

Terry James helps restore Halifax bomber

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# Rebuilding aviation history

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SHILOH - Terry James is holding a serious mechanical challenge in his hands. Small bits are all that remain of what was once the undercarriage of a Halifax bomber airplane. His job is to put the thing together again. He will.

Since Terry and Germaine James moved to their Shiloh retirement home five years ago, threads of the past keep manifesting themselves like the interwoven patterns of one of Germaine's tapestry's. The Halifax Restoration Project has many happy coincidences.

Born in the Cotswolds on England, he attended a grammar school at Cheltenham.

"It was not too science and technology oriented," he recalls. "They had an Honour Board with the names of all those who had gone on to university. My cousin's name was on the board and my parents would hold it up to me.

But, alongside that display was a photograph of an aircraft, a large bi-plane bomber from World War I, the Handley-Page (V-1500) and it's builder Frederick Handley Page who had been educated at my school."

During World War II, the Handley-Page company designed and built the Halifax bomber.

"I had always considered that photograph, been drawn to it. I thought that was more important than degrees."

Now, over 50 years later, Terry is working on a Halifax aircraft.

"To me, this was an interesting connection because there are no Halifax's left. I never expected to see one."

Like a lesson in patience, Terry is proof that good things happen to those who wait. True to his conviction, in 1947 Terry started a five-year he apprenticeship with Dowty Equipment Ltd., one of the pioneer undercarriage/hydraulic aviation com-

panies based at Cheltenham, England. Mostly working on the fighters and bombers of the 1950s, he was aware of the Halifax bomber and the three factories where it was manufactured.

"I decided to emigrate to Canada," recalls Terry. Accredited as an undercarriage design draftsman, in 1953 he boarded a ship bound for Canada with only the name of a Toronto relative in reserve. Disembarking from a train in Toronto at 7 a.m. one morning, the same day he went for a job interview on King Street West.

"By 2 p.m. I had a job as a mechanical draftsman for \$40 a week. I really wanted to work for Dowty in Ajax, but they were not hiring design people at that time. Eventually Dowty did offer me a job."

Indeed, it was working on the famed Canadian Avro Arrow design starting Christmas 1953.

"I worked on the Arrow

landing gear design until the bitter end in 1959," recalls Terry. "But it was a great time. I met Germaine, we married and had a child. By the time I was laid off in April 1960, we had two more children - twins. Then, I went to Chalk River working on nuclear design for 30 years."

Germaine and Terry lived in Deep River and then Pembroke, raising their three children, pursuing their hobbies and interests. Terry never lost his enthusiasm for aviation. After retirement in 1990, the

James' eventually sold their Pembroke home and built a new home on Germaine's family homestead at Shiloh.

"In November of 1994, Germaine was invited to attend a convention of the international rug hooking association. I said I thought she better go," recalls Terry of Germaine's acclaim and recognized talents as a rug hooking instructor and creator.

"Germaine's friend from the States was also going and she as interested in taking a tour the cotswolds where I grew up. I thought I should be the Boy Scout for the group to show. I visited the Duxford Museum while Germaine attended the conference. I saw people working on World War II planes. I thought to myself, if I lived here, I'd be doing that. I never thought of it happening locally."

Later, reading a the British magazine *Aeroplane Monthly*, Terry read of the Canadian Halifax restoration project.

*see next page*

Bits and pieces - Terry James of Shiloh faces a challenge of technical skill: the restoration of the landing gear of a Halifax bomber retrieved from the bottom of a Norwegian lake.

PHOTO BY MANDY MARTIN

