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Not Easy to Enlist in Royal Canadian Air Force

(By Hugh Tempkin)

This is the second of a series of articles about the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Commonwealth Air Training Plan, written for the members of the C.W.N.A. by Hugh Tempkin of the Fergus News-Record.

It is not easy to join the Royal Canadian Air Force.

That is not because men are not wanted: they are, and the need will become greater. It is not because one has to go far to find a Recruiting Centre: they are scattered all over Canada, and every province has at least one of them. Ontario has six—at North Bay, Windsor, London, Hamilton, Toronto and Ottawa. It is hard because the R.C.A.F. is particular about those it allows into its ranks. There is a high tradition to be maintained. For the air crews, at least, educational requirements are high. A pilot, for instance, must have junior matriculation, or better.

Alert, physically fit young men are needed, of course. The age limit for pilots is 30 years; for air observers and wireless operators, two years older. According to the official literature, "applicants are required to be of good character, possessing intelligence and personality, and to be observant, self-reliant and keen on flying." And this means just what it says.

At the Recruiting Centre

In order to find out just how a young man would join the R.C.A.F., I started at the beginning of the procedure. I went to the Recruiting Centre at 297 Bay Street, Toronto, choosing it because it is the largest and the busiest in Ontario. The staff numbers 45.

The Recruiting Centre is in an old office building. That was obvious, not only because of the layout but because the names of brokerage firms and the like are still to be found on some of the doors. In the hallway, a man scrutinized me carefully. He said nothing but his look was penetrating. I wondered if I was suspected of spying or something of the kind but my guide, Flying Officer Nicol, steered me safely past. Later, I learned that the man in the hall is an expert in character study. Had I fortified myself with a few drinks, or been otherwise unsuited to become a member of this great brotherhood, he would have found an excuse for steering me out the door.

Every applicant must have proof of age and education, at least two letters of recommendation and character, one of them from a recent or present employer, a marriage certificate, if applicable, birth certificates of children, if any, and discharge papers, if formerly in military service. I might have supplied them all, but had none with me. Most applicants go like that and are sent to the Parliament Buildings or wherever it is necessary to go to get the certificates. There is no charge for these, if applicant uses the forms given him at the Recruiting Centre.

Pilots Are Most Popular

Nearly every applicant, who has the qualifications, wants to be a pilot. That's easy enough to understand for there's a certain glamor about the job. What boy hasn't

dreamed of flying his plane through the skies? Who hasn't heard what Canadian pilots did during the last war? And how many really know much about all the other jobs the Air Force offers?

Many don't realize that conditions have changed greatly in the air since the last war. Then the pilot usually flew and fought alone; now co-operation is essential. Many planes carry crews of three or four or more. They require air observers, wireless operators and air gunners.

For every plane flying in the air, a large crew is needed on the ground. The R.C.A.F. lists some 65 trades in its ranks. Experienced men are much preferred, but inexperienced men of the right kind will be trained.

Many applicants try to bluff their way into the positions they desire. There's nothing new about that, of course, but it's almost impossible in the R.C.A.F. All applicants for trades must pass the "trade tests" even before the medical examinations. Two corporals start the questioning. If the man passes them, he goes to the Warrant Officer.

To save time, I slipped past the two corporals and went directly to Warrant Officer W. H. Day, familiarly known as Sgt. Major Day. In years past I knew more than one Sergeant Major. It was never the most popular rank in the Army. But Sgt. Major Day was unlike any other of the rank that I had met. For one thing, he had a sense of humor. Equally important, he seemed to have an uncanny knowledge of the intricacies of all the trades in the Air Force.

I looked down the long list and pretended I wanted to be a motor mechanic. (I really wanted to be a pilot, but I was a bit too old.) I couldn't imagine myself being a diesel oiler or a pigeon loftman or a masseur or an interpreter, but everybody knows how to drive a car, so I would be a motor mechanic.

"Suppose you were out driving with your girl on the way to Niagara Falls and you were on a back road somewhere" (What that man knows!) "and your car stopped, what would you do first?" asked the Sergeant Major.

I said that I would look in the gas tank, but it appeared I had plenty of gas. After covering several possibilities, it seemed I had trouble in the timing of the ignition, and I was soon beyond my depth. The Warrant Officer knew far more about it than I did. So I decided to be a pilot after all.

That is typical of what every recruit goes through at first. I asked if some were not too nervous to answer. After all, a man joining the Air Force was taking an important and decisive step. Sgt. Major Day agreed, but he said that he soon put most recruits at ease and I believed him. If a few were still nervous, he sent them in to talk to the girls on the staff for a while. I didn't know whether to believe that or not. Anyway, I skipped that part of it.

The attestation paper which the recruit must fill out contains the expected questions, such as name, age, place of birth, and so on. There is space enough to list the names of eight children, which should be ample. There are also some less obvious questions: Have you ever been convicted of an indictable offence? Are you in debt? (If so, state particulars—and there is plenty of space for the particulars.) Sports and Hobbies? In addition, there is a question about flying experience in hours, solo, dual or passenger. It is said that some of the applicants, particularly from the United States, have plenty of hours to their credit, but that doesn't always guarantee that they will be good pilots in the fighting services.

Definite and detailed instructions are given to each applicant when filling in the forms, yet 90 per cent are said to make one stupid mistake: they don't write in the name of their home town. They don't forget their street address, but most of them applying at that centre are from Toronto and don't think it necessary to say so.

The Medical Examinations

The medical examination is thorough, particular attention being paid to the eyes and hearing, as might be expected. After passing the usual eye tests, reading letters on the chart at a distance of 20 feet in a darkened tunnel, and so on, the doctor held up his finger two feet in

front of my eyes and told me to watch it, as he slowly pushed it nearer my face. Gradually I grew more and more cross-eyed, which was quite proper. He asked me to try it with him. His eyes followed my finger to a certain point, then one suddenly snapped back. I was surprised, but it's fairly common. Those candidates haven't perfect muscular co-ordination, it seems, and can't judge distances accurately. They are the ones who might crash into another plane while landing.

Finally, there was the color blindness test. I looked at colored circles in a book, one to a page. Each one looked as though it was a mosaic pattern and in each I could trace with little difficulty usually, though not so easily sometimes, a pair of figures—57, or 29, or a pattern. A man who was color blind would see an entirely different number, one which didn't show up until pointed out by Flying Officer Kinsey, who was giving me the tests. The system was devised by a Japanese professor who had made a study of color blindness. For those who are seriously color blind, there is a light test with red and green lights. It is said that five per cent of the recruits are color blind and so useless as members of an air crew.

Last stage in the recruiting process was carried on in a basement room where a full set of my finger prints was taken. The fingers were stuck on a sheet of glass coated with printer's ink or something of the kind, then pressed one by one in the proper places on a card, then the four fingers of the left hand together and the four of the right hand. My guide enjoyed this immensely, but there seemed to be a certain grimness to it as well. The members of the R.C.A.F. carry copies of these and other identifications with them wherever they go.

After farewells to Flight Lieut. Lumsden, O.C. at the Recruiting Centre, and Flight Lieut. Muckell, I headed for the Manning Depot, the next stage in the life of the recruit in the R.C.A.F.

Next Week—The Manning Depot.

When 110 Holstein-Friesian calves were sold by auction at Brampton on Tuesday of last week, \$11,500 was the proceeds which will go to the Holstein-Friesian Association in Britain for war use. \$325 was the highest price paid and was for a calf offered by T. B. McCauley of Hudson Heights, Que. Hon. J. G. Gardiner, Dominion Minister and Hon. P. M. Dewan, provincial Minister of Agriculture were present at the sale.

Liberal Classified "Ads" bring results.

OBITUARY

MRS. C. DAVIS

Funeral services were held at Schomberg Thursday, June 26th for the late Mary Louisa Davis who died at her home there Monday evening in her 84th year. She was born in Bradford and on her 18th birthday was married and moved to Schomberg. Her husband, Charles Davis, who predeceased her by three years, was known as one of the pioneers of Schomberg. She was a life member of Schomberg Women's Institute.

Surviving are two daughters, Florence E. Moore of Ithaca, New York, and Clara of Schomberg, and one son, C. Russell Davis of Ridgetown. Rev. J. McEwan of the United Church and Rev. F. V. Abbott of Schomberg Anglican Church officiated at the service held from the home. Interment was in Schomberg Union cemetery.

Going Somewhere?

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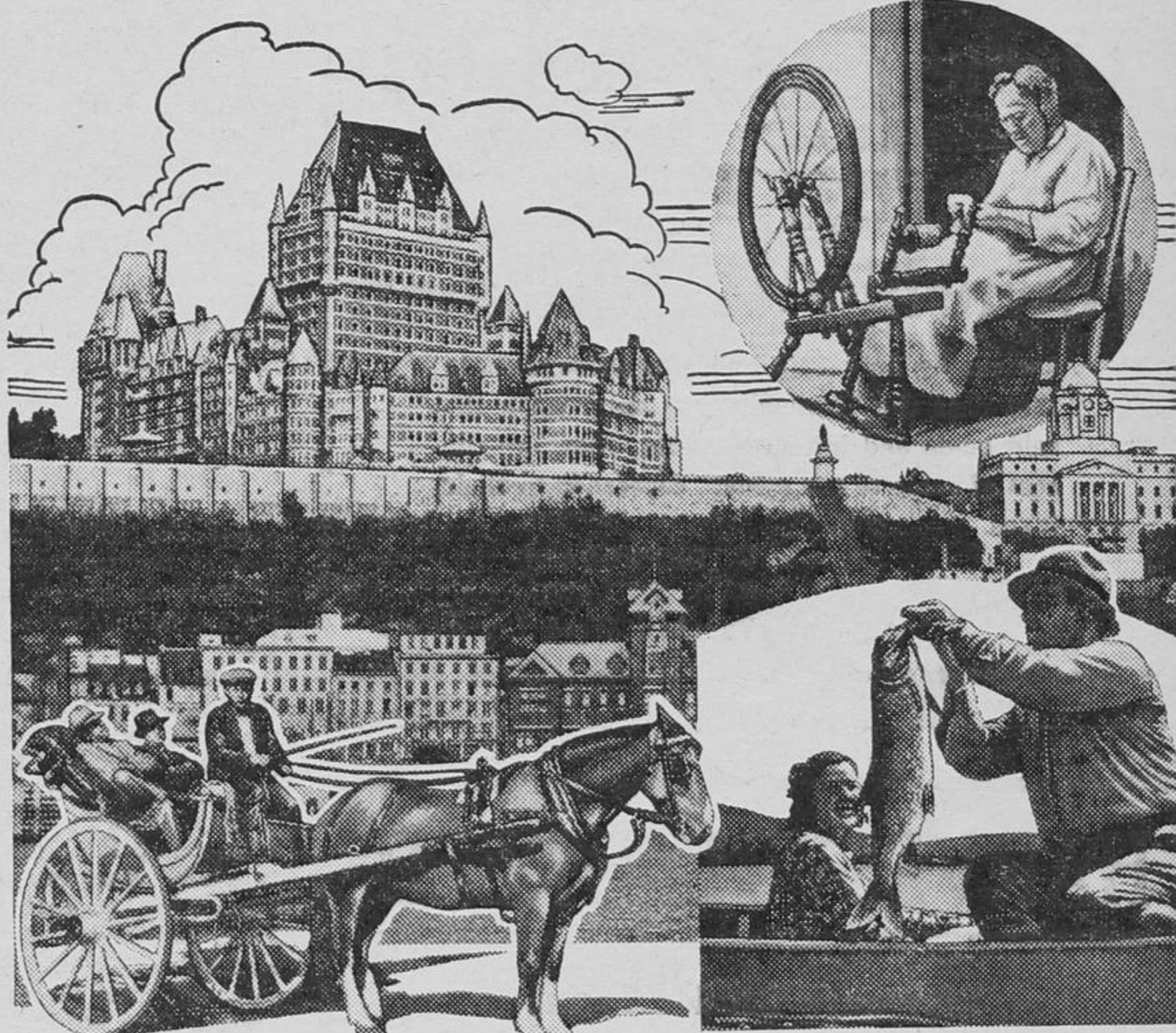
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Vacation Delights In Old World Setting



Tourists who previously found the time-mellowed cities of Europe the answer to their vacation problems are today enjoying those same old world delights on their own side of the Atlantic—in old Quebec City where practically every vacation sport and pastime, including golf, tennis, fishing and hunting, combined with the most up-to-date accommodation, awaits the visitor in a mediaeval setting unique on the North American continent.

Easily accessible by Canadian Pacific rail lines from Montreal, New York, Boston, and other large eastern centres, Quebec is experiencing one of the liveliest seasons in its 300 years of history.

The opportunity of attending service in century-old churches, rambling through narrow, cobblestoned streets, over long-silenced battlefields, and seeing the colorful "habitant" at work in the fields, is a rare privilege in the new world, and one that Quebec alone can offer. The ancient dwellings of Quebec's "Lower Town" stand out in sharp contrast to the modern grace of the Chateau Frontenac, popular headquarters for the Quebec visitor. This famed Canadian Pacific hostelry is starting point for many a delightful sight-seeing tour by bus, cab, or lofty, horse-drawn caleche. Within easy distance lie the historic Plains of Abraham, the Citadel, the ancient city wall, the Great Gates, numerous monuments and other interesting landmarks. Farther afield the tourist is drawn to the picturesque Isle of Orleans, where farmers still sow by hand, plow by oxen, reap with the scythe and thresh with the flail, while women ply ancient hand-ooms and spinning wheels. Other nearby attractions include Wolfe's Cove, Quebec Bridge, the Shrine of Ste. Anne de Beaupre, Montmorency Falls and Kenil House, while northward lies the famed Laurentides Park, a vast area of virgin lake, forest and stream country where vacation delights await at every turn.