



John Bertram prepared this photo montage highlighting different chapters of Lou Wise's creative life. The centre photo is a "meander" of the Beaver River taken for the Lake Simcoe Conversation Authority.

# Lou Wise: Canada's "Pilotographer" A Centenary Tribute

CAHS Toronto Chapter Meeting April 8, 2021

Presentation by John Bertram

Report by Gord McNulty

Forty-five members and guests of the Chapter enjoyed a colourful and tribute to a remarkable aviator, Lou Wise, on April 8. Chapter 1st VP and historian John Bertram presented the virtual meeting via Zoom. It was John's second solo presentation and the third time the Chapter has highlighted the career of Lou Wise, who died on July 24, 2019 at age 98.

In Feb 1999, Lou spoke about his aerial photography for Conservation Authorities and in May 2006, he spoke about the CF-105 Arrow and the Avro Canada Photo Department, where he worked from 1947 to 1961. John also noted an article in Canada's History magazine, February 2009 issue, describing Lou's efforts to keep the official Avro records from being destroyed.

Chapter President Sheldon Benner introduced our multi-talented presenter. John is a writer, director, photographer and filmmaker with extensive experience in many creative facets of film, television and theatre in both Canada and the U.S. In more recent years, John (email: [jb@jbmg.ca](mailto:jb@jbmg.ca)) has become actively involved in several historical groups.

John's participation in CAHS Toronto Chapter meetings started in early 2012. His research into the worlds of aerospace and aviation has grown from investigating personal connections in his family tree to a much broader exploration of "aerosthetics". John describes it as the unique, uplifting, cultural and social aspects of humanity's air and space endeavours. In that context, he's given multiple presentations at the CAHS National Conventions; the Toronto Chapter; the Canadian Aerophilatelic Society; the Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute; an informal veterans' history group in Rochester, NY; the annual reunion





Lou receives the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal from Prince Charles at Queen's Park, Toronto in May 2012.

conferences of the U.S. Fifteenth Air Force Joint Bomb Groups Association; and most recently at the prestigious Palm Springs Air Museum in California.



Lou and John in front of Piper Cherokee 180, C-FXCO, Aug 2010.

John chose "pilotographer" to describe Lou as he always had a remarkable ability to combine his two passions, aviation and photography, and became a well-known advocate for protection of the environment. He began with a short Global Television profile in 2012 showing Lou, at age 91, flying his beloved Piper Cherokee, C-FXCO. Lou acquired it in 1978. In commenting on his longevity, he said: "If you have things you love to do and keep on doing them, it keeps you going. That's my philosophy anyway."

The profile highlighted Lou's award-winning environmental aerial photography in a "retirement career," flying for Conservation Authorities all across Ontario over three decades. He took beautiful photos of rivers, wetlands and

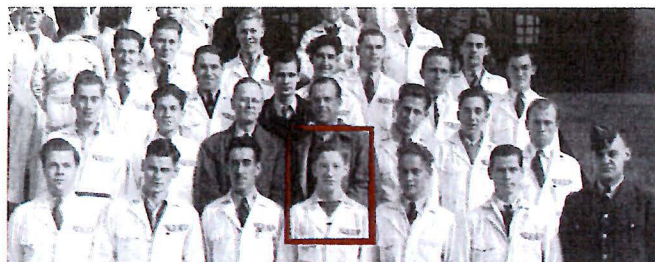
landscapes while flying the Cherokee with his left hand and taking pictures with his right hand. Lou installed a larger, customized door to facilitate the picture-taking from his "lofty perspective."

Thousands of photos, many of which were invaluable for identifying issues like urban buildup in the Oak Ridges Moraine for example, were taken by Lou. His photos can be found at the Conservation Authorities and his work earned numerous awards. He was awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal at Queen's Park in May 2012. Prince Charles

pinned the medal on him and was amazed to learn that Lou was still doing the aerial photography at 91. Lou took a strict medical test each September to retain his licence and Transport Canada certification. Sadly, 2012 proved to be the final season for Lou's time as a pilot.

John first met Lou in the early 1970s, when Lou was head of the Toronto Board of Education Audio/Visual Department. Lou worked there from 1962 to 1984, and led the department from 1973 to 1984. John had just started to make his own films, after finishing high school. Lou helped John to access equipment and they enjoyed a casual friendship. About 10 years ago, they reacquainted.

Lou was born in 1921 and attended the aircraft mechanic's course at Central Tech. In October 1939, he marched to the Manning Depot and enlisted in the RCAF. He was



Lou studied aircraft maintenance at Central Technical School, Toronto in the late 1930s. CANAV Books Collection.

soon posted to Camp Borden. In retrospect, Lou probably wished he had waited a couple of months when the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan began.

Lou wanted to be in aircrew, but was advised to join the groundcrew and told he might be able "in a little while" to remuster for aircrew. That "little while" turned out to be 3½ years. Lou was posted to No. 6 Service Flying Training





Harvard II 2502 was the first delivered the RCAF. Camp Borden summer 1940.

School Dunnville, where he was an airframe mechanic. By 1941, now a corporal, he was posted to the newly formed 411 Squadron at Rockcliffe.



Curtiss P-40Es of 111(F) Sqn at RCAF Patricia Bay, BC prior to departure to Alaska in early June 1942.

Lou anticipated heading overseas for Europe, but the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7 resulted in a posting to the West Coast. The Japanese had occupied a couple of islands in the extreme western end of the Aleutians, looking to control the North Pacific and distract the Allies. In response, the RCAF deployed squadrons with Kittyhawk fighters and Bolingbroke maritime patrol aircraft to help the U.S. military bolster the defence of the West Coast. Lou served in various postings from Vancouver to Kodiak Island on the south coast of Alaska.

Finally, by late 1943, he was able to get into flight training school at Regina. Then he went to Virden, MB, where he was among the first group of students to fly brand-new Cornells. Lou then went briefly to Swift Current, SK, but most of his flying training was at Centralia, ON, where he trained on Ansons. He thought he might be flying Mosqui-



Fairchild Cornell 10887 at No. 19 EFTS, Virden, MB, 1944.



Anson II, 7282, on flight from Centralia, August 1944.

tos, and graduated at the top of his class, commissioned as a Pilot Officer in 1944.

Alas, in November, Lou and his colleagues were classified as surplus and released to the air force reserve. John showed pictures of the meticulous log that Lou kept in very neat fashion. He kept the log until his final flight in the Cherokee at age 91½. He had an artistic flare too.



Lou's widely published photo of the Avro C-102 Jetliner at Malton Airport in August 1949.

Lou joined Avro Canada's Film and Photography Department at Malton in September, 1947. It wasn't long before he was taking excellent photos of aircraft like the Jetliner, first flown in 1949. Lou took one well-known photo of the Jetliner, showing the aircraft static on the runway, but it was credited simply as a company photo. "As Lou was fond of saying, he never saw one dime of royalties from that picture," John noted with a smile.



Avro Arrow first flight photographers, March 1958. Lou Wise bottom left with map. Jack Hurst, CAHS April 2020 speaker, bottom right.

By 1951 Lou was manager of the department, leading a team of about 16 people. John showed numerous photos taken by Lou. They included a memorable company newsletter describing the first flight of the Arrow on March 25, 1958, with a photo of the team with the various cameras they used.

Lou was a colleague of Elwy Yost, who worked in the Avro personnel department before he became a popular TV



Ontario Saturday night movie enthusiast. That same newsletter included Elwy sharing his excitement about the latest Hollywood productions, such as the 1957 movies Bombers B-52 with Karl Malden and Natalie Wood, Jet Pilot with John Wayne and Janet Leigh, and Zero Hour! with Dana Andrews and Linda Darnell.



ASM's Claude Sherwood views the Speed Graphic camera grip Lou designed for use in Avro's CF-100 chase planes.  
Photo: Robert Bergman.

Other photos covered special events like the 50th anniversary commemoration of the Arrow first flight. Elwy also commended Lou for the fine company documentaries he produced on the CF-100, crediting Lou for "mixing a sound technical format with sheer pictorial poetry" that made the industry proud.

At his home in Don Mills, Lou was proud of not only a large poster-sized image of the Arrow, but also a wonderful



Avro's motion picture team in front of a CF-100.

stained-glass hanging of the supersonic interceptor. Artist Jim Youngson, a friend and longtime colleague of Lou's at the Board of Education, presented Lou with the gift in appreciation of his talk to the Chapter in 2006.

Jim caught the aviation bug through Lou and created at least three pieces of aviation stained glass artwork, including

one showing the Jetliner. It was presented to Jim Floyd, designer of the Jetliner and member of Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame, by then Lieutenant Governor David Onley --- a keen Arrow enthusiast himself. The ceremony at Queen's Park, with several Avro alumni, marked the 50th anniversary of the rollout of the Arrow on Oct. 4, 1957.

John recalled many field trips with Lou, including a drive to CFB Borden where Lou enjoyed nostalgic recollections of the hangars that he knew from his first days in the RCAF. They had gone to Borden to enjoy one of its biennial air shows. When they

arrived late, and John thought they would need to turn around, Lou smoothly played three cards --- Camp Borden alumnus, Second World War RCAF veteran, and 91-year-old pilot --- in just two or three sentences. He did it so skilfully that he and John were promptly ushered into the VIP area with chairs, food and drinks!

Sadly, Lou had a medical issue shortly after the Global Television profile aired in 2012. He planned on one more season of flying, but his health prompted him to hang up his wings and sell the Cherokee. Family and friends celebrated Lou's 92nd birthday by taking him for a surprise visit to the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum (CWHM), where he was delighted to receive a ride in the museum's Cornell and pose with the CWH Anson.

John's first flight with Lou in the Cherokee was in August, 2010. Most of the conservation authority flights that John flew with Lou produced really scenic photographs, though some included more prosaic assignments such as expansion of a water filtration plant in the Duffins Creek area near Pickering. John recalled eight flights in the Cherokee, which Lou kept at Oshawa Airport.

John's last flight with Lou in 2012 was especially memorable. Lou generously provided our speaker with a flight





Lou flew in the CWHM Fairchild Cornell on his 92nd birthday in 2012. Hamilton, April 27, 2013. Photo Gus Corujo.



Lou with the CWHM Avro Anson V. Hamilton, April 27, 2013. Photo Gus Corujo.

over the Bertram family summer cottage at Sharbot Lake, north of Kingston. It was tricky for Lou to locate the cottage precisely, as John could only advise Lou that Sharbot Lake was “south of Highway 7.” John recalled that Lou would make steep banks and turns at about 1,000 feet to take his pictures. For his part, John happily reported: “On at least six of the eight flights I was not the least bit airsick. You can take what you will from that.”

John recalled a final visit to Queen’s Park. Jim Youngson produced a stained glass rendition of Arrow RL205, the last Arrow to fly, to thank David Onley for his support. It was a particularly enjoyable special occasion.

During a lively question and answer session, Bob Winson noted that all of Lou’s conservation

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### UPCOMING CAHS ZOOM MEETINGS

June 10. Chapter members will receive Zoom meeting access passwords by email. Non-members must contact [cahstorsvp@gmail.com](mailto:cahstorsvp@gmail.com) to be added to the meeting notification list.

### BECOME A CHAPTER MEMBER

Members receive seven issues of the *Flypast* newsletter a year:  
Regular Printed\* \$50.00 (8 pages max)  
Regular Email \$25.00 (10+ pages)  
Serving Military Email \$20.00 (10+ pages)  
Student Email \$15.00 (10+ pages)  
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### DONATIONS

Tax receipts for the year 2021 will be issued by CAHS National for donations of \$25.00 or greater. No 2021 tax receipts will be issued for donations received after December 31, 2021.

***Flypast*** is the newsletter of the Toronto Chapter, Canadian Aviation Historical Society (CAHS), and is available with membership. Membership fees are payable in November. **EDITOR:** Ken Swartz, 190A Lowther Avenue, Toronto, M5R 1E8, +1 416-836-7094 — [newsletter@cahstoronto.ca](mailto:newsletter@cahstoronto.ca)





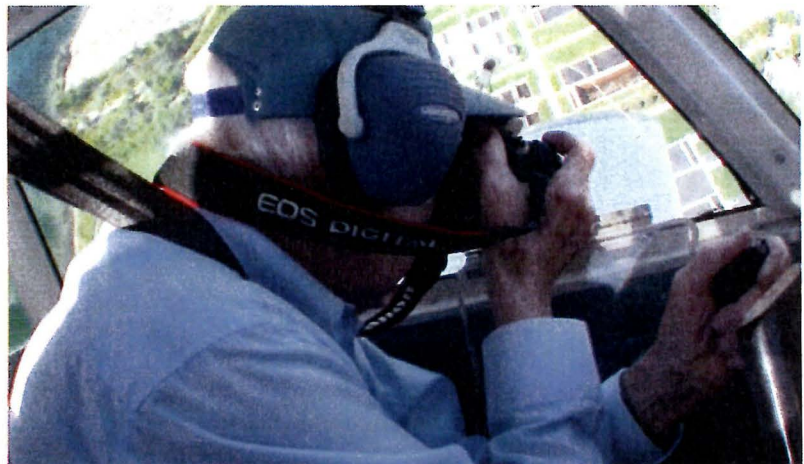
Lou on a Conservation Authority aerial photo flight, Aug 2010. Photo John Bertram.

authority slides were donated to York University. It is now digitizing the slides. As Bob said, "They will be a legacy for Lou and thousands of students and environmental planners for decades to come." When Lou switched to digital photography, all of the digital archives went to Ryerson University's Environmental Studies program.

John went online recently and was pleasantly surprised to find the extent which Lou's photography is readily accessible to the public. Just Google "Lou Wise fonds and York University" to find this rich history of our increasingly fragile natural heritage in Ontario.

John also recommended "Report from the Aleutians," a 45-minute U.S. Army colour film describing this relatively little-known chapter of the Second World War --- conducted in an often bleak, relatively inhospitable environment. Directed by John Huston, it's worth checking out on YouTube.

Bob Winson extended thanks to John for a fine presentation. In fact, Bob first met John after John enquired about then CAHS Journal editor Bill Wheeler. Within a year, John was a Chapter director. As Bob noted, John's fresh, artistic approach has certainly enhanced our speaker program. We appreciate his generous efforts to assist and share time with veterans in Canada and the U.S. and his enthusiasm for strengthening our Chapter and the CAHS.



Lou flies and photographs, Aug 2010. Photo John Bertram.

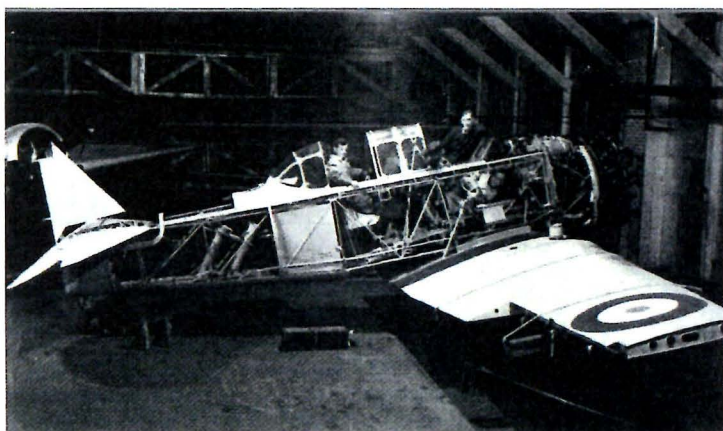


Lieutenant Governor David Onley, Jim Youngson and Lou, Feb 2013.

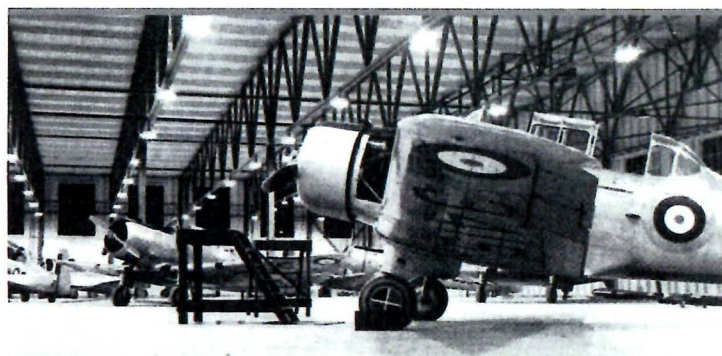




Nineteen North American NA-64 Yale's with No. 1 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) at Camp Borden, c1940.



Obsolete tube and fabric construction of a Harvard I is visible during maintenance at Camp Borden c1940.



Yale 3415 at Camp Borden c1940. Sold to Ernie Simmons of Tillsonburg. This aircraft is believed to have gone to Musee de L'Air et L'Espace, Paris-Le Bourget and was destroyed in a hangar fire on May 17, 1990.



No. 1 SFTS Yale 3371 on flight from Camp Borden c1940.

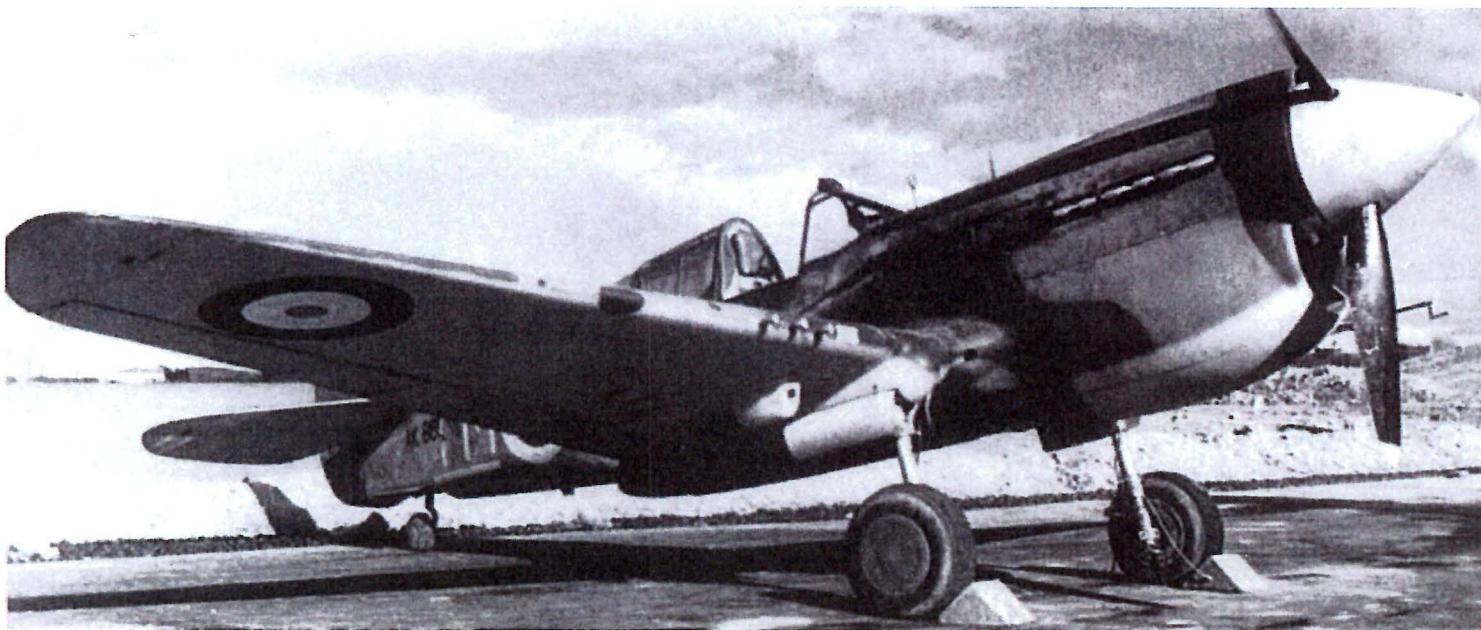


RCAF ground crew pose with Harvard I at Camp Borden c1940.



# Lou Wise: Canada's Pilotographer

CAHS Member No. 3360



A 111 (F) Sqn. Curtiss Kittyhawk at RCAF Patricia Bay, Sidney, BC, February 1942.



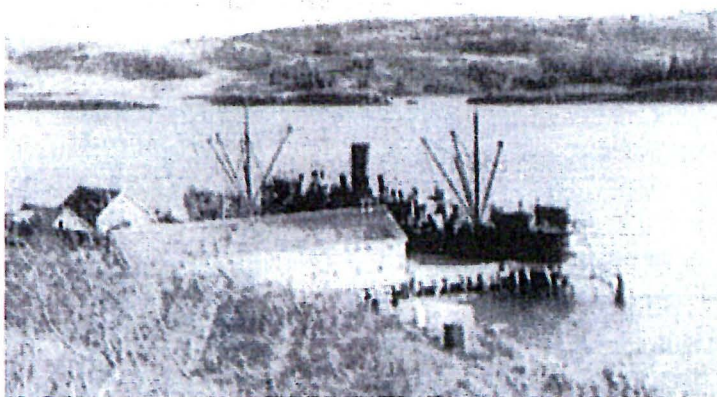
111 Sqn. ground crew and admin staff sailed north to Alaska on the SS Catala on June 6, 1942. Lou Wise is centre left.



Stinson Model A Trimotor, N16154 (?) of Alaska Star Airlines at Merrill Field, Anchorage, August 1942.



111 Sqn. Kittyhawks at Elmendorf air base, Fairbanks, Alaska.



The US Ostwego transported 111 Sqn personnel from Seward to Kodiak (pictured) in October 1942.





Lou Wise took thousands of aerial photos, including this one for the Minesing Wetlands Conservation Authority. The devastating floods of Hurricane Hazel in 1954 resulted in the creation of the 36 Conservation Authorities to manage Ontario's watersheds on a regional basis.



Mad River, Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority.



Lynde Creek, Lynde Shores Conservation Area, Whitby.



Goose Lake, Kawartha Lakes region.

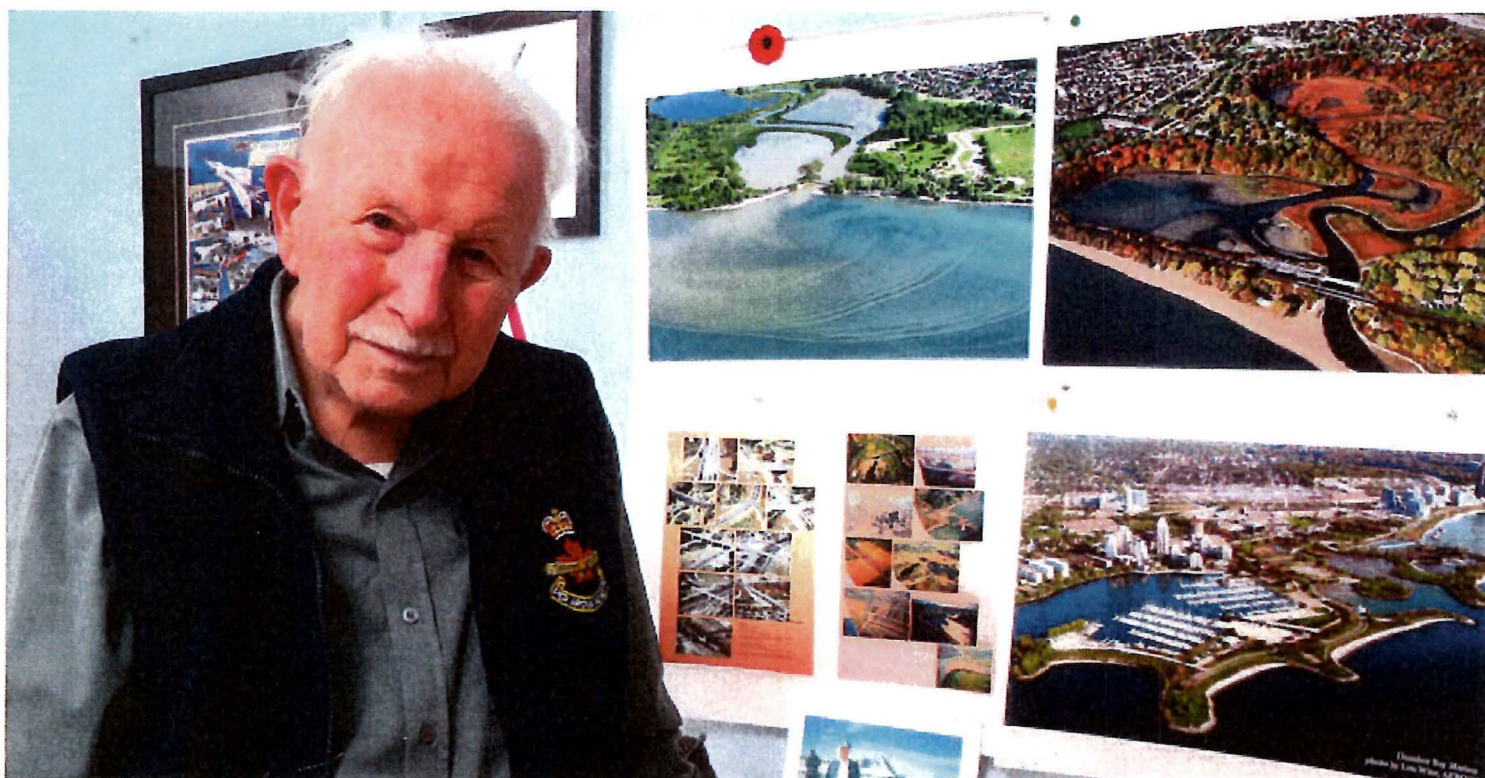


Nonquon River near Greenbank, Kawartha Conservation Authority.



# Lou Wise: Canada's Pilotographer

CAHS Member No. 3360



Lou spent his final years at the Sunnybrook Veterans Care Facility, Toronto. Lou is seen here with photos printed by Ana Seara, the Director of Sunnybrook's in-house Veterans Portrait & Photography Studio in January 2016. Photo John Bertram.



East Cross Creek, near Lake Scugog and the town of Lindsay. Photo Lou Wise.