



# Happy Birthday Beav!

## From June, Walleye, Ward and Wilderness North

Not that Beaver!...as in “leave it to...”

It's the De Havilland Beaver we're talkin' about here.

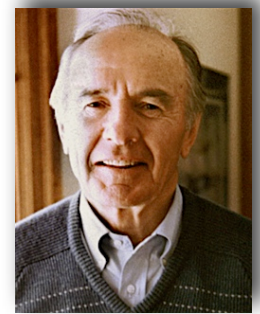
Last week Alan put a few lines in his column about the DHC-2's 60th birthday celebration. The DHC-2 is more commonly called the “Beaver” to reflect its non stop work ethic. This is the great little bush plane that had it's maiden voyage on August 16th, 1947... sixty years ago. We have one, with tail number: NZO, and we work it hard. Well, the mention last week of the birthday triggered a “tell me more” response. So we Googled our way to knowledge. Here's what we learned:

The pilot of the famous first flight in 1947 was Russ Bannock. Up he went in the proto-type airplane designed and built by a little known company called DHC -



DeHavilland Canada. De Havilland-England was the famous builder of war birds, but the war was over, and the Canadian wilderness was the next chosen challenge.

**But wait there's more.** Pilot Russ Bannock is still around and still flying thank you very much. And Russ claims the testing of the “the little plane that could” was really a shared project with a fellow aviator named George Neal.



**But wait there's even more.** George Neal is still around...and still flying. These guys are about 87-88 years of age and both are still flying.

After his first flight, Russ continued to fly the Beaver for a few more weeks and then turned the testing over to George Neal. George continued to fine tune the aerodynamics and went on to a great career with DeHavilland and retired at 83...yes, that's Four Score and Three years.

This past May, Russ climbed back into the cockpit of a Beaver and took off and landed from the same Toronto area airport he did about sixty years earlier. WOW!



**But wait there's really more!**

Both Russ and Neal talked to us recently and those interviews are ready to hear in this week's [podcast](#).

Aviator or not, you'll find these conversations interesting and a celebration of two guys who led the way for every bush pilot and guest who has ever flown in these legendary Beaver airplanes.

Now can you name another invention from 1947 that basically remains unchanged today and is still in service ... with a sixty year history of excellence?

Google here we come!



**Thanks Neil, Russ, and George !** by *Alan Cheeseman, President Wilderness North*

Once we announced the 60th birthday of the de Havilland Beaver, we were flooded with questions from our friends and guests.



- Where is the plane now?
- How did the flight actually go?
- How many Beavers did De Havilland build?
- Was this the same "Beaver" that flew in VietNam?

So when we did the research on these questions, we came across a great guy named Neil Aird. Neil is an artist and goldsmith...and manages a fine website: [www.DHC-2.com](http://www.DHC-2.com) He has recorded over a half million visitors to the site. He provided us with the photos we have on the first page. Neil also led us to Russ Bannock and George Neal. Mr. Aird first saw the Beaver in Scotland his home country and fell in love. This spring he took a 4500 kilometer flight from his hometown of Kingston, ON to BC in a modern day Beaver MK.III

Also my thanks goes out to Russ Bannock and George Neal, for sharing their own words with us and creating an audio trip down memory and history lane. We are delighted to pass those taped interviews along to you in this week's [Voices From The Wilderness](#). By the way, all those questions above and several others are all answered in the [podcast](#).

As an owner of four airplanes with a DHC logo on them...I am additionally grateful to the skills of these two aviators and the men and women with whom they have worked over the years.

I see it this way...In 1947 Russ and George had a mission:  
To open up the vast Canadian wilderness with reliable safe bush planes.  
Mission Accomplished - Congratulations Gentlemen!

Keep in touch,

*Alan*

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The sepia pics on page one belong to De Havilland who gave us permission to use them.

**George Neal -Aviation Hall of Fame**



Congratulations to George Neal for his 1995 induction into the [Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame](#). The picture on the left is the Hall of Fame's line drawing of him for the "official" listing. Now the photo on the right is the "real" George...this past spring...flying a Beaver simulator at the Wings and Wheels meeting. On November 21st he'll celebrate his 89th birthday.

