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## Yellowknife Western Canada SAREX Biggest Yet!

By: *L.N. (Larrie) Happy*  
Deputy Director MB.

When the decision was made in Regina last fall, few believed that the next Western Canada SAREX, to be held in Yellowknife in 2003, would be much of a success. Little did many expect, but were soon proven wrong when CASARA members were challenged with this task. It was unfortunate that financially we were restricted, as many others would have loved to make the journey to “the land of the midnight sun” to participate.

Sixteen private aircraft, plus the military Hercules, is a real handful, but the Yellowknife CASARA team was not easily intimidated! With a bit of assistance and guidance from our military CASARA Liaison Officers, and visiting CASARA members, the exercise evolved into a big success.

Our Yellowknife hosts did an excellent job throughout, and deserve to be commended. To Director, Jim Tennant, slaving Dave Taylor, the Deputy Director/Training Officer and all their participating members, congratulations on a job well done, and a “GREAT BIG THANK-YOU”!

A “Thank you” is also in order for all the visiting crews from the various western provinces and the Yukon. This also includes our CLO Capt.

Lanning, Capt. Kolesnik, and the Rebel 339 Herc crew (a great bunch)!

I have been fortunate to participate as the Safety Officer in this, and most of the past, Western Canada SAR Exercises. It is rewarding to see, and I am glad to report that CASARA flight crews are consistently showing a high degree of discipline and professionalism in these SAR undertakings. It is obvious that training and practice in CASARA is paying off! If I may quote our military CLO, Capt. Lanning, “an exercise of this type would not have been possible five years ago”. Today it’s a different story.

I believe that every aircrew has returned home safely, some after many hours in the air. Congratulations to all of you for having the courage, taking the time, accepting the challenge, and performing to the best of your ability. I have heard that some learned a lot, some made minor errors or mistakes, some were somewhat intimidated by the terrain, but in general we all learned, and will continue to as we strive to improve through CASARA mandated training and exercises such as the Western Canada SAREX.

I hope that other CASARA participants of the Yellowknife Western Canada SAREX take a few minutes to commit their impressions and

experiences to paper, so that the general membership will be able to enjoy and benefit from this once in a lifetime experience.

Safety is an integral part of flying that we all have to challenge ourselves with daily, to ensure; or minimize the potential of becoming a statistic.

Please continue this practice, and “Fly Safe”!

## Ghost Plane Found !

By: L.N. (Larrie) Happy  
Deputy Director MB.



While participating at the Western Canada SAREX in Yellowknife, I came across an interesting article in the Friday, August 8, 2003 issue of the *Weekend Yellowknifer* newspaper. Hope you will find this interesting.

The headline read “GHOST PLANE FOUND. Gone nearly 40 years, crash site proves to belong to bush pilot Chuck McAvoy.” “If I ever crash, they’ll never find me,” was his most infamous quote. Legendary bush pilot Chuck McAvoy’s claim stood for 39 years, one month, and 26 days.

1964 was the last time that Chuck McAvoy’s canvas covered Fairchild 82 with two passengers on board was seen. They went missing en route from Bristol Lake near the Arctic Ocean to Itchen Lake, which straddles the present-day Nunavut-NWT border approximately 350 kilometres north of Yellowknife.

The search for McAvoy’s plane went on for the better part of the summer of ’64, with members of the Royal Canadian Air Force search and rescue, and numerous local pilots taking part. At one point the search was called off, but efforts resumed after the Canadian government came under pressure from the employer of the two

passenger geologists, Roberts Mining Corporation.

Yet ultimately, the fate of Chuck McAvoy and his missing plane became the “Stuff of Northern Legend”! It wasn’t until August of 2003, that a helicopter pilot and a team of geologists finally discovered what’s left of McAvoy’s Fairchild 82.

The remains of the aircraft were in remarkably good condition, given the fact that it had spent the last (close to 40) years on the unforgiving northern steppe. The canvas skin of the plane had long since disintegrated, but its metal airframe was more or less intact. Almost everything in the plane was charred by a fire that probably erupted on impact, as the aircraft was carrying several canisters of fuel when it disappeared. Unopened sardine cans litter the beachhead of an unnamed lake in Nunavut, scattered randomly around the crumpled airframe of a wrecked bush plane. This was an indication that none of the occupants survived the crash. Remarkably, McAvoy’s flying wallet somehow managed to survive the blaze, offering a glimpse back in time to 1964.



From the photo of the crash site, we can appreciate that the aircraft we are searching for, may not look anything like the aircraft in a

picture. During our exercise in Yellowknife we all experienced first-hand, some of the challenges that a search and rescue team would confront in this rugged/wild terrain.

---- Till Next time, "Fly Safe"! ----

## Zone 2 News

Greetings, fellow volunteers! I would like to thank Darryl Childerhose (former Zone 2 Commander and now Treasurer) for his past work and commitment to the Searcher and thank Jim for volunteering to continue his effort.

There are five events I would like to comment on: SAREX Night, Yellowknife Western SAREX, SAREX Water, C-130 Hercules spotter training and SAREX Mock-Up.

**SAREX Night** involved searching for a remote mobile target at night, loaded with varying light sources, including different coloured flares and coloured fireworks. With deteriorating weather and distant lightning, search aircraft did find and communicate with the target. The target shot off the varying light sources as communicated. In an almost humorously bizarre twist, the target was not a CASARA target at all, but a civilian who must have monitored CASARA operations and had an ample supply of light sources. Radio transmissions are monitored! In conclusion, aerial spotting determined that red fireworks and red flares appeared the most notably on the dark night.

**Yellowknife** enlightened many participants with its unique topography. Much of the rock, water, and few trees of the Canadian Shield make the aerial view of the ground look astonishingly the same. It reminded me personally of Sudbury, without the yellow dust of INCO and the black pollution-tainted NASA training hard-rock grounds. A good lesson learned here is to start the search area from the most notable geographic reference, in our case using the Creeping Line Ahead method. An oddly shaped lake or unique topographic formation or landmark is a good starting point. The use of such a start point may appear awkward at first (ie, it is not simply the most direct-to or nearest start point from departure) but certainly will pay off at the completion of the task. This is important if the

whole mission is miscalculated (eg, an error in turn calculations using 90 degrees instead of 180 degrees) in undifferentiated terrain. If the starting point can be determined topographically, search matters become much simpler.



Yellowknife Western SAREX search topography near YZF

**SAREX Water** involved searching for an ELT near a watercraft with a drop and CAP airplane. Four aircraft participated in twelve drops with the conclusion that practice certainly improves accuracy. In Cessnas, best drops were obtained with the navigator holding the door and making the drop while directing the pilot to steer. Drops from Piper aircraft were best initiated by the pilot through the camera hole. SAREX Water also indicated the importance of climbing to over 3,000' AGL for initial ELT detection in Southern Manitoba. As a test, CAP determined that no ELT detections were made within 6 nautical miles without direction to the target. The use of white flour proved immensely helpful: no damage to either the environment or airplane was done (ie vs. use of hard canisters) and the drop left a bubbling watermark tracer for minutes.



SAREX Water (can you spot the target?)

The myth of the **C-130 Hercules** in CASARA operations ended when the huge bird actually appeared at YBR to pick up two loads of twelve spotters. The exercise was enhanced with low-level flying over the no-fly Shilo Prohibited Area. I'm proud of Zone 2's performance, especially of the newcomers who had *a priori* training the morning of the flights and the lengthy period between C-130 spotter training. Captain Rod Lanning and SARTech Darcy St. Laurent's flight crew provided superb briefings. Thank you to Kathy Serle (Chief Spotter), Mary Ritchie (Spotter), Terry Pearce (Navigator) and Roy Sobchuk (Pilot) for providing the barbeque of Rollie Kuip's (Pilot) excellent beef at Eleanor Kidd Park for all of us.



C-130 Spotter Training Zone 2 with Captain Rod Lanning and SARTech Darcy St. Laurent

A final exercise I would like to comment is **SAREX Mock-Up**. Fred Eshpeter's (Navigator) construction and positioning of an ultralight aircraft proved to be an excellent fresh target for spotters. Fred's art of camouflage made the SAREX particularly challenging with all aircraft finding the small craft.

Upcoming SAREX's will include continuing our speed-of-service and spotter-to-navigator training. Spotters are encouraged to double-check navigator calculations before take-off.

Good flying!

Kevin A. Choy MA, MCP, JUS  
Zone 2 Commander

## Introducing Your New Searcher Editor



Hi, everyone. My name is Jim Bell. In real life, I'm an aircraft maintenance engineer working on Air Canada A320 series aircraft. Before that I

spent several years working on Dash-8's, Tutors, and Hercules aircraft in the Canadian Forces.

I am the Winnipeg Zone Training Officer, and the new editor of the Searcher. I also edit the Winnipeg Zone newsletter, and I intend to bring the same approach to the Searcher. One of the more successful aspects of the Wpg Zone newsletter, I think, is that many people write articles. This produces a variety of "voices" in the newsletter, and makes it more interesting to read, than if you were just reading the same author all the time. I welcome articles and photos from all members of CASARAMAN. If you took part in an exercise or a search, have a few good photos

from a CASARA activity, or some useful information to pass on to other members, please send it to me. The preferred format for articles is Microsoft Word, and the photo format is .JPG. I can open just about anything, though. I will also take articles and photos by good old Canada Post.

My e-mail address is [jbelle@gatewest.net](mailto:jbelle@gatewest.net), and my mailing address is 819 Ashburn Street, Winnipeg, R3G 3C8.

As with other aspects of CASARA, it's the members who will determine the success of the Searcher. So don't be shy, and don't assume that someone else will do it.

## Goose Bump



This Canadian Forces CC-150 Polaris (Airbus A310) struck a Canada goose on final approach into Winnipeg a couple of weeks ago. The goose just missed the radome, and made a three inch deep, eighteen inch high dent in the nose. Imagine the damage a goose could do to a Cessna. When you're flying and you see birds that are potential threats to your aircraft, make sure you point them out to the pilot.

## Your Survival Kit

By Jim Bell

When's the last time you checked your survival kit? CASARA members should always carry one when they fly – does yours reflect the changing seasons? With winter approaching, there should be a greater emphasis on fire starting and shelter building materials.

Generally, the sequence in a survival situation is:

- remove yourself and others from immediate danger;
- perform first aid;
- start a fire;
- build a shelter;
- find a source of water;
- build signals;
- find a source of food.

Try to have something in your survival kit that will help you with each of these requirements. Knives and Leatherman-type tools are essential. Have more than one type of fire starter in your kit. Wire can be used for building a shelter, snares, and fishing. Garbage bags are useful for collecting water or providing shelter. Though you might think that there's no need for mosquito repellent, many brands burn easily, and can be used as a fire starter. The mosquito net can probably be left behind.

## Walter Zylich

1918 - 2003



We in Winnipeg Zone were saddened by Walter's passing this summer. In many ways, our zone revolved around Walter. He was Deputy Zone Commander, Treasurer, and our primary contact with JRCC. He also worked as our base radio station operator on almost all of our exercises and searches, and maintained our training records.

We will miss him.

# **CASARA NATIONAL SAR EXCELLENCE AWARD PRESENTED FIRST TIME IN GANDER !**

By: L.N. (Larrie) Happy  
Deputy Director MB.

The week started with the usual prairie interest in weather for the week, with little regard for Hurricane Juan that was brewing on the east coast. Few of us truly believed that this storm would cause any real disruption to the SAREX scheduled for Gander, NL. Not even after boarding the Air Canada flight at Pearson Airport in Toronto, was there any heads-up info on the storm that was heading directly for Halifax.

Anticipation of arriving in Gander on Sunday evening took a sour twist as we landed in Halifax. We were hustled off the aircraft and informed that the Airport Authority had just closed all flights in and out of Halifax, because of Juan's imminent approach. At the time the winds were gusting to 25 mph, and the temperature was hovering near the 20 degree mark. Reality, however, was soon to rear its ugly head!

Just like all of the other fortunate Air Canada passengers, we were informed that our flight had been rescheduled for 06:15 the next morning. The better news (WHOOPEE!) was to be back at the airport a minimum of 1.5 to 2 hours early the next morning, and to fend for ourselves for accommodations!

Well, for those of you that were watching the latest severity reports and scenes of destruction on the local news channel, Davina Harker from Whitehorse and I were in the middle of it all! A "Hell of A Storm" it was! Power, phone lines and water were all lost at approximately 12:30 PM, with total emergency light failure some 20 minutes later. Within the next two hours, the hotel roof also disappeared, along with the hotel sign, and many of the huge oaks that snapped like toothpicks! Few had any sleep, as the storm finally showed signs of passing between 4:00 & 5:00 AM.

With the limited visibility in the morning rain, scenes from a war zone would best describe the resultant destruction!

Contact via cell phone was established with Air Canada in Montreal at 05:00, with confirmation at 05:30 that the flight to Gander was delayed, but would take off as soon as the co-pilot was able to make it to the airport.

I believe it took him approximately one hour to arrive from Halifax, having to move or dodge trees and obstacles in his way. For the tired but relieved passengers,

thankful for having survived Juan's destruction, departure for Gander was successful later that morning!

The National SAREX started with a Meet & Greet on Monday the 29<sup>th</sup> of September. All the participants had a great time, as everyone indulged in comradery, local comedy, music, and cuisine (moose burgers & sausages), including renewing of old friendships!

Tuesday was devoted to mass briefings and presentations for most of the day. The SAR Techs managed to do some team practice jumps, while CASARA organized their week's activities and scheduling of crews, in anticipation of being paired off with military crews for the Search Event starting on Wednesday. After being asked by our VP Training/Operations, Mr. Brian Bishop, to undertake the position of co-ordinator/judge for this exercise, plans were activated, selection of crews was made, and their respective scheduling was initiated.

The rain associated with heavy low clouds dropped conditions to less than VFR requirements, seeing both CASARA and military flight crews having to cancel all flying to the search area on Wednesday, with only the Labrador helo finally being able to fly the designated course on Thursday. Because of the rain, a decision was made to cancel all flying to the search area on Friday. Saturday was just a gorgeous day, sunny with minimal winds, giving us the long awaited opportunity for all CASARA crews to fly the search area. It not only became extremely busy for Major Mickey Colton (the military co-ordinator/judge) and me, but somewhat exciting as pressure of scoring was checked and re-checked, to ensure fairness between two top crews. As judges, we agreed that the scores were not close enough for a tie, and the winning team was selected for their overall teamwork/performance.

The CASARA winning team of Tom Ray, pilot from Saskatchewan, Ernie Jones, Navigator from New Brunswick, Tyrone Blizzard, Spotter from New Brunswick, and Sharon Kenny, Spotter from Newfoundland, were announced as the winners at the National SAREX Awards Banquet on Saturday. The team was presented with the first ever National SAR Excellence Award! This is truly a beautiful masterpiece, one that all CASARA members would be proud to have their names on. As you may recall, Sharon Kenny was also on the winning team in Gimli last year! She must be the team's "GOOD LUCK CHARM"!



---- CONGRATULATIONS CASARA TEAM #5! ---

I believe that all CASARA participants at the National SAREX came back winners. Whether members were in direct participation, presentation, observation, assistance in planning and execution of delegated duties, attending training sessions, both group and personal, including revision of the navigation log, there was enough to keep everyone as busy as they wished to be.

As the flight crews prepared their navigational planning, it became clearly evident that the cause of most of the delays was the form they were using. In most cases, unnecessary information and calculations were generated, leading to the delays. By making small but significant changes to the present nav log, CASARA can cut their preparation time in less than half, as was proven by a crew that tried the modified form. I believe these improved results will reflect in future CASARA evaluations. The proposed changes were based on the present military nav log, input from our CLO, Capt. Lanning, and coordinated input from the exercise judging staff. This modified nav log was presented to the attending Training Officers, who voted to submit it to the National Executive for their approval. Standardization and use of these living forms (may be changed at any time, as required) throughout our CASARA organization will greatly improve our effectiveness and efficiency.

As it is getting rather late (11:30 PM), and still being under the influence of Newfoundland time, I will bring this article to a close. A personal "THANK-YOU" to Mr. Brian Bishop, VP Training/Operations, including all the organizing and participating CASARA/military personnel for giving me the opportunity to assist them in the capacity of SAREX co-ordinator/judge, to help make the National SAREX a success! CASARA is truly becoming a professional organization to be reckoned with!

----- Let's be Safe Out There ! -----

## Coming Events

If your zone has an event that you would like to have listed here, please send the information to the editor before the publication deadline.

### **Winnipeg Zone**

Saturday 10 January 2004 – **First Aid Course**  
Friday 7 May 2004 – **Annual Wings Banquet**

### **Provincial Zone**

31 December - **Searcher Deadline**  
29 May 2004 – **Provincial AGM**

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