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Canadian Aviation History

Art Seller

and
Skyway AIR SERVICES LTD.




Art Seller was a determined visionary who conceived of a flying service business while still a prisoner of war. His vision established a world class company whose influence continues to this day.

Story by Jack Meadows

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Airport*

Art Seller was born in Saskatchewan on November 1, 1919. He moved with his parents to the West Coast when he was still young. Like so many of that generation he grew up fascinated by airplanes and flight. Like only a few, he followed through with his obsession.

As a teenager growing up in the depression, he washed cars, delivered bread, did any job he could find to save money for flying lessons on a Taylorcraft. Later he worked around the flying world on Sea Island, doing every sort of job to the same end. Slowly, with Gilberts Flying Services, he managed to add hours until, in 1941, he had not only his Private License but also a limited Commercial License. This enabled him to join the Royal Canadian Air Force as a pilot without further screening.

He said little to his family or later colleagues about the war. As a fighter pilot flying Spitfires from Britain, soon after 'D' Day, on June 17, 1944, he was shot down by ground fire over the beachhead. He became a Prisoner of War in Eastern Germany. From there he managed to survive the long, hungry, desperate forced marches west as the Germans evacuated the camps and moved their charges away from the advancing Russians.

Only after his death did his son, David find a diary kept of his time in a P.O.W. camp. It was full of plans for his postwar activities, ideas for his own company and its name, even sketches of advertising designs. He already had a very clear idea of what he was going to do as soon as peace allowed.



Art Seller with Royal City Flying Club
Tiger Moth. circa 1945

[Click on picture to view a larger image.](#)

To take advantage of the postwar flying boom, almost as soon as he got home in 1945, in partnership with Harold Foster, whom he later bought out, he formed Royal City Flying Club at Vancouver Airport. It had one war surplus Tiger Moth. Later, a second Moth was added.

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Vancouver airport was becoming crowded so, in 1947, he decided to move to Langley. He might almost be considered the father of the present day bustling Langley Airport for, in 1947, it was only a grass field - an emergency landing strip for Trans Canada Airlines, with no buildings other than a couple of old farm privies Art used as offices.

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