TOM PAYNE FOX – Dec. 24, 1909 – Sept. 14, 1995

Tom Fox was a pilot, engineer, and at one time, janitor and bookkeeper. Tom had taken flying lessons in 1930, but his career in aviation might be said to have begin when he was 23 years old when he built an aircraft from plans he'd seen in Popular Mechanics magazine-total cost of this aircraft was $800.00. He was the revered Edmonton businessman who donated land worth millions of dollars to the city for parkland and recreation.. He was a member of the "Nervous Nine" who each signed notes worth $100,000. in 1963 to put the Edmonton Eskimos back on their feet. He bankrolled Speedway Park car race track in the 70's and has been president of many organizations, from the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, Edmonton Flying Club, the YMCA, Quarter Horse Assoc. of Alberta (twice), the Boy Scouts and the Edmonton Exhibition Association. He was a member, founding-member or life-member of a long list of clubs and societies which includes the Air Transport Association of Canada, Shriners, Rotary Club and the Fort Edmonton Historical Society. Besides being inducted into the CCHA Hall of Fame, he was inducted into the Aviation Hall of Fame, and the Edmonton Klondike Days Hall of Fame.

Tom Fox was one of the most organized people known, he could be driving down the road to a cutting, and he knew in advance how many would be in a class, the dollars involved and when he drove home, he would know exactly where he stood in the standings on that day. Standings were very important to everyone in those days.

Over the years Tom had some excellent horses, some of his favorites that he showed in the Canadian Cutting Horse competitions were Cocoa Buck, Connie Bee, Black Peppy, India Ruby, Docs My Tie, Docs Dandy Doll, Squote and Ran Dry. Tom also showed in the quarter horse shows in Alberta in trail, pleasure and reining classes on his good horse Old Tivio. Tom was the first organized President of the Alberta Quarter Horse Association.

Tom was instrumental in the trip to England, upon being invited by Prince Phillip to demonstrate our Cutting Horses on huge fields much like football fields. Tom came up with the solution and designed a pen to take to England that was made out of nylon and cable with steel posts and pegs. The whole fence was color coded so we could train staff to put it up quickly. The whole pen could be in place in ten minutes, thanks to Tom.

Not only did Tom ride horses well over the years, he was very involved with the Administration of the Associations. Tom became a member of the CCHA in 1956 and served as Vice President in 1959, and 1960, President in 1961, 1962, 1963, 1971 and 1978. He was Secretary – Treasurer in 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985. Tom wrote the Constitution for the CCHA. It hadn't been for all his hard work, the CCHA would not have grown like it did in Canada. Clara was a driving force in the CCHA and spent hours keeping score, timing and helping out wherever she could. They were married for sixty years, and we know Tom could not have accomplished all he did without a partner beside him as good or as nice as

Clara. The membership of the CCHA thought so much of Clara, they inducted her in the CCHA Hall of Fame also.

Tom designed his own truck for hauling horses and believe me he had everything in it. If you needed something, Tom probably had it, and don't think you could ever catch Tom on the #2 highway. If there was ever anything ahead of him, he had to pass it. I believe that Tom has lived most of his life this way – always looking ahead to challenges whether with his business or with his beloved horses. Tom wrote of his many aviation adventures, which I will document in further issues of the "Cutter". Tom Payne Fox was inducted into the Canadian Cutting Horse Hall of Fame in 1987.

At this 60th Anniversary for Tom and Clara which was at the Derrick Golf and Country Club in Edmonton, after Fred Duke's presentation, Fred went out to the trailer and the last horse Tom had competed on, the mare "Ran Dry", was brought into the banquet room, the halter given to Tom and he sat in his wheel-chair petting the old mare - it was a very emotional evening for everyone.

Article taken from the Edmonton Newspaper and Fred Duke's presentation at Tom & Clara's 60 Anniversary.

Thanks so much Fred for information to do this well-deserved tribute to Tom.

Following is the article in the Edmonton Journal, September, 1988, of one of Tom Fox's adventures.

The temperature went off the gauge that night and when he awoke, Tommy Fox found his cheek frozen to his sleeping bag.

His aircraft has been forced down on the frozen Peace River two days previously and now he was seriously considering his chances of survival.

The weather was completely socked in, but even if it improved, Fox wasn't sure he would be found. "MAYDAY", the bush pilot had yelled into his radio as he carefully coaxed his Anson, CF-EKD, between the 100 meter-high banks of the Peace.

But he had been unable to make contact with anyone and now he was carefully conserving his seven-day supply of tea, hardtack, dry soup and canned "Spam."

On the first day of his camp on Friday, Jan. 21, 1947, ox has set off to snowshoe to Fort McMurray, an estimated 24 km to the east. He had left a note about his plans, packed an axe, some matches and food – but he only traveled several hundred meters. "This is ridiculous," he told himself as his snowshoes disappeared into the deep, powdery snow. "I'll die from exposure before I cover a couple of miles."

He returned to his aircraft, cut wood on a nearby hill and brewed tea and soup in a tin stove he'd set beside his aircraft.

Fox slept in the Anson's cabin that night, using his wing tarpaulins for a mattress and stretching his double-layered sleeping bag on top. But it was impossible to keep warm in the -70 Fahrenheit temperatures and he dozed fitfully. His axe handle broke the next day and he was reduced to breaking smaller branches for firewood to feed the stove he'd now set up in the aircraft's cabin. Fox was so cold that afternoon that he thought he'd take the advise of someone that said the best way to keep warm in a sleeping bag is to remove all your clothes and let the insulation hold in your body heat. "The author of that theory must have been from Florida," the pilot told himself as, shivering, he climbed back into his heavy underwear, wool pants and shirt, winter parks and donned his lined flying boots for good measure. He pulled one of the wing covers over his sleeping bag for additional insulation and went back to bed.

The best place to hear how Fox came to find himself in this predicament, and what happened, is to sit around a campfire with him.

Suddenly, he is no longer the revered Edmonton businessman who donated land worth millions of dollars to the city for parkland and recreation. Forget he was a member of the "Nervous Nine" who each signed notes with $100,000. in 1963 to put the Edmonton Eskimos back on their feet. Forget he bankrolled Speedway Park Car Race Track in the 70's when it was in financial trouble or that he's been president of every organization from the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce to the Canadian Cutting Horse Association. Forget his directorships of the Edmonton Flying Club, the YMCA, Quarter Horse Association of Alberta (twice), the Boy Scouts and the Edmonton Exhibition Association, to name but a few. And forget he is either a member, founding member or life-member of a long list of clubs and societies which includes the Air Transport Association of Canada, Shriners, the rotary club and the Fort Edmonton Historical Society.

When the campfire sparks fly up and momentarily compete with the stars, Fox is in his element, rolling his own cigarettes and spinning a yard with the boys.   At 78, Tommy Fox still competes in the Calgary Stampede, runs businesses and entertains many local association committees in his lounge. (It was the family swimming pool before the kids left home). It's almost by accident, if you listen to him, that Fox was inducted into the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame; the Edmonton Klondike Days Hall of Fame and the Canadian Cutting Horse Hall of Fame.

"It was so cold that it hurt that day on the Peace" he says, taking up his narrative again. "But I knew that unless I started feeling euphoric, I was okay. "When you start to feel at peace with the world, hypothermia is setting in. You want to sit down and drift off."

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The aircraft Fox landed on the Peace River was major business investment and it was vital that he salvaged it. Born in Vancouver in 1909, Fox took flying lessons in 1930. But his career in aviation might be said to begin when he was 23 years old and built an aircraft from plans he'd seen in a Popular Mechanics magazine. "It was inexpensive as aircraft go, about $800." said Fox. "but that was a lot of money in the hungry '30's, I was later able to sell it at a resourceful capital gain." He married his wife Clara in 1935 and operated a fuel and trucking business before the Second World Was. In 1941, Fox joined the No. 2 Air Observer School in Edmonton and 31/2 years later went to work for Ferry Command, mainly flying Liberators and Flying Fortress to the Middle East and India. "Air transport was vital to the developing North and I decided I was going back to Edmonton to operate a business for 10 years, win, loose or draw", he said. Before leaving the forces, Fox bought an ex-RCMP DeHavilland Dragonfly aircraft and flew it west with his wife, two small children and their worldly possessions on board. He also purchased a Tiger Moth and in 1946 he became a one-man operation, Associated Airways. "I was the pilot, engineer, janitor and bookkeeper" he said. "I soon started adding additional aircraft and staff and building bases throughout the North". The fledgling company faced a severe setback in 1947 when a pilot crashed a newly-acquired Anson aircraft while flying supplies to the Hudson Bay Post on Fort Chipewyan, 576 km north of Edmonton. This was the aircraft Fox was to spend miserable days in on the Peace River. The pilot, against orders, had flown above a cloud layer and picked up ice on the wings as he descended to land. "One wing stalled as he leveled out and it hit the icy surface of the lake," said Fox, "Nine and a half feet of the starboard wing broke off." There were no roads into Chipewyan Lake and many thought, come spring, the ski-equipped aircraft was destined to end up in the bottom of the lake. But Fox, who decided he had to salvage parts such as the engines, propellers, landing gear and instrument, worked out that he could fly the aircraft if he cut a corresponding 9 ½ feet from the port wing. "This compared with the wing loading of some maximum freight loads that had been carried," he said, "It seemed feasible!". Fox and colleague Maury Danes found the Anson in worse shape than they has feared and fought -50 degree temperatures as they worked. "The biggest problem was that the outboard half of aileron (a moveable part of the wing which helps balance an aircraft during flight), had been shattered, so was the rear spar inboard of the middle aileron hinge. "It was obvious that the spar would have to be extended far enough to accommodate the aileron hinge if the ship was to be flown out". This was a woodworking job and the only material available

Were scraps of lumber left from the building of the post's floor, but it did the job. The duo patched and doped one wing and were eyeing the sawing of the other when the pilot of another Anson landed and borrowed 45 gallons of gas. The gas, taken from the starboard wing, was returned the following day, but pumped into the port wing because of work being done on the starboard.

'That's a big country and you have to help someone in need of gas", said Fox. "But I didn't know how much trouble it was going to put me in". Repairs finished, Fox test-hopped the aircraft, made a circuit

and reported everything ready for his take-off for Fort McMurray the following day. He detailed the work in the aircraft logbook – and found himself in a predicament. There was no doubt Department of Transport officials wouldn't be pleased with the aircraft's new configuration and Fox, Associated's only licensed engineer, would risk suspension if he approved the aircraft's flight. So hoping to keep his engineer's license, he certified the aircraft unfit for flight, and then flew it. Danes headed directly for Edmonton in his Taylorcraft while Fox made for Fort McMurray – and trouble. "I climbed gradually to about 2,000 feet and noticed the fuel gauge for the starboard tank seemed to be dropping at an alarming rate," said Fox. "I realized this was because I was having to cruise at climb power to maintain an airspeed of 90 mph." But when he tried to switch to the port tank, the pilot found his engine spluttered. "It was obvious the cross-feed lines were frozen," he said. "And it was extremely doubtful if there was enough fuel in the starboard tank to keep my flying until I reached Fort McMurray". When the starboard tank ran out, Fox chose to land on the Peace River, as close to firewood as possible.

Even with the tarpaulins over him, Fox enjoyed little sleep the night he awoke to find his face frozen to his sleeping bag by condensation from his breath. He melted the ice with his hands and made tea and soup for breakfast. He felt in better spirits when, as he gathered firewood, he noticed the weather was clearing. Late that afternoon, after a meal of fried Spam, Fox heard a familiar drone and looked out. Overhead, the Taylorcraft waggled its wings. "Maury Danes soon joined me in a cup of tea and it wasn't long before we were in McMurray", he said. The next day, they returned with a tank of gas and a "Jeep" heater, warmed the Anson up and were soon on their way to Edmonton via Fort McMurray. But turbulence was encountered en route and Fox found himself being "Knocked about like a pin-ball in the sky" because of the shortened wings and reduced aileron surface. "I had to hang on to the controls to keep the ship right side up," said Fox. In Edmonton, the aircraft was quickly taxied into a hanger and the Associated gang were enjoying handshakes and congratulations all around when in came the Department of Transport's superintendent of Engineers and Maintenance. "He burst in wanting to know what the bleep-bleep contraption was that flew over his new house", said Fox. "To say he wasn't very happy would be an understatement. He demanded that my pilot's and aircrafts engineer's licenses be surrendered".   The following day, Fox was called before the district superintendent of air regulations, who criticized the unapproved aircraft innovations. "I'm sending these licenses to Ottawa with a recommendation that they be suspended", he told Fox. It was only a week later that the licenses were returned by Ottawa Officials, who chose not to suspend the Associated boss. "Heck, they didn't even bother to comment," said Fox.

A man of the right business stuff, a dash of the Swashbuckler peppering shrewd financial acumen, Fox and Associated Airways prospered. In 1950, he bought a Bell helicopter, founded Associated Helicopters and pioneered the use of helicopters in the North, particularly in the Oil and Forestry Industries. He also formed Fox Investments, C.B. Holdings Ltd. and several other successful companies.

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But Fox, says his peers, was always ready to share his talents and success with the community. In 1954 he served as general campaign chairman of the Edmonton Community Chest (forerunner of the United Way) and later took the office of President. He also found time to serve as President of half a dozen groups which reflected his interest in aviation, resources and his hobby, riding horses. "I exercised race horses on Vancouver Island after lying about my age when I was 13 and 14 years old." Said Fox. "For years, I never seemed to have enough time to ride."

In 1955, Associated Airways was awarded the prime contract in the Western Arctic for the DEW line, which brought about a rapid increase in large freight aircraft. The following year, the airline was sold to Pacific Western Airlines and for many years, Fox served as vice-chairman of the board of directors, playing a leading role in getting PWA into jet equipment.

Fox acquired a parcel of land in the river valley in which to live and enjoy his hobbies of riding and ranching. Showing a munificence typical of him, he announced in 1968 that 39 acres of the land will go to the city of Edmonton when he and his wife head for heaven's greener pastures. Again, showing his usual foresight, he made sure future generations will enjoy the land by stipulating that it can only be used for parkland or recreation. Fox leases the land in lieu of taxes and a grateful city council named the freeway running through it "Fox Drive".

"Tommy became a most accomplished rider and won trophies everywhere", said equestrian Fred Duke. Fox and Old Tivio, Connie Bee, India Ruby and Doc's Dandy Doll, again to name but a few, filled a roomful of trophies. "I was out in the foothills with Tommy the other day and I'm pleased to report nothing has changed," said Duke. "He rode the backside off us all".

Fox sold Associated Helicopters to the Neonix Group in 1969 and he's proud it's still operating today, with many of his former staff in key positions.

Stories about the intrepid Fox abound but it is worth mentioning he took up race-car driving at the age of 60, bankrolled Speedway Park when it was in trouble and, of course, became president of the Edmonton Speedway Motor Racing Association. Somewhere down the line, the city awarded him the Companion Order of Flight for his aviation work and he received the Order of Polaris, for his northern flying. When the campfire ashes begin to dim, Fox gives them a little kick, rolls another cigarette and says: "I'd do it all about the same again if I was just starting out' There'd be a few minor changes. It wasn't always easy, but I'm not going to sit back and worry about it. There's too much still be done – to try."

 And he's got a sleeping bag now that will handle any kind of wither!

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