted by the department of national defence, she said she applied for one.

The department wrote back in a letter that she could not become a commercial pilot simply because of her sex.

After a great deal of argument it was finally pointed out that nowhere in the government regulations did it say that a woman could not become a commercial pilot.

During the 1930s she said she was unable to find work as a pilot but received the de Havilland Trophy as one of the top fliers in the country.

When the war broke out Miss Paterson went to Ottawa and said she was told to go to Toronto and take an instructors course.

She successfully completed the course only to have the government change its mind and decide not to have women instructors teach the men how to fly.

Miss Paterson said she tried to join the Women's Division of the RCAF early in the war but they refused to take her because she had training as a pilot and she was over-qualified.

In talking with the government and various companies during the 12 years she was flying, she said they were always telling her to wait for another few weeks or a few months.

After completing the instructor course in Toronto she came to Trenton and because there was no private



DAPHNE PATERSON

airport in the area she stopped flying.

"The nearest place you could fly was Kingston and there was no way we could afford that," she added.

During her flying days Miss Paterson said her sex led to some interesting experiences.

"I remember I was flying to Hamilton once and I got to Cobourg and I didn't like the look of the clouds and it was getting dark.

"I turned back and landed at RCAF Station Trenton and at that time there was only one hangar and one barrack block.

"It was a weekend and there was only an airman there. He directed me in saying right here sir, yes sir, and so on."

Needless to say the airman was a bit flustered when a woman in a skirt stepped out of the aircraft.

There was no place to stay on the base and she said the airman said there weren't any hotels "fit for a woman in Trenton."

Intel, October 6/81