

A Little Bit of Heaven ... A Little Bit of Hell Part 1

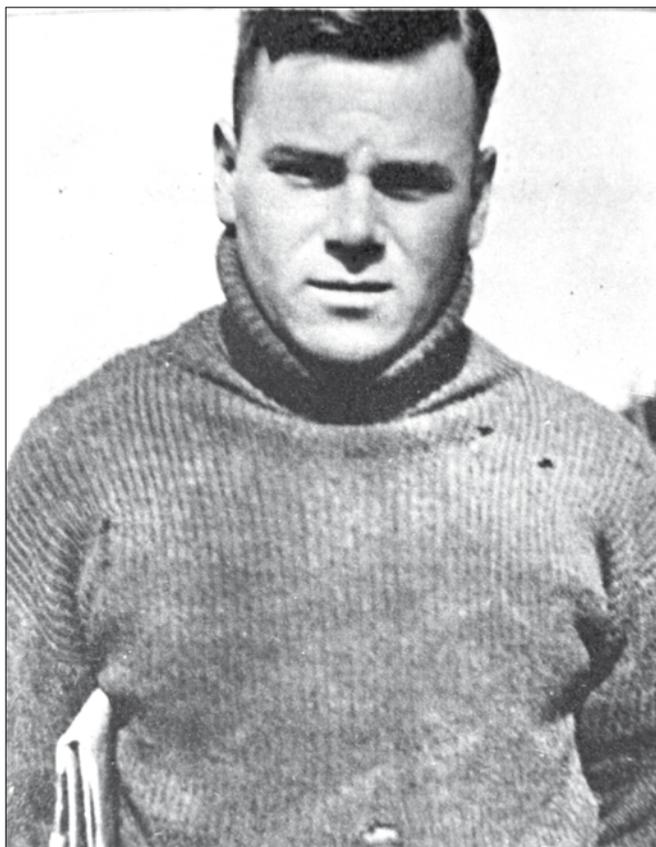
Canadian Sopwith Triplane Pilots of Naval One

by Stewart K. Taylor

NO CANADIAN PILOT OF CONSEQUENCE reached any degree of success in Naval 1 until, perhaps, 22 June 1917, when the latest member of A Flight, FSL Stanley Wallace 'Rosey' Rosevear, joined the unit.

Not eager to accept Canadians, Flt Cdr Thomas Francis Netterville kept them out of his C Flight and while Flt Cdr Dallas, before he became Naval 1's commanding officer on 14 June 1917 and more liberal in attitude, laid the foundation for additional lads from the land of the Maple to serve in his B Flight, only A Flight, led by the inept Flt Cdr B.C. Clayton, was willing to accept them. That squadron's premier flight had not found much to shout about for its small contingent of Canadian-born Triplane pilots.

While well-intentioned, FSL Earl Anthony would never amount to anything beyond a 'lumbering journeyman' but enjoyed the leadership and camaraderie of Australian Flt Lt Richard Pearman Minifie, *a real gentleman amongst rascals* to quote the former FSL Cecil Guelph 'Peanuts' Brock. Brock had suffered cuts to his left eyebrow and nose, plus a severe right leg abrasion, on 13 August 1917 after a crash near Dranoutre, when the engine of his Sopwith Triplane N5373 had cut out.



After recuperation and wanting very much for a return to Naval 1, his request was denied by Squadron Commander R.S. Dallas, an *overly principled leader*, in Brock's opinion, with an aversion to pilots who *soiled their conscience* by having to receive treatment for gonorrhoea in Chatham Royal Naval Hospital, as 'Peanuts' had done for three weeks in May 1917 and cause for his rejection.

P.W. JENCKES

Then, to add more uncertainty regarding Canadians detailed to join his squadron, Dallas may very well have recalled the recent case of FSL Paul Worthington Jenckes, born 21 June 1891 at Sherbrooke, Quebec and a graduate student of Bishop's College. While assistant superintendent in the Jenckes' family machine shop, Paul Jencks learned the basics of flying at Toronto's Curtiss School, passed his tests on 10 November 1916 and entered the RNAS, in Ottawa, as a PFO, on 10 November 1916. He was ordered to sail from Montreal on 25 November 1916, aboard the *Grampian*. Jencks completed his pre-operation rounds at Crystal Palace, Eastchurch and Cranwell, graduating 16 May 1917 as a *very good pilot*. He was sent to Dover on 6 June 1917 and posted to 12 Naval the same day.

Among the four Canadians already part of the Naval 1 roster was the very keen and competitive FSL Stanley Wallace Rosevear and the equally determined FSL Gordon George Beattie Scott, from Guelph, Ontario. An exacting 22 year-old, 'Rosey' Rosevear, a year Scott's junior, had taught school for one year in rural Oxford County, Southern Ontario. A 28 October 1916 Curtiss School Toronto graduate (RACC No.3825), also joined the RNAS in Ottawa and followed

Some of those who were taking flying instruction with Paul Worthington Jenckes in Webster's class at the Curtiss School, Toronto during the early summer of 1916 wondered why he stayed away for extended periods without offering any explanation. A strange fellow, often wrapped up in his own world, he was a good pilot and this was taken into account upon his 16 May 1917 graduation, before reality set in with a vengeance once FSL Jenckes attempted to cross the lines. Whatever fear he may have suppressed in training deserted him. An almost complete nervous breakdown eliminated any possible retention of his services as a RNAS pilot although his resignation as a FSL was not final until mid-December 1917, allowing him to return to Canada and re-enter civilian life with the family's machine tool business in Sherbrooke PQ.

Taken while undergoing pilot training at Long Branch (Toronto's west end) and dressed appropriately, if not comfortably, in a turtleneck woollen sweater, a 'high fashion' garment for the active outdoor young and old male and a popular one with the boys at the flying school, the quizzing look he is giving the photographer was not in keeping with the normal facial gestures found on 99% of the other lads at the school. Not in the least a social 'gadfly', his sisters Alice and Gertrude were also considered socially inept and like Paul, who never married, 'Gerty' also remained a spinster to her dying day.

:RAF Museum