

LIEUTENANT COLONEL (RET'D) DAN DEMPSEY, CD



A pilot by profession, Dan Dempsey's motivation towards an aviation career was fostered by his boyhood fascination watching the RCAF Golden Hawks aerobatic team perform. Born in Hamilton, Ontario to an air force father who worked at Mount Hope, he grew up near RCAF Stations Rockcliffe (Ottawa), Lincoln Park (Calgary) and Namao (Edmonton). His passion for flying led to a 23 year career with the Canadian Forces. A graduate of Royal Roads Military College in Victoria, British Columbia and the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ontario, he holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Applied Science.

Dan earned his private pilot license in 1972 at the Victoria Flying Club while attending Royal Roads and his Air Force wings at CFB Moose Jaw in June 1975. Having subsequently instructed on the CT-114 Tutor for four years, Dan was selected to fly one of the coveted solo positions with the Snowbirds (Snowbird 9) for the 1980-1981 airshow seasons. He then trained on the CF-5 Freedom Fighter and CF-104 Starfighter at Cold Lake, Alberta, subsequently flying the Starfighter with both 439 and 441 Tactical Fighter Squadrons based in Baden-Soellingen, West Germany. Returning to command 431 Air Demonstration Squadron in 1989 and 1990, he was honoured to lead the Snowbirds through their 20th anniversary and 1,000th official performance. A distinguished graduate of the Canadian Forces Command and Staff College in Toronto, Dan was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel following his Snowbird tour and served as Executive Assistant to the Commander Air Command where he was successful in initiating several important air force heritage projects, including the designation of CFBs Bagotville and Cold Lake to 3 and 4 Wings respectively following the closure of Canadian Forces Europe.

Following his air force career, Dan spent over 15 years with Cathay Pacific Airways flying the Lockheed L-1011 Tristar, Boeing 747-400 and Boeing 777-200/300/300ER series airliners, often between New York, Vancouver and Hong Kong. He retired from Cathay in January 2009 as a Training Captain on the B-777 to fly with Canadian-based Top Aces Incorporated which provides dedicated combat support training to the RCAF, RCN and Canadian Army. Dan's log books now record over 15,000 hours flying time.

As a member of the Discovery Air Hawk One team from its inception in 2008, Dan flew the F-86 "Golden Hawk" Sabre across Canada with the Centennial Heritage Flight in 2009 and was subsequently selected as team leader and demonstration pilot for 2011 and 2012. As team leader, he initiated a "Pursue Your Dreams" campaign for children and teenagers, encouraging them to set a goal for themselves early in life and then pursue it.

Dan is the author of "A Tradition of Excellence - Canada's Airshow Team Heritage" which chronicles the proud history of Canada's airshow teams. At 768 pages and with over 1,800 photographs, it is the largest single volume aviation book ever published in Canada. In October 2012 Dan was presented the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for his contribution to the preservation and promotion of Canada's aviation heritage.

Dan is a member of the RCAF Association, Vancouver Island Aircrew Association, Canadian Aviation Historical Society, RMC Club of Canada and is past president of both the Snowbirds Alumni Association and the Society of Honorary Snowbirds. He resides in Victoria, British Columbia with his wife Ruth.