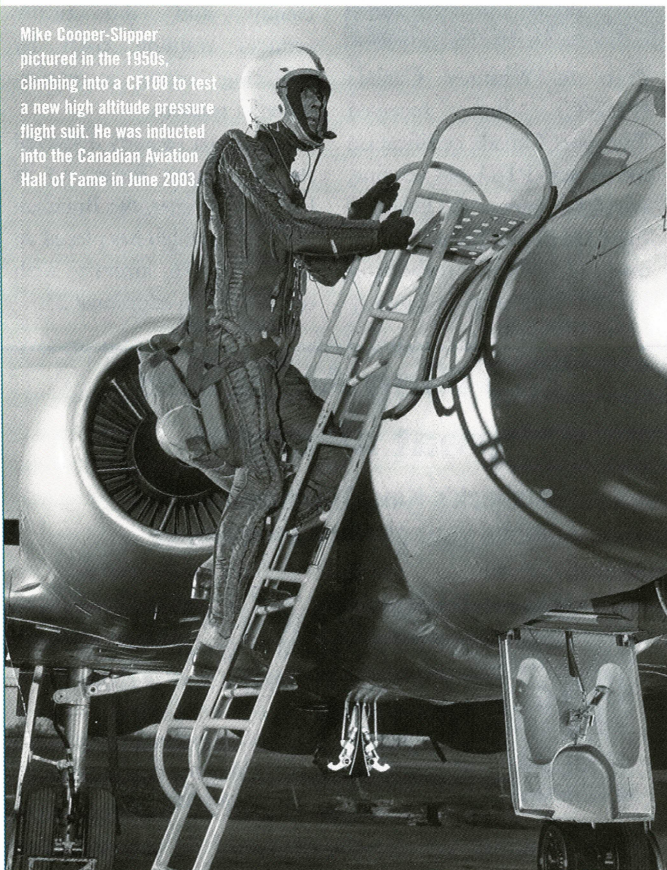


# FAREWELL TO AN ICON

Rob Seaman looks back on the career of Mike Cooper-Slipper

Mike Cooper-Slipper pictured in the 1950s, climbing into a CF100 to test a new high altitude pressure flight suit. He was inducted into the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame in June 2003.



THE COOPER-SLIPPER name has been synonymous with Canadian aviation development ever since Mike Cooper-Slipper left his native England in 1947 to join A.V. Roe Canada, first as an engine fitter and later as a test pilot for Lancaster, B-25 and Sea Fury aircraft being modified for peacetime.

Born January 11, 1921,

Thomas Paul Michael Cooper-Slipper, Mike's career in aviation began in 1938 as a fighter pilot for the RAF. Cooper-Slipper served the RAF with distinction in three separate theatres of war. He notched 14 confirmed shot-down or damaged enemy aircraft and, at 19, became one of the youngest pilots in the Battle of Britain to receive a

DFC after ramming a Dornier 17 bomber with his disabled Hurricane fighter. A Battle of Britain Bar would later be added to the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC).

There was no limit to what the Canadian aircraft industry could achieve in the late 1940s and fifties, and Cooper-Slipper was at the centre of it all. In 1950 he co-piloted the C102 Jetliner on its celebrated flight to New York (carrying the first air mail in North America moved by commercial jet), making the return flight to Toronto in the left-hand seat. He later moved up the street to Orenda Engines where he tested the Iroquois turbojet mounted on a B-47 flying test bed for the Avro Arrow.

It was while at Avro and Orenda that Cooper-Slipper developed his flair for sales. In 1961, following a brief return to England where he sold Avro 748 airplanes, he joined de Havilland Aircraft of Canada, where he sold and aided in the further development of Beaver, Otter, Twin Otter and Caribou aircraft.

It was Cooper-Slipper who convinced DHC to move forward on development of the 19-seat Twin Otter, an aircraft that would revolu-

tionize the small-airline market around the world.

After DHC, Cooper-Slipper moved to Field Aviation to market the Beechcraft; was instrumental in some of Falcon's early successes in the Canadian marketplace; and was involved in the development and refinement of water pickup and delivery systems for water bombers.

Mike Cooper-Slipper retired in 1986 to Victoria, British Columbia with his wife Rita. He continued his interest in aviation through a study of its history while also indulging in his love for photography and his passion for sports cars.

Sadly, on February 23, Mike succumbed to failing health, sparking tributes and newspaper articles both at home and abroad.

In his lifetime, Cooper-Slipper logged 5,000 hours in 75 different aircraft. On April 22, he took his final flight from Sydney, British Columbia aboard a Citabria, accompanied by his son Chris and escorted by a Tiger Moth also carrying some of Mike's ashes. As the aircraft returned to the airport after the ashes had been scattered an unidentified voice crackled over the intercom: "God Speed Old Soldier".