



Peter B. Cowie 1938-2018

Longtime northern pilot and former Fort Simpson resident Peter Cowie died at the Langley Memorial Hospital on the morning of April 5, 2018. Peter was 79 years old.

Pete grew up and attended school in Langley, BC. One of his first jobs was working on BC rivers with the BC Salmon Commission, where he got his first taste of flying. He learned to fly and headed to the NWT, arriving in Fort Simpson in 1965 – still wearing his brown fisheries uniform – to start flying for Northern Mountain Airlines. Pete became a familiar figure in Nahanni Butte, Wrigley, Trout Lake, Jean-Marie and Fort Liard. At the time several of these communities had limited or no radiotelephone communications or hydropower, and landings were done on cleared firebreaks.

At this time, Gus and Mary Kraus were living at the Hot Springs on the South Nahanni River. This was a frequent stopping point at the time and Pete would often run into Joe McBryan who was also doing flights into the area. Pete spent the summer of 1971 flying a Single Otter on fire bombing operations for Buffalo Airways. Pete moved to Yellowknife in 1967 to fly for Northwest Territorial Airways on the Single Otter, Beech 18 and DC-3. He then moved back to Fort Simpson to buy the air charter base from Northern Mountain. He renamed his operation Arctic Air Ltd., which it remained until 1975 when subsequent owners changed the name to Simpson Air Ltd.

Between the late 1960s and early 1970s was a period of extensive oil and gas exploration in the the Mackenzie Valley. To help meet the demand, Pete imported the first Turbo-Porter into Canada from Switzerland and operated it in support of the activity out of Fort Simpson. To the west, Cadillac Explorations was developing their property on Prairie Creek. Some of the more demanding flying Pete did was off-strip landings at the headwaters of Prairie Creek with the Turbo-Porter before an airstrip was built.

After several years of trying to keep up with the high

level of flying, Pete sold his operation to Bob Keen (Keen Industries). Pete continued to fly for many more years for both of the charter operators in Fort Simpson, as required and his schedule allowed. He had his own Cessna 185 CF-TFO, which he flew for many years. Pete was always one to share his knowledge of the area with the many pilots who passed through Fort Simpson in their flying careers.

Always on the lookout for new opportunities, Pete recognized the potential of the South Nahanni River for outdoor enthusiasts long before it became part of the National Park Reserve. He formed South Nahanni River Ltd., purchased jet boats, and established camps at Dry Creek in Deadman Valley and on the Flat River below Virginia Falls, along with his base camp at Nahanni Butte. Each summer, for a number of years, he would take visitors up to Virginia Falls, assisted by his right-hand man, Fred Sibbeston. One of his guests on these river tours was David Molson from Montreal who subsequently worked to preserve the area.

Peter has resided in the family home in Langley for the past several years

He is survived by his sister Laurel along with his many northern friends.

