

Harold Raymond Foottit

Chairman of the CASI Interim Council 1953/54

by R.D. Richmond, F.CASI

Ray was born at Vancouver B.C. in 1913 and passed away in June of this year. As a young man in the early 1930s, he was amongst a very small and diverse number of Canadians seriously interested in the technical aspects of aeronautics.

He graduated in 1934 from the Curtiss Wright Technical Institute of Aeronautics in California, a well recognized organization at that time, where he won the prize for original design and a letter of commendation from its President. The following year, he travelled to the UK, as were other like-minded enthusiasts, to gain training or experience in what was a very prolific industry. In 1935, he entered the design department of Heston Aircraft, moving the next year to Fairey Aviation. With World War II looming, married and possessing a newborn, he returned to California to join the Stress Department of Vultee Aircraft Company, and later, the Ryan Aeronautical Company, where for a period he was an instructor in that company's Aeronautical School.

In 1942, he joined the RCAF, at Headquarters in the Directorate of Aeronautical Engineering as Staff Officer in charge of Airworthiness, before his promotion to Squadron Leader in the Aircraft Development Section. He resigned his commission in mid-1945 to return to Ryan as Chief of Stress Analysis but rejoined RCAF Headquarters as Officer in Charge of Airframe Development the following year, with the rank of Wing Commander. Apart from two field postings and time at Staff and Defence College, Ray spent most of his career during the 1950s and 1960s at Headquarters, progressing to the rank of Air Commodore as the Director General of Aerospace Systems. It was a very active time during much of this period within the RCAF and consequently the Aerospace Industry where he had an active responsibility for the development of such well-known projects as the Sabre 5 and 6, the CF-100, the Argus Maritime Patrol Aircraft and the Tutor. During that time, he was also appointed, in 1957, Director of Aircraft Engineering - Assistant for Weapons Systems on the much publicized Arrow Project.



He retired from the service in 1967 and joined the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce as Director of Aerospace for a period of five years, where he continued to influence aircraft development. The next ten years, he maintained his interest in Aerospace through consulting work with J.T. Taylor and Associates and later with Foottit, Mitchell and Associates.

As an active member of the Ottawa Aeronautical Society, one of the founding groups of CASI, Ray was one of those nominated to represent that organization in the discussions that took place with the other charter groups. How the CAI (CASI) was formed was well documented by him in the first issue of the CAI Log, including that he was "pushed" into the Chair of the Interim Council; it needs to be added that it was by acclamation. Although the four original organizations all had the same objectives, there were many diverse opinions on how they should be achieved. The formalization of the Institute within nine months from the initial informal meeting can be credited to Ray's affable but determined diplomatic skills in reconciling a multitude of issues.

It was recognized early in the formative process that one of the essential elements of the Institute would be its own publications to convey information and as a vehicle for the membership to record technical papers. Ray was a writer, particularly on aeronautical subjects, who was later recognized by the Air Industry and Transport Association in 1956 with his receipt of their Writer of the Year award for "outstanding Aviation reporting". This talent led him to become the initial Chairman of the Institute's Publication Committee, which produced the first Log in September 1954, just four months after the inaugural meeting. The Journal followed in 1955. Both these publications continue as a tribute to his determination to making the Institute a success. In 1973, he received the C.D. Howe award in recognition of his leadership abilities.

Ray Foottit left an indelible imprint on Canadian Aerospace; as a military officer, a skilled engineer, an administrator and his unselfish dedication to the formation of this Institute.