



Major Alfred Williams Nick Carter OBE, DSC

The Founder of 111 Pegasus Squadron

On 17 December 1986 WWI flying ace, "Nick" Carter, OBE, DSC aged 92, died peacefully in Vancouver. Not only did our city lose a colorful character and one of the few intrepid airmen who flew the famous Sopwith Triplane in aerial combat, but Pegasus 111 squadron also lost the founder of its illustrious unit back in 1939.

Nick Carter was truly a Knight of the Air and his love of flying made him a strong advocate of air preparedness. Prior to his own acceptance into the Royal Flying Corps, he, like so many Canadians, went off to Florida and paid for his own 'ab initio' flying training to obtain his 'International Aero-Club Certificate' in order to become a pilot. The British Admiralty, following his frantic persistence, finally sent him to England. There he soloed after less than three hours of instruction in an old Rumpty with the elevator stuck out in front, and a piece of string - a crude side - slipping and airspeed indicator - his only instrument.

The summer of 1916 found Carter in Southern France flying on operations with the Royal Naval Air Service. They were initially engaged primarily in 'long-distance' bombing of Germany's industrial Saar valley. The squadron's task was to fight its way for 60 or 70 miles to drop four sixty pound bombs per machine, and fight its way back. The following year he was chosen for a special fighter squadron of selected pilots attached to the famous Royal Flying Corps. When the Armistice was signed, Nick was in command of No. 10 Naval squadron and had personally accounted for 14 enemy aircraft.

In between the wars he, amongst other things, became Air Station Superintendent in Ottawa in Canada's original Air Board, a forerunner of the RCAF. As a strong advocate of youth training, it was in that uncomfortable year of peace, 1939, that the Air Advisory Board used him to launch a noteworthy experiment in the city of Vancouver. This was to give him the opportunity of making an invaluable contribution to Canadian Youth. The experiment involved the training of Air Force Cadets as a feeder for the permanent and non-permanent RCAF. The Air Force thus persuaded Nick Carter to step back into uniform to be Commanding Officer of the cadets.

In January 1939 the Vancouver School Board and the Vancouver newspaper cooperated by calling a meeting in the Stanley Park Armouries. More than 1,100 boys had applied by the end of the first week. Two hundred and fifty were carefully selected for admission to the squadron. Most of this original member served in the

RCAF in Canada and overseas. Four of these won Distinguished Flying Crosses and one a posthumous George Cross.

No. 111 Air Force Cadet Squadron was on parade in full strength, and in uniform, at the time of the King and Queen's visit in the spring of 1939. When war finally broke out in the autumn of 1939, Squadron Leader Carter was head of a highly polished and effective squadron. The value of training to Air Cadets had been proven to his own satisfaction, and he expressed the ambition to see similar squadrons organized from coast to coast. At this time he traveled to Ottawa and joined forces with the group of men who launched the Air Cadet League as a national organization for the primary purpose of building a reserve pool of pre-trained airmen for the wartime RCAF.

To his last day, Nick Carter worked in the interest of Canada's Air Cadets. 111 Squadron was with their Squadron Leader at the end, as it was they who provided the Guard of Honour at his funeral for his service to them over so many years.

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