



VOL. 2, NO. 2 — FALL 2005

# *On Approach*

NEWSLETTER OF THE VICTORIA AIRPORT AUTHORITY



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# What's up at the Airport

Construction at the Victoria Airport Terminal Building is nearing completion, with the new departure area expected to fully open by the end of 2005. The area presently occupied by WestJet and Horizon Air will then be closed to allow for

the final renovation phase of the terminal building. VAA President and CEO Richard Paquette says the Airport Authority is now looking at making improvements to the food and beverage facilities. "We have a consultant on

board and will be doing customer surveys," Paquette says. "We want to know what our customers are looking for."

Self serve check-in kiosks are a recently added feature in the departure areas. They are simple to use, and airline check-in



*Mount Baker lends contrast to evening paving work at the airport.*

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## Editor's desk

This issue of On Approach brings you a number of news items, plus several feature stories. The cover photo of paving crews working through the night, illustrates a rarely seen aspect of airport activity. You can read more about the night paving program in the news section of this issue.

Have you ever thought of learning to fly? Read about the Victoria Flying Club, then drop by to meet some of the people. They're a very friendly bunch, and will make you welcome. But be careful. The passion for flying is contagious. Speaking of flying, our airline feature in this issue introduces readers to Horizon Air. With seven flights a day between Victoria and Seattle, they're a significant operation here. Read the story to find out what they're all about.

Finally, we will be introducing you to three local artists. Read It's all about colour, to meet Illarion Gallant, Ed Schaefer, and Tom Mercer. In this story, you'll learn a little about their approach to the creative process, and get a preview of new artistic works that will be gracing the airport in the near future.

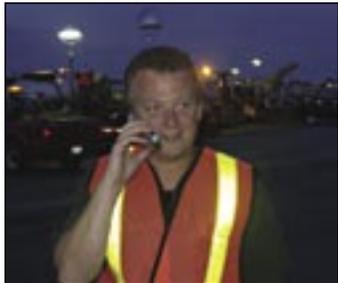
Phil Jensen,  
editor



## Airport news continued

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personnel are happy to provide guidance. "It takes about twenty seconds to check yourself in," Operations Manager Ian



**Maintenance Supervisor Ken Keck fields a phone call during night paving operations.**

West says. "It's really easy, and we expect to have ten kiosks in place by the end of January."

Airport watchers will soon see changes in the parking facilities with a 575 stall, \$4.2 million expansion, and a major realignment of Willingdon Road. The current long term parking spaces will be turned

over to the car rental industry and an automotive service facility will be constructed in that area, eliminating the need to service rental vehicles off-site. Other changes will include covered walkways, gardens of native plants, and rain gardens and swales to collect storm water run-off in an environmentally friendly manner.

The runway paving program went according to schedule again this year. Maintenance and Mobile Supervisor Ken Keck explains that crews can only work on runways when they are closed to air traffic, which necessitates night paving program during the warm summer months. During June and July this year, they repaved several intersections and a strip down each side of the main runway (09-27). "There's been paving every year for quite a few years, and it's planned for



**Ria Hansen, WestJet guest service agent demonstrates use of the self-serve check-in kiosks.**

next year too." Keck says. "It's just routine maintenance."



**Runway paving crews gather for a night's work.**

# Victoria Flying Club



## Challenge and glory

The path from dreamy eyed neophyte to qualified pilot typically begins at a local flying club. Now in its sixtieth year of operation, the Victoria Flying Club on Canso Road is a case in point.

Bruce Payne, now retired, took his initial training at the club in 1956 and went on to a long career as a helicopter pilot. Yorgo Rouomanis started training at the VFC half a century later and this year won the Webster Memorial Trophy, making him Canada's top amateur pilot.

Vancouver Island residents have long been dreaming of ways to get off the ground. In 1896, Frank Miller parachuted from a hot air balloon into the water of Oak Bay. Five years later, a man identified as Professor Earlston followed suite, and Miller did it again in 1902. Frank and Lloyd Wright made their first powered flight in 1903, but our interest is focussed on Vancouver Island where William Wallace Gibson

made a powered flight at Mount Tolmie in 1910. A native of Saskatchewan, Gibson also designed and built the engine that powered his Twin Plane.\*

**“We are a place where people who are nuts about flying hang out,”**

**Sean Steele,  
Victoria Flying Club  
president**

In 1928 the Victoria Aero Club opened its doors at Lansdowne Field, the present site of Lansdowne Junior High School in Victoria. With a fleet of two Gypsy Moth airplanes, the club's goal was to generate interest in aviation and teach people to fly. It cost \$15 an hour for instruction, and the

average student qualified for a license after an outlay of just \$150. The group disbanded during WWII, and re-emerged as the Victoria Flying Club in 1946. “We've only been around since after the war, but our roots are in the Victoria Aero Club,” says Sean Steele, current VFC president.

The club mission is to promote the art and science of aviation. Steele puts it another way. “We are a place where people who are nuts about flying hang out,” he says. It seems that quite a number of people fit that category. Membership in the VFC stands at four hundred and fifty people aged between the earliest teen years and the late eighties. “We provide an outlet for people to pursue it as a career or an avocation,” Steele sums up. “We've trained thousands, including people who have gone up in the space shuttle, team leads for the Snowbirds and pilots at all the major carriers. We permeate the aviation industry.”

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# Horizon Air, our American Cousin

Horizon Air has been flying out of Victoria for so long, they're like one of the family. Sister to Alaska Airlines, Horizon makes seven round trips a day between Victoria and Seattle. This frequency of service makes them a natural choice of travellers bound for connections and destinations south of the border.

Customer Service Manager Dawn Rees joined Horizon in 1989, when they first opened in Victoria and Vancouver.

"Since then, we've opened in Calgary, Edmonton, Kelowna, and Kamloops," Rees says. Because Horizon is an American company, their service is limited to carrying passengers between Canada and the USA. The restriction works in reverse as well. Canadian airlines flying into the USA are not permitted to carry passengers between points within that country.

Rees is one of the original staff hired when Horizon opened in Victoria sixteen years ago. "We're all Canadian, all local," she says, "And we're paid in Canadian dollars." Five of the eight people signing on at that time are still employed at the Victoria base. But the staff has grown to fourteen members since then, and some other things have changed too. "Back then we did the inside and outside work," Rees recalls. "We did the check-ins; we did the baggage handling; we marshalled the airplanes. We had to de-ice the airplanes the one time it was needed." That system changed in 1995, when Horizon hired CanWest to



*A Horizon Dash 8 - 200 is reflected in the holding area windows.*

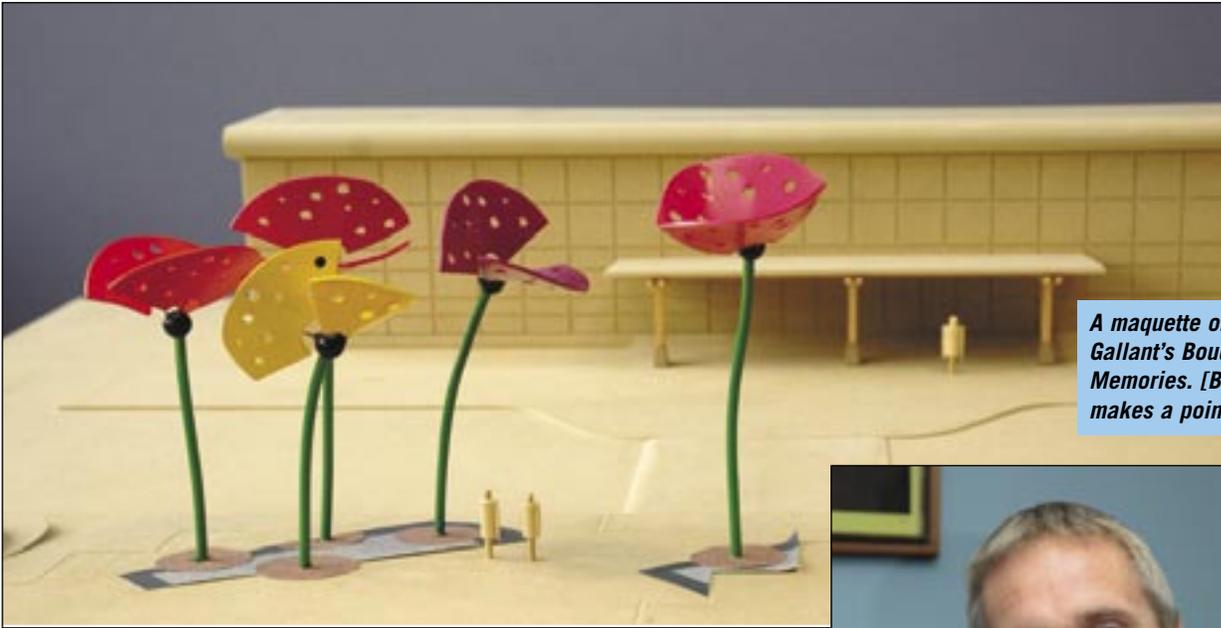
handle all outside work, freeing Rees and her colleagues to focus on customer service. "I kind of wear three hats," Rees says. "I'm customer service manager, operations manager and the point person for Horizon on Vancouver Island. I guess you could call that base manager." She reports directly to her supervisor in Vancouver, the general manager of Horizon's Canadian operations. Established in 1981, Horizon grew quickly. In 1982, they acquired Air Oregon, and in 1983 purchased Transwestern Airlines. Then in 1986, Horizon, itself, was acquired. The new owners were the Alaska Air Group, the parent company of long established Alaska Airlines. Today Horizon Air provides service to eighty destinations in the United States, Canada and Mexico, moving approximately five million travellers a year. Among those millions are the passengers who fly between Victoria and Seattle on the seven times a week schedule. Asked what makes Horizon special, Rees says, "It's a commitment to

customer service. Our goal is to be the best regional airline in North America. And every day is a new day. It's a fantastic company to work for." Evidently, the company leaders think their people in Victoria are fantastic as well. "Last year we won the Station of the Year award for the best performance and best service out of forty-three stations," Rees says. And that's the way they do it at Horizon Air Victoria, our American cousin.

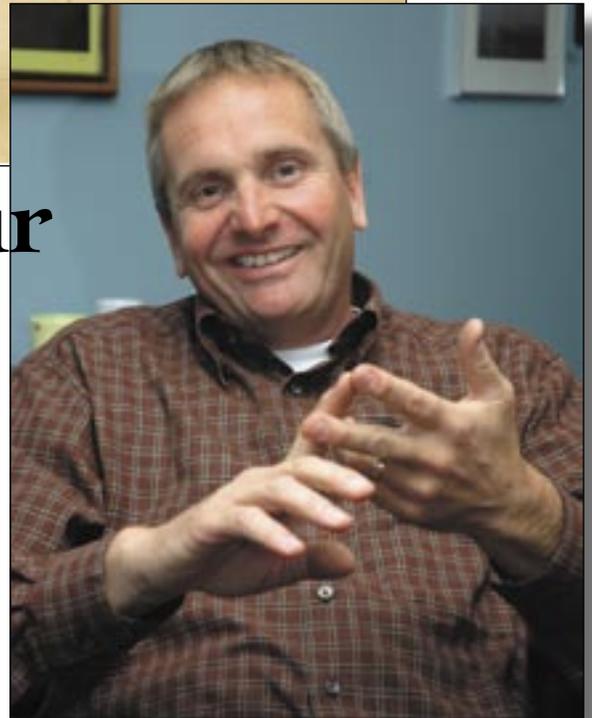


*Baggage handlers Curran Watts and Arpad Szatory. Customer Services Manager Dawn Rees and Cheryl Kimber.*





*A maquette of Illarion Gallant's Bouquet of Memories. [Below] Gallant makes a point about art.*



## It's all about colour

Following recommendations of the Art at the Airport Committee and the Planning and Development Committee, the Victoria Airport Authority Board has approved two new projects by local artists. Illarion Gallant's Bouquet of Memories is an aluminium and steel sculpture to be situated across the frontal road from the departure lounge. The other work will be a series of forty-five stained glass win-

colour to our grey winter sky," Schaefer says. "And when the sun is shining, they will spray some of their colour onto the floor. It will move with the sun, creating an

*Illarion Gallant studied sculpture and design at Emily Carr College, and stone sculpture in Germany and Austria. He went on to study landscape design and now melds the two disciplines in his professional life. Gallant and his wife, Twyla Rusnak, now keep busy designing and building gardens, specializing in apartment complexes, gardens on parking garages and high end residential work. Gallant sculptures are found in locations around North America. His favourite, resembling the skeletal remains of Tom Thomson's canoe, is located in Toronto. Gallant's work in Victoria can be seen at Fort Street and Foul Bay, and at the Hotel Grand Pacific on the Inner Harbour.*

dows extending the length of the new departure lounge. This work is designed by stained glass artists Tom Mercer and Ed Schaefer of Mercer and Schaeffer Glasstudios.

"The windows will add a little

energy without any moving parts. It's about the effect, rather than the actual piece."

Mercer continues the description: "The glass goes a long way, and as you're walking the length of the building it's a

presence that follows you." The colours they've chosen are bright and mostly primary, much like those that Gallant will be using for his Bouquet of Memories. "Both are very whimsical," Mercer says, remarking on a surprising simi-

larity between the works.

Gallant's inspiration is derived from memories of images that have stayed with him for decades. "In 1976 on a motorcycle trip through the Mojave Desert, I could see lines on the horizon. And as I got closer I could see that they were horizontal columns of Monarch Butterflies, migrating north. I appreciated the tenacity of

natural, and there's a sense of gravity in the airport. So I wanted it to be light. It's mostly butterflies. Butterflies and poppies. Poppies grow in adverse conditions. When the wind hit them, have you ever seen how they move? How do you capture the gesture of all these things? You have to freeze frame these things."

Standing twenty-five feet high,



**[Above] a maquette shows a section of the stained glass from outside the terminal building. [Below] a close look at a portion of the stained glass work. [Right] Ed Schaefer and Tom Mercer in their Rock Bay studio.**

these butterflies flying north and I can see parallels with today's flight." For Gallant, the butterfly image ties together with one from his time as an air cadet in Ontario. "We were at an abandoned airfield and were wandering through the old hangars, looking at old mothballed airplanes. And I remember noticing wild flowers growing up through cracks in the pavement ..."

He began thinking about a work related to plant material bursting through the urban landscape. Then he took it a little further. "Flight isn't really

Bouquet of Memories, will break the visual roof line of the departure lounge, welcoming travelers with a sense of lightness and colour. Entering the building, they'll become aware of splashes of new colour from the windows created by Mercer and Schaeffer. As they walk the length of the departure area, everyone will find their own interpretation of the windows and the moving colours. "It's meant



to be accessible to everyone, regardless of their age or origin," Schaeffer says. "We're leaving it open for as wide an interpretation as possible." Mercer sums up: "For me it's a metaphor for a trip," he says. "A child might see butterfly shapes, a kite, sails, or a piece of paper riding on a current



*Ed Schaefer and Tom Mercer are partners in Mercer and Schaeffer Glasstudios on Rock Bay Avenue in Victoria. As leading experts in design, creation, and restoration of stained glass, they've been involved in many significant local projects. They created the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Window, unveiled by Her Majesty on October 6, 2002, and have recently finished some new windows for the Anglican Cathedral on Quadra Street. They've been involved in restoration work at Craigdarroch Castle and will be working on a project at Government House concurrent with the airport project.*

of air. It's open to interpretation ... or to just enjoying the colours."

# Victoria Flying Club

## Challenge and glory

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Although the VFC is a non profit society, someone still has to look after business. That's where Gerry Mants and approximately twenty-five staff fit in. "This a service business, not far removed from retail." Mants says.

"Planning where we're going to be next year and the year after is important. We have to know where the industry is going to be for the students who walk through the door with stars in their eyes. They have to know right from the beginning."

But in the end it still all comes down to the romance of flying. Treasurer and editor of the *Patrician*\*\*<sup>2</sup>, Eleanor Eastick got involved with the flying club in 1993. She's since gone on to earn a commercial license, but doesn't work in the industry. "I fly for fun," Eastick remarks. "It's a sublime experience. Almost indescribable. It's a total and absolute escape from all the things that bug you. And it keeps you physically and mentally fit."

President Steele is every bit as enthusiastic. "When we're in our airplanes, we have our own private mountain top. We enjoy the beauty of the clouds and the sun, and what we call the god

rays coming down through the clouds. And when you're flying above the clouds and look down at your shadow, there'll be a rainbow all around it.



**Victoria Flying Club  
President Sean Steele**



**Eleanor Eastick, treasurer  
and editor of the Patrician**



**Club Manager Gerry Mants**



**The Victoria Flying Club has trained thousands of pilots, including some who have flown with the world famous Snowbirds.**

Some people call that 'the glory'."

\*A replica of the Gibson Twin Plane can be seen at the BC Aviation Museum on Norseman Road.

\*\* The *Patrician* is the Victoria Flying Club's on-line newsletter. The newsletter and other information can be found on the web at [www.flyvfc.com/](http://www.flyvfc.com/)



**The Victoria Flying Club owns eleven airplanes.**