

Wheels Up for Ice Pilots

By Ralph Lucas, Publisher



(October 11, 2011 - Toronto, Ontario) You know you're getting old when too many of your stories begin with the phrase When I was a little boy. But when I was a little boy, twelve, thirteen, perhaps a bit younger, there was a small airline with a large name located in a isolated spot of the airport at Dorval, Québec, now known as Pierre Elliot Trudeau International. World Wide Airways' tiny fleet of ancient C-46 airplanes, a couple of PBY-5A Cansos and a defunct Lancaster tucked away next to its huge, mostly empty hanger became an exploration target for me and an equally adventuresome friend.

What must be remembered is WWII had ended just as we were being born. It was still very fresh in the memories of our fathers and television, a crude black and white device that magically brought the world into our homes was often filled with documentaries about The War.

We bought and built model airplanes, dreamed of the day we would fly and when we stumbled upon the unguarded airplanes sitting there waiting to be discovered it was a temptation too hard to resist. Many an hour was spent sitting in the cockpit of a C-46 (pictured above) pretending to start the engines, taxi out to the runway, do a run-up of the engines, then release brakes and begin to roll toward lift-off and wheels up.

The freedom and innocence of the era is caught in that moment. Try doing anything like that today at any major North American or European airport and you risk being shot. At best we had a sleepy watchman to contend with and we could always bail out and run faster than his old legs could carry him.

When the first season of Ice Pilots NWT aired I was enthralled. There on the crystal clear TV that's almost as wide as a SmartCar is long, came the thundering piston-driven airplanes of my

boyhood. Each episode was a serious trip down memory lane. I had sat in that left seat. I had carefully touched that lever to raise or lower the landing gear.

I had monitored the stilled analog gauges for RPM, altitude and direction. During last year's second season I learned more about the people behind Buffalo Airlines, and their tentative steps toward modernity as problems with the aging fleet seemed to increase and the threat that standard, non-jet aviation fuel would one day disappear.



While the planes on Ice Pilots NWT play the central characters in this series that returns for its third season tomorrow night, the people who work for Buffalo Airlines bring their own quirks and faults.

As season three unfolds, young pilots Gord and Sean face a terrifying loss of oil pressure inflight in the high Arctic, Adam travels to a military station at the top of the world and Devan struggles with the sudden failure of the C-46's hydraulic controls while on approach. Also this season, the vintage C-46 faces extinction due to a growing scarcity of parts, new senior manager Duane Hicks stirs up a storm by pushing to modernize Buffalo, the usually cantankerous owner butts heads with his sons, crusty mechanic Chuck Adams reaches the end of his rope, and a new golden boy shakes up the rampie roster.

"Fans can't seem to get enough of Ice Pilots NWT," said creator and series producer, David Gullason. "The response to the last two seasons has been overwhelming. We're excited to return this fall to follow Joe, Mikey, their pilots and crew for more adventures in their amazing World War II planes. Buffalo Airways is the most extraordinary airline in the world and it's a privilege to tell this iconic Canadian story."

This season series creator Omni Film is launching the social media game [Ice Pilots NWT: Air Hunt](#) and the mini-game Arctic Cargo Collectors' Challenge. Players can earn points by collecting cargo hidden throughout the Ice Pilots NWT online world. Weekly prizes will be awarded to players with the highest points and after the season finale, the player with the most total points will claim a Grand Prize.

"With weekly rewards and the grand prize of a behind-the-scenes visit to Buffalo Airways, we've really ramped up our online and social media initiatives for the third season," says Omni partner and Executive Producer, Gabriela Schonbach. "Fans of Ice Pilots NWT can connect with the series and with Buffalo Airways in new, exciting ways, making the experience of the show much more comprehensive and hands-on. We're confident viewers will enjoy this new level of interactivity."

Season three of Ice Pilots NWT premieres October 12 at 8 p.m. ET/PT on History Television. You know where I'll be. In television heaven.