

Jeanne Muldoon interviews Don Fink, a graduate from the first class at No. 12 Elementary Flying Training School.

**Excerpt 1 - Early No. 12 Elementary Flying Training School days and civilian instructors**

**DON FINK (D.F.)** - Steeves. Flight Lieutenant Steeves

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - Steeves. All right

**D.F.** - S T E E V E S. He was the C.O. of the whole...

**J.M.** - of the flight

**D.F.** - the whole thing, yup

**J.M.** - Yup

**D.F.** - the air force

**J.M.** - The instructors, were all civilians

**D.F.** - They were all civilians at that time and they were all Waterloo-Wellington Flying Club see

**J.M.** - You got it

**D.F.** - They were all civies at that time

**J.M.** - Yeah, they were

**D.F.** - There was Sergeant Moore, became my instructor

**J.M.** - All right

**D.F.** - He was my...

**J.M.** - That was after...

**D.F.** - Well, I did the first with Davidson, but I was...

**J.M.** - With Herb, yeah

**D.F.** - I don't know how I got over to Moore but I, something happened

**J.M.** - Yeah, well they probably had to divvy the...

**D.F.** - Well, whatever, it was... see they weren't finished there

**J.M.** - Oh, I know

**D.F.** - They hadn't completed hardly anything

**J.M.** - ... October, you were lucky you weren't billeted out

**D.F.** - I think all of the airplanes were outside

**J.M.** - Yeah, they didn't have a hanger

**D.F.** - They had the lean to part, like where you could, the rooms

**J.M.** - Yeah

**D.F.** - But I don't think we had anything in the hanger, if I remember right. It's vague in my mind as to whether there was anything in the hanger or not.

### **Excerpt 2 - Visits from No. 31 Air Navigation School and deciding to become a bomber pilot**

**DON FINK (D.F.)** - At that time the Navigation School at Port Albert was going.

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - Yes

**D.F.** - And the Ansons used to occasionally come in and, amazing, you know, that was the first chance I ever had a look at a twin engine. I'd never seen a twin engine and all of these, all of these.... I got in it and I sat in the seat and I thought, geez, that's I want to be is a bomber pilot. Boy, do I ever want to be, like all kinds of throttles, and instruments and everything. And that was what made up my mind. And the funny part is when we were posted to Saskatoon for our FTS, SFTS

**J.M.** - Yeah

**D.F.** - SFTS, we had a choice and it's the only course that I ever heard of that ever had a choice. Those who wanted to be fighter pilots put their hands up and those who wanted to be bomber pilots put their hands up. That's how they selected them.

### **Excerpt 3- Visiting Goderich**

**DON FINK (D.F.)** - Yeah, All I can, I don't even remember. I just remember coming in and out of that gate and going down, 'cross the river.

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - All right

**D.F.** - and up the far side when the old bridge was in there

**J.M.** - Yes...

**D.F.** - And I remember going in through the guard house, okay? And getting in and out there. We used to go in and go to a restaurant to have something to eat.

**J.M.** - Did you not get into, did nobody invite you over for meals?

**D.F.** - I was never at anywhere for a meal, because we were...

**J.M.** - Well, I don't know how you missed my father

**D.F.** - We were seven days a week, like we didn't, there was no... I don't know, I guess I was just tied up in flying and getting through and everything else. I didn't give a damn whether I went out anywhere to eat.

#### **Excerpt 4- Landing in a field to visit the instructor's girlfriend and flying in snow**

**DON FINK (D.F.)** - I remember my instructor landing in a field. I know, geez, landing in a field, you know, you just pick some old farmers field and go and land in. But he had a girlfriend there. So we went and landed, taxied up and she came out and they talked for a little while. I was all... I wanted to fly. Boy, I was just all keyed up, I didn't give a damn about the girl. Anyway, so that was, we did that.

**J.M.** - Yeah

**D.F.** - And the other thing I can remember about it is flying in snow for the first time.

**J.M.** - Right

**D.F.** - And going up in weather that I would have thought, you can't see anything.

**J.M.** - Right

**D.F.** - Like in a little bit of snow storm

**J.M.** - That'll be Lake Huron

**D.F.** - So what they did was, we'd keep within site of the aerodrome. The wing tip, you'd just keep the airport right there. So, that's how. And that's my first introduction to dirty weather flying.

#### **Excerpt 5 - Airmen visiting local homes for meals**

**DON FINK (D.F.)** - There again you see, I can't remember anything. I remember going out of the gate, I remember going into town to a restaurant. We had a favourite restaurant we used to go to and look at the girls. Blah, blah, blah, and then go back, you see.

**JEANNE MULDOON (J.M.)** - Were there no dances that they had for them?

**D.F.** - No, I never went to a dance, never went to a dance ever. Either at Goderich or at SFTS because we were seven days a week, see.

**J.M.** - Well they changed it after.

**D.F.** - Well, yeah they might have but...

**J.M.** - They did. Our house was like Grand Central Station, you know. It really was.

**D.F.** - Yeah, right.

**J.M.** - And the boys used to come on weekend often, and for dinner too during the middle of the week.

**D.F.** - Sure, sure, sure

**J.M.** - Some of them bought an old Ford car, you know, \$5 each.

**D.F.** - Yeah, yeah

**J.M.** - And mom would say, I think I hear that car coming down Britannia road, Jeannie. We'd better throw some more corn in the pot, you know

**D.F.** - Now, I, if I did go out, I don't remember. I might have. I might have gone out to somebody's house for supper

**J.M.** - You know what I think, I think this happened the following summer, after you were there Don, of course. And there was the boys from Goderich that were in that course.

**D.F.** - Yeah

**J.M.** - And they used to come over and eventually they brought their buddies.

**D.F.** - Yeah

**J.M.** - And then the word got out, you know, if you want to go to a house for dinner, just go over to the Kershaws. There were many many other homes in Goderich...

**D.F.** - oh yeah, sure, I know, I know they were very, very, if I remember rightly, they were very hospitable.

**J.M.** - Oh yeah

**D.F.** - I always felt that they were, I always felt the people in Saskatoon were too.

**J.M.** - Oh sure, they were glad to see you there.

**D.F.** - Oh yeah, they were glad, they wanted to help in any way that they could, you know.

**J.M.** - Right

**D.F.** - So, that was, you know.

**J.M.** - Do you remember the food at Sky Harbour? Everybody has told us, so far, and of course it may have been different when you were there first, that they never had better food at any of the schools they were ever at then the one at Sky Harbour.

**D.F.** - Do you see, that was a brand new mess.

**J.M.** - Yes, and it was a civilian run mess.

**D.F.** - Yes and I don't think it was any screaming hell when we went there.

**J.M.** - Well it could be that, then again, you were there during the growing days.

**D.F.** - yeah right, but, you see, when I look back, I never think about things like that. That doesn't stick in my mind. Food was not the, what, the important thing.

**J.M.** - Right, no.

**D.F.** - It was what I was doing, flying and eating and sleeping and flying because I was a nut, a bug about flying anyway you see way back when

**J.M.** - Sure, well this is it

**D.F.** - I was a nut about flying, really, to be honest with you. Because I wanted to fly, ever since I was a little guy