

Jeff Mellon recalls his time as a former instructor at No. 12 Elementary Flying Training School during the spring of 1944, including one memorable trip to Kitchener. Before coming to Goderich, Jeff was also an instructor at No. 6 S.F.T.S. Dunnville, No. 9 S.F.T.S. Centralia, and No. 9 S.F.T.S. St. Catherines. His reminiscences were recorded on a cassette in 1992 and sent to Jeanne Muldoon.

At the end of the year '43, I was posted to Goderich pending posting overseas. Don Mason instructed there at the time and I'm please to report that Don and I still play a lot of golf together. Although, sorry, also transferred to Goderich from St. Catherines were Curly Warren from Toronto and Clyde Russell from North Bay. Together we made up a line on the Goderich Flyers hockey team. Curly and I were only so-so hockey players but Clyde was major league stuff. Clyde would set up Curly and me all game and as a result we were scoring 3 or 4 goals a game and looking pretty darn good. The three of us got together for the Goderich reunion in 1988.

During the war, liquor was not available in Goderich so we had to fly to Kitchener and smuggle back bottles in order to keep our party stocks in responsible, respectable shape. And one of these trips, an instructor, who shall remain nameless, did a little hedge hopping on the way down and carelessly flew through a tree. When he landed in Kitchener he was appalled to see that his lower left wing was severely twisted and we suspected it was broken or cracked main spar. Engine panels were dented and torn. And the tip ends of the propeller were shredded and spilt. There was a mess and it appeared totally unrepairable. The instructor realizing this, things stood he would be court marshalled and positively found guilty, and concluding that the aircraft could fly perhaps without totally collapsing in the air, took off in a great flutter of flapping wings and throbbing propeller noises. On the way home he faked a forced landing, overshot into a stone fence and broke everything that wasn't all ready broken. Now the investigation, the authorities found a piece of solder in the carburetor, and how lucky can you get and concluded that this could have been caused, could have caused the engine to cut out and the aircraft to force land. The instructor was cleared although he was required to practice forced landings by the hour for the following two weeks. But a happy note in this story is that the flying instructor went on to have a very successful flying career for the next 35 years.