

Hobbies and Leisure Activities



Deaf skydiver, Larissa Anne Makortoff (1981)

Courtesy of Larissa Anne Makortoff (Vancouver, B.C.)

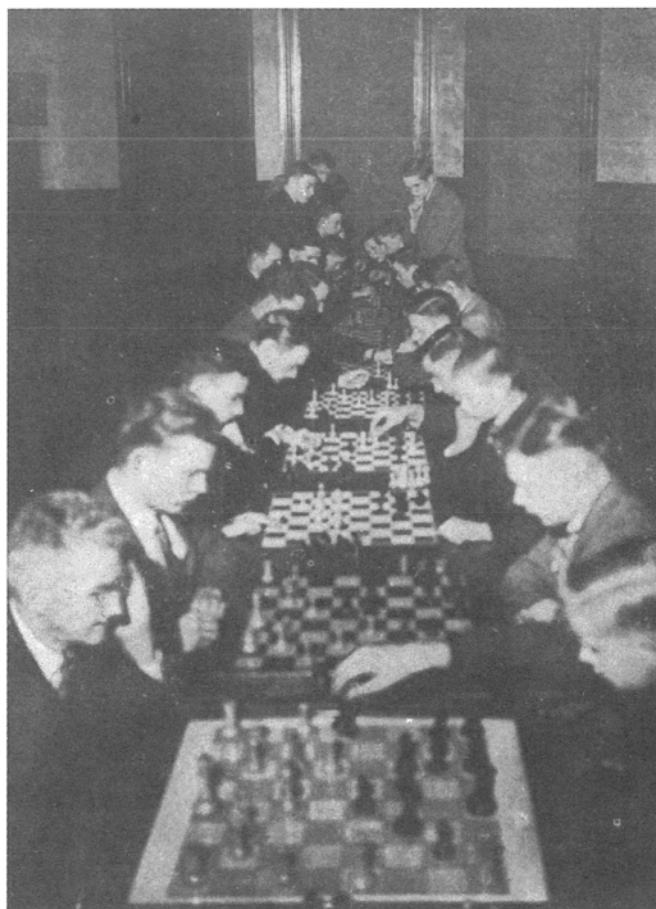
Almost everyone enjoys participating in some kind of hobby. In fact, there are probably almost as many different hobbies as there are people. Some of the leisure activities enjoyed by deaf Canadians at the turn of the 20th century were picnics (which included outdoor games for both men and women, such as foot races and tug of war), painting, drawing, board games (especially checkers and chess), acting, reading, debating, crocheting, tatting, quilting, and — once cars came on the scene — driving around the country to visit friends. Most of these activities occurred in groups, because the Deaf community enjoyed getting together for social events as often as possible. In some cities, one could find a gathering of deaf people engaged in a different activity every night of the week. Schools, too, encouraged an interest in hobbies. Graduates of the School for the Deaf in Halifax, N.S., for example, returned regularly to challenge current students in games of chess. This interaction provided a chance for the deaf students to meet deaf adult role models and to have fun at the same time.

Obviously, not every person who is involved in a hobby can be included in a book of this size. The following entries were chosen to provide a brief glimpse into only a few of the activities deaf Canadians enjoy in their leisure hours.

Scouting

In October 1946, the School for the Deaf in Halifax, N.S. was granted a charter to form the 33rd Division of the Halifax Boy Scout Troop. William Manuel of Bishop's Falls, Nfld. and Raymond Boyd of Eastern Passage, N.S. became the school's first Queen's Scouts in late spring of 1954 when they received their certificates in the legislative chambers of the Provincial Building of Nova Scotia. In 1953, two scouts (Boyd and Bruce Foran) represented the troop at the Canadian Scout Jamboree, the first time a deaf troop had participated in this event.¹

Canada's first deaf scoutmaster was Lawrence Claude Joseph Duchesne (b. Dec. 29, 1934; d. Aug. 6, 1990), who was



Former students challenge current students to a marathon chess match, School for the Deaf, Halifax, N.S. (1939). The former students won this contest, with a score of 11 games to 5.

The School News/Gallaudet University Archives

officially registered with the Boy Scouts Association of Canada on the 6th of April 1958.

Born in Rouyn, Québec, Duchesne was deafened at two years of age by spinal meningitis. His family moved to Nova Scotia when he was a child, and he attended the School for the Deaf in Halifax (1941-1952). He later became the first profoundly deaf person to enrol at the Halifax County Vocational High School (1953-1955), where he received training in sheet metal work. His interest in scouting developed at the school for deaf students when eight senior boys formed the 33rd Division of the Halifax Boy Scout Troop in October 1946. Duchesne joined the troop a short time later. Five months after his graduation in 1952, he returned to his alma mater as assistant scoutmaster, where his presence as a deaf scout leader and role model attracted new members to the troop. By the end of the 1952-1953 school year, a total of 28 deaf boys were active in scouting on the campus. Duchesne served continuously as assistant scoutmaster until 1961 (with the exception of the 1953-1954 school term and part of 1957). He occasionally assumed the duties of scoutmaster on an unofficial basis as well. It was not until April 1958, however, that he was officially registered as the first deaf scoutmaster in Canada. His division



Scoutmaster Duchesne in 1953

Courtesy of Lawrence C.J. Duchesne (Halifax, N.S.)

also made history when it became Canada's first and only deaf scout troop known to be led by a deaf leader. His tenure as scoutmaster of the 33rd Division of the Halifax Boy Scout Troop ended in June 1961 when the Halifax School for the Deaf closed and the students were transferred to a new school in Amherst, N.S.

On June 7, 1969, Duchesne married the former Judith Ann Levy (b. Oct. 29, 1945) of Beaver Harbour County, N.S. Levy had attended the Halifax School (1957-1960) and the Interprovincial School for the Education of the Deaf in Amherst (1960-1966). They have three hearing children.

Collecting

There's an old expression that says: "One man's junk is another man's treasure." Some people seem to be "natural-born" collectors (people who are *not* collectors often refer to them as "pack rats"). Collections can range from coins and stamps to stuffed animals and pictures of Elvis Presley. Some deaf Canadians, like James Gatto, collect pieces of the past.

In a former chicken house not far from Bellevue, Alta., Gatto (b. Mar. 25, 1914) displays his vast collection of antique bottles and artifacts dug up in ghost towns in southern Alberta and

southeastern British Columbia. He was born in Bushtown (Bush) near Bellevue and lost his hearing at the age of six following a series of bad colds. Gatto attended the Manitoba School for the Deaf in Winnipeg (1926-1935). After returning to his hometown, he worked at odd jobs and played hockey in his spare time (“a real tough hockey player,” Gatto and his team won six out of eight games one winter).² Gatto worked as a carpenter for Bellevue and Sickoff Contracting Company from 1942 to 1978, with a starting salary of 50 cents per hour. Because he grew up in the Bellevue area, he is a rich source of information about its past. The area, he recalls, was famous for its homemade sausage, salami, and cheese, but the art of making these has been lost. There were 14 coal mines in the Crows’ Nest Pass of Alberta, but all are now closed. There was no electricity at that time, and families used coal oil lamps in the homes and barns. Like many of his neighbours, Gatto’s family moved from Bushtown to higher ground in 1929 because of flooding. During a flood in 1923, the family lost everything except some mattresses and lamps, and had to sleep in railroad boxcars for three days until new housing could be found.

Gatto and his deaf brother, Carino (b. Oct. 30, 1923; d. Apr. 6, 1978), started unearthing antiques in deserted towns and villages in 1967. Most of the collection was acquired prior to 1977. Gatto used his carpentry skills to convert an old chicken house into a museum to house his collection. The museum, which opened to the public in 1974, operates on a year-round basis, with visiting hours in the afternoons and evenings during the week and all day on the weekend. The bottles in his collection come in a rainbow of colours — olive green, dark green, purple, brown, dark red, peach, and dark blue. Others are clear, and a few are black, a result of iron slag in the glass mix. In addition to the bottles, Gatto’s collection includes oil lamps, jars, cow bells, butter churns, old telephones, antique school desks, mine buckets, carpenters’ tools, old nails, and old books. Visitors can get a sense of what life was like in the “old days” of Crows’ Nest Pass by spending an hour or so among his memorabilia.

The collections of Howard Lloyd and Nelson Wood took up



James Gatto and a few of his antique bottles and oil lamps

Courtesy of James Gatto (Bellevue, Alta.)



Gatto’s collection also includes old household appliances and tools

Courtesy of James Gatto (Bellevue, Alta.)

less room than the antiques collected by Gatto. Both Lloyd and Wood collected stamps, as this newsy note in *The Deaf Canadian* of February 3, 1915, recounts:

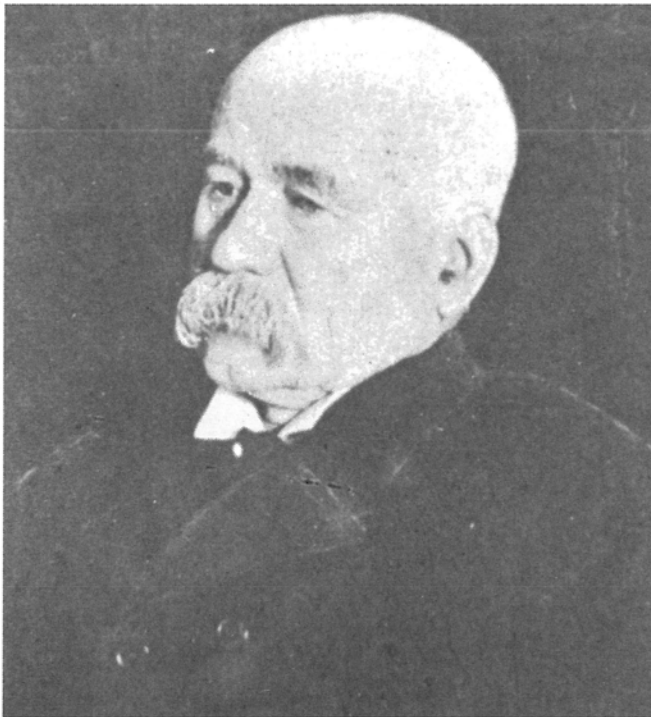
Mr. Howard Lloyd of Brantford [Ont.] is now making a hobby of collecting foreign stamps. Mr. Nelson Wood used to collect thousands of them and once had no fewer than sixteen thousand different kinds, but has since disposed of them to Mr. Alexander, a wealthy banker of Winnipeg, for \$600, thus making a profit of a couple of hundred dollars. Nelson has now given up this hobby.³

Apparently Mr. Wood turned his attention from stamps to inventing, for it was reported that he received both Canadian and American patents on his “30 x 36 inch egg collapsible crates.”⁴

Inventing

Nelson Wood was not the only deaf Canadian to receive a patent for an invention. To some it might appear to be “just tinkering,” but in workshops, basements, and garages throughout Canada, deaf inventors are putting their minds to solving puzzles or coming up with a new device or method to make life easier. A couple of these men from the early 1900s are profiled below.

John Parker and the Parker Ballot: John Parker (b. 1844; d. May 1, 1922), a born-deaf Scot who lived in Manitoba, is remembered for two contributions to Canada — his actions



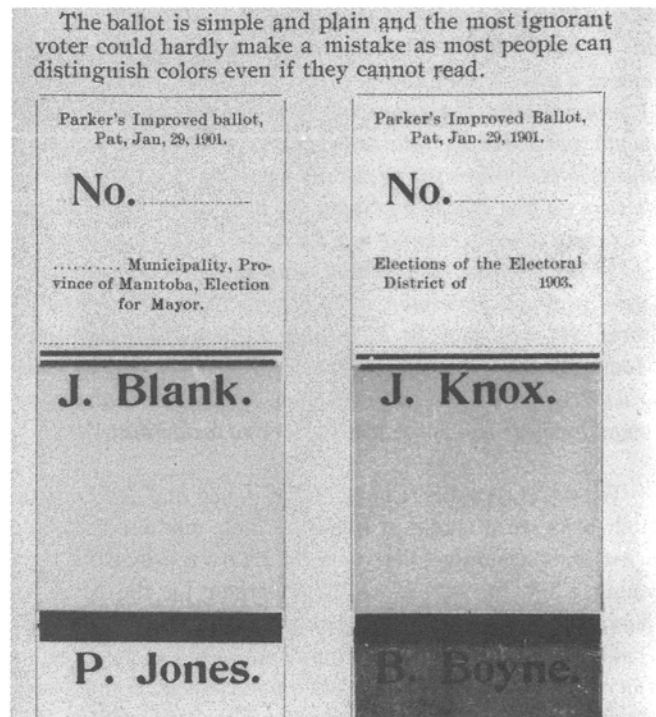
John Parker

The Silent Echo/Gallaudet University Archives

during the Canadian North-West Rebellion of 1885, and his invention of an improved ballot system in 1901. Parker received his education at the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Aberdeen, Scotland.⁵ Shortly after his graduation, he immigrated with his parents to Canada and settled in Kingston, Ont. Following the death of his parents in 1882, Parker travelled to Brandon, Man., then a small tent settlement on the Assiniboine River, approximately 200 kilometres west of Winnipeg. He first worked as a drayman and/or an expressman. In the early summer of 1883, he left to homestead on a 320-acre lot, known as "Ninian Farm," near Souris, Man., some 45 kilometres south-west of Brandon.⁶

In the summer of 1884, Parker travelled to Winnipeg to greet the deaf settlers brought into the country from England by Jane Elizabeth Groom, a British deaf missionary.⁷ He was involved in orienting the newcomers to the area and in helping them find employment. A member of the Brandon Rifle Association and "a crack shot" (winner of the association's gold medal in the 1884 rifle competitions), Parker became a volunteer with civilian militia assisting the North-West Mounted Police when the Canadian North-West Rebellion of 1885 broke out.⁸ He first served as a wagon driver and later fought against the militant Plains Cree and Assiniboine Indians at the battle of Cut Knife Hills (near Battleford, Sask.), narrowly escaping death several times. An article in the May 28, 1885 edition of the *Brandon Sun* (Brandon, Man.) stated that, "John Parker, a deaf-mute but a capital shot, perhaps hit more Indians than any other man on the field."⁹ Parker was decorated with several medals for gallantry. He returned to farm on his homestead soon after peace was restored on the prairies.

At the turn of the century, Parker sold his farm and moved



The Parker Ballot (1901)

The Silent Echo/Gallaudet University Archives

to a house at 602 Corydon Ave. in Winnipeg, where he spent much of his time experimenting and developing useful creations. On January 29, 1901, he patented one of his inventions — the "Parker Ballot" — an improved voting system for the municipalities and electoral districts of Manitoba.¹⁰ Parker's ballot relied on different colours to distinguish between the candidates, with each coloured square containing a candidate's name. A mark any place on the square signified a vote for that individual. The new system was simple and even "the most ignorant voter could hardly make a mistake as most people can distinguish colors [for each candidate] even if they cannot read."¹¹ It was reported that the ballot was "receiving favorable notice from both municipal and provincial authorities."¹² Some accounts also credit Parker and another deaf man (Theodore Wilkie, an 1899 graduate of the Manitoba Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb in Winnipeg) with inventing an unspecified type of "auto contrivance" in the late 1910s.¹³

Parker spent the last 18 months of his life at the Old Folks Home in Middlechurch near Winnipeg. In 1922, he died from cancer at the age of 78. His casket, draped with the Union Jack, was interred at Elmwood Cemetery beside the body of his late wife, Sarah (b. July 5, 1851; d. Sept. 28, 1913), a deaf immigrant from England.

Another deaf Canadian inventor was a Toronto man named Charles Edmund Wilson (b. Mar. 15, 1848; d. June 6, 1913). The January 2, 1905 edition of *The Silent Echo* reprinted the following story about one of his creations.

Charles E. Wilson, a deaf man, of Toronto, Ont. is a remarkable mechanical genius. He recently constructed a piece of mechanism, which is worked by means of a small crank, showing a

woman milking a cow. The woman's hands move, and occasionally her head will turn. The cow is slowly chewing its cud, and will once in a while brush away the flies with its tail. Even the streams of milk are seen. A pig standing by is feeding out of a pail. Its mouth moves and the little tail shakes as the tail of a happy pig always does. A frog is sitting just in front of the cow, and its throat moves as a frog does in breathing. All these different movements are caused by wires running into the figures, which are controlled by the small crank. Mr. Wilson, who invented and made the curiosity, is a draughtsman at the Toronto Engraving Company's works. He was born in Richmond, Eastern Township [near Montréal]. His father was a retired English officer, and his mother took charge of her child's education. Mr. Wilson is also a successful amateur carpenter, upholsterer and taxidermist.¹⁴

Wilson, the youngest of 12 children, had one deaf brother. Both boys were taught at home by their mother, a talented artist who encouraged her youngest child's artistic skills. As a young adult, he worked as an illustrator for the Montréal *Witness* newspaper and later took a position as an engraver in Frederick Brigden's wood engraving business in Toronto, where he continued working until his retirement 26 years later. On July 11, 1890, Wilson married Eva Elizabeth Swift (b. Feb. 28, 1861; Unknown) of Churchville, a deaf woman who had attended the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Belleville (1871-1882).¹⁵ The couple had two deaf sons who also went to the Ontario Institution (their daughter, also born deaf, died in childhood). Wilson was described as "popular for his hospitality and his entertaining discourses on the natural history of animals, birds, fish, trees, and vines."¹⁶ He was a religious man who "always earned the sincere respect of all with whom he came in contact."¹⁷

Building

Gary Kenneth Belmore (b. Feb. 6, 1934) of Nova Scotia dreamed of living in a log cabin. Through perseverance and hard work, he and his wife, the former Jacqueline Lillian Johnston (b. May 15, 1933) have made that dream come true. Born in Halifax, N.S., Belmore was brought up in foster homes. He became deaf at the age of three following an attack of spinal meningitis. Because his foster mother frequently travelled around Northern Ontario, his schooling was sporadic. He was a student at the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville (1939-1940) and the Clinton Street Public School oral classes in Toronto (1944-1946). In 1946, he was struck by a car. After he recovered from his injuries, he moved back to Nova Scotia and lived with his grandparents until 1951. He later attended the Halifax School for the Deaf (1951-1953). His wife, Jacqueline, was born deaf in Peters Road, P.E.I. She also attended the Halifax School (1939-1950). The couple met at a party in Halifax and married in 1955. They have two hearing children, a son, Wade and a daughter, Susan, both in their 30s.

Belmore describes himself as a "jack of all trades" who has worked on various construction sites for a number of years. His construction experience was an advantage when he began



The cabin's exterior

Courtesy of Gary and Jacqueline Belmore (Shubenacadie, N.S.)

designing and building his dream home. All the work, with the exception of the electrical wiring, was done by Belmore himself.

Located off a dirt road in the country (about 75 kilometres from Halifax), the seven-room log cabin is constructed entirely of hand-hewn pine and spruce logs. All the trees were cut by Belmore on his 115-acre property, which he purchased in 1980. After he chopped down the trees and trimmed off the branches, he used his truck to drag the logs to the building site. Then he and his wife cured the logs and peeled the bark. The foundation for the house was constructed of fieldstone. Raising the heavy logs into place required a rope block and tackle arrangement, plus the help of some deaf friends. The notched logs fit together without the need for spikes or nails, and the chinks between the logs were first filled with moss from the forest, then caulked. Belmore began building the cabin in May of



A wood-burning stove helps heat the cabin

Courtesy of Gary and Jacqueline Belmore (Shubenacadie, N.S.)

1984. Working mainly on the weekends, it took him almost seven years to finish.

In addition to two bedrooms and one bath, the cabin consists of a pantry, kitchen, dining room, and large living room with a stone fireplace. The fireplace was also built by Belmore with stones he found piled near the fence line of his property, probably "cleared from a field by a farmer some 100 years before."¹⁸ The cabin is heated by two wood-burning stoves,

plus a propane gas furnace that is used as a back-up when the couple is not home. Log cabins are extremely energy efficient — cool in summer and warm in winter. Even in temperatures of -10 degrees (Fahrenheit), “it is so warm inside that I don’t need storm windows,” said Belmore. Now that the house is finished, he is hard at work on a 24-foot by 36-foot log garage on his property, again working alone on the weekends.

Flying

Edward Thomas Payne (b. Sept. 22, 1896; d. Jan. 8, 1973) is believed to be the first licensed deaf male pilot in the world.¹⁹ Deaf since birth, he attended the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville (1906-1917). His exploits as a pilot won him the affection of a deaf beauty queen, Frances Lucille Ford (b. Aug. 31, 1912), an alumna of the Kentucky School for the Deaf in Danville (1917-1931). In a description of her first meeting with the famous pilot, she recounts: “I accepted an invitation for my first flight with him as my pilot. While soaring through the clouds, our romance began.”²⁰ The couple married on June 4, 1932. For more than a quarter of a century, Payne was employed as a Linotype operator at the *Border Cities Star* in Windsor, Ont.

Four years after Charles A. Lindberg, the celebrated hearing American pilot, flew the “Spirit of St. Louis” alone across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927, Payne began to develop an interest in becoming a “birdman” as well. His entreaties to be taken on as a student were rejected by flight instructors at first. But his “forceful and persuasive personality finally weakened the resistance of Captain F.G.M. Sparks,” a World War I flying ace, who accepted him as a student at the Border Cities Aero Club in Windsor (then Walkerville).²¹ Payne was dubbed “The Silent Lindy.”²² The Canadian Department of National Defence (Air Service) issued him a licence in the B2 category on June 15, 1931, and he attended flight classes from June to August of that year. After 11 hours of dual instruction in the air and many preliminary sessions conducted via pad and pencil on the ground, he passed his private pilot’s licence examination and made his first solo flight at Walker Airport (in August). On October 21, 1931, he was issued his pilot’s licence.²³ *The Canadian*, the paper printed by his alma mater, wrote the following about Payne’s aeronautical training and accomplishments: “Eddie



Eddie Payne and his wife, who “fell in love” during their first flight

Courtesy of William E. Payne (Calgary, Alta.)



Hall in front of a Cessna (1950s)

Courtesy of George D. Hall (Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.)

was one of the finest pupils that ever graduated from the O.S.D....We will expect to see his plane drop gracefully down on our campus some nice day, and he is assured of a cordial welcome.”²⁴

A few years later, Payne was approached by Robert L. Ripley of “Believe It or Not” fame, and asked to perform a stunt with a Fleet plane to entertain the crowds at the famous Kentucky Derby horserace in the 1930s. Ripley wanted to write a feature about him in one of his columns. Although Payne had done considerable stunts in other airplanes, he was not able to familiarize himself with the Fleet machine in time to accept Ripley’s proposal.²⁵ In 1938, Payne participated in the All-American Aircraft Show in Detroit, Mich., where he nonchalantly flew his small plane back and forth above the crowds, without incident. On another occasion, however, something went wrong while he was executing a nose-dive, and the plane crashed. Fortunately, Payne emerged without a scratch, and continued “to frequent with greater relish the sky lanes” until the Second World War broke out.²⁶

During the war, the federal government of Canada prohibited private flying. After a lapse of six years, Payne decided to reapply for a pilot’s license. On April 28, 1946, he went up three times with an instructor at the Windsor airport, who saw no reason why Payne could not solo. His application to Ottawa for a renewed pilot’s license was then approved. According to his Pilot Log Book, which is currently in his son’s possession, it appeared that Payne flew until July 29, 1947, at which time he lost his license due to the advent of radio communications.²⁷ The book also showed that he flew such planes as the Reid Rambler, Gypsy Moth 60, Taylor Cub, and Piper Cub.

George Darwin Hall (b. Feb. 10, 1928), another alumnus of the Ontario School (1935-1945), was also a licensed pilot.²⁸ He became deaf at the age of six months following a fall. Hall grew up in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. In 1947, he moved to Grand Rapids, Mich., where he married a hard-of-hearing American woman, Jennie Diekman, in 1949. (She died on December 12, 1969, and in 1970, Hall married Shirley Elliott [b. Feb. 11, 1937], a deaf

woman who had also attended the Ontario School [1944-1957]). Hall worked as an inspector at the American Seating Company in Grand Rapids. In order to make quick and frequent trips to visit his relatives in the Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. area, he took flying lessons from the Jack Norton School in October 1954. (His second reason for obtaining a pilot's licence was to regularly fly into western Michigan to do missionary work among deaf people for the Baptist Church.) Communication between Hall and Norton, his flight instructor, was accomplished by writing on a pad when on land, and through hand signals when in the air. Hall purchased a two-passenger Cessna and surprised his mother, Stella McLean of Sault Ste. Marie, by "just flying in" from Grand Rapids one weekend in the fall of 1955. "I didn't even know he knew how to fly," she said, stunned at his unexpected appearance.²⁹ His private licence was granted on March 20, 1956 with one restriction: no flying into any airfield that required radio contact with the tower.

Canada's first deaf ultralight aeroplane pilot [ultralight aeroplanes are small planes that fly close to the ground over non-congested areas] was William Harvey Parker (b. Oct. 2, 1962) of Calgary, Alta., a certified aerobic dance instructor and former architectural student.³⁰ Deafened at birth, he attended the Alberta School for the Deaf (1972-1982) in Edmonton. Parker first became fascinated with airplanes at the age of four. An aviation movie buff, he recalls dreaming of flying such military jets as the B-52, F-14, F-15, F-16, or the United States' B707s. When he was older, Parker was told by Air Transport Canada (ATC) that his deafness would prohibit him from flying an aircraft around any airport or congested area where the use of radio contact or control is required. In spite of this restriction, his strong love for aviation continued. Fortunately, he



Bill Parker in front of an ultralight aeroplane
Courtesy of William Parker (Calgary, Alta.)

learned that it was possible to fly an ultralight aircraft without air-to-ground radio contact. After a few months of trying to convince the ATC, Parker was finally authorized to fly an ultralight aircraft. He began taking lessons in 1983 with John Reed, the owner and instructor of Sky Pilot Aviation, located near his hometown. They worked out a series of hand signals to communicate with the ground crew. Parker's first attempts at flying were frustrating, and he was on the verge of dropping out twice before completing the course. Nevertheless, he managed to pass the three-part written examinations required by the ATC. Parker's childhood dream was realized when he soloed on July 31, 1986, flying the Spectrum Beaver RX-35 at Indus Airport, approximately 42 kilometres east of Calgary.³¹

The second deaf person in Canada to acquire an ultralight aeroplane license (in September 1990) was Clifford Bruce Skelton (b. Apr. 29, 1954) of Surrey, B.C. An alumnus of the Jericho Hill Provincial School for the Deaf in Vancouver (1959-1972), he had dreamed about flying since the age of 14. In November 1989, Skelton approached Fred Glasbergen, president of the Airflow Ultralight Aviation Limited in Surrey, to inquire about the possibility of taking aviation lessons. Glasbergen, whose planes had been involved in three movies shot in the B.C. area (an episode of "McGyver," a Japanese advertising shoot, and a television documentary), was reluctant at first, because of Skelton's deafness, but eventually allowed him to take lessons, beginning in January 1990. Skelton and his instructor, Ken Buck, established a method of communicating between themselves. Aside from ground communication via pencil and paper, they invented tactile codes for communication in the air.³²

Following 14 hours of training and test soloing, Skelton received his five-year ultralight aeroplane license from the Canadian Department of Transport in September 1990. On a May weekend in 1991, together with a group of 14 hearing ultralight aeroplane aviators, he made a round-trip flight over the magnificent British Columbia terrain from Surrey to Lillooet, with two stops in Hope and Boston Bar for refuelling and refreshments. He was especially impressed by the grandeur of the Fraser Canyon, which he described as "the most beautiful sight I have ever seen."³³

On October 11, 1980, Skelton married Karen Joan Foot (b. Apr. 2, 1959), an alumna of his alma mater (1964-1966 and 1974-



Skelton soars over Surrey, B.C. (1991)
Photo Credit: Astrid E. Flanjak (White Rock, B.C.)

1978) and the Metro School for the Deaf (1969-1974) in Toronto. They have three hearing children. Skelton is currently logging the many hours of flight time necessary to obtain a commercial pilot's licence. He also hopes to learn to fly a "float plane" and be able to land on water someday.

In Ontario, Timmins resident Gaetan Gerard Luc Bourgault (b. Nov. 30, 1956), a former student at the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville (1962-1975), is one of the most recent deaf persons known to conquer the Canadian skies. After a 13-year battle with Transport Canada (1977-1990), he was granted a certificate to take flying lessons after passing his "medical 4 category examination" in December 1990. Earlier that same year, he had completed a ten-week "aviation educational ground training program for Private Pilots (Airplane)" at Northern College of Applied Arts and Technology in Timmins, taught by Bodhan Skrynyk, a hearing flight instructor.³⁴ Bourgault joined the Nighthawk Flying Club in Iroquois Falls, Ont. in 1991 for further training "off the ground" with Skrynyk.

Like other deaf pilots, Bourgault (who was born deaf) is restricted to flying planes that do not require radio guidance, so he specializes in piloting ultralight aircraft. A welder by trade, his fascination with flying began when he was a young boy. "In school, I would read every book I could find about planes ... to this day I still read all the books I can about airplanes."³⁵ After three attempts, he passed the written exams and obtained his private pilot's licence (No. U392634) in October 1993. He is now saving money to buy a plane with pontoons so he can fly "into some of the remote lakes to fish" in Northern Ontario.³⁶ As of August 1994, he had logged 156.3 hours in the air.



Bourgault inspecting an aircraft before take-off
Courtesy of Gaetan G.L. Bourgault (Timmins, Ont.)

Skydiving

Plummeting from an airplane at least 3,000 feet above the ground is not everyone's idea of a good time, but some deaf Canadians enjoy the thrill of skydiving. Larissa Anne Makortoff (b. Feb. 16, 1962) of Vancouver, B.C. is believed to be the first born-deaf woman in Canada to leap out of an airplane (on July



Brown practising for his jump
Courtesy of Carl Beverley Brown (Fredericton, N.B.)

11, 1981). Captured by the excitement of the experience, she regularly participates as a skydiver. Deaf since birth, Makortoff attended the Jericho Hill Provincial School for the Deaf (1967-1980) in Vancouver. A year following her graduation, she completed six hours of parachutist training, and made her first jump at Blaine Airport in Blaine, Wash. On her fifth jump (September 13 of that year), the parachute lines got tangled some 20 seconds after she exited a plane at an altitude of 2,800 feet. Makortoff immediately handled the problem by opening her auxiliary chute and landed safely. This terrifying experience has not stopped her from further skydiving activities.

Another deaf Canadian skydiver is Carl Beverley Brown (b. Jan. 26, 1968) of Fredericton, N.B. It is difficult to determine whether or not he is the first deaf male skydiver in Canada, however.³⁷ Born deaf at Woodstock, N.B., Brown briefly attended a preschool program at the Interprovincial School for the Education of the Deaf in Amherst, N.S. (1970-1972). He then received his elementary and secondary education at various public schools with special classes for deaf students in and around Fredericton, including the Charlotte Street School (1972-1974), Montgomery Street School (1974-1976), Forest Hill School (1976-1977), Douglas Elementary School (1977-1980), Albert Street Junior High School (1980-1983), and Fredericton High School (1983-1987). Following ground and aerial training, Brown's first sport parachute jump was made on August 27, 1988, at Weyman Airport in Sisson Settlement (about 32 kilometres northwest of Fredericton). Since earning his First Jump Certificate from the Canadian Sport Parachuting Association, Brown has continued to leap from airplanes.

Sharpshooting

Vance Thelston Maxwell, Jr. (b. July 21, 1940) is a man who keeps his eye on the target and has a living room full of sharpshooter trophies, plaques, and medals to prove it. He is regarded as Canada's best deaf marksman. Profoundly deafened at the age of 18 months by an ear infection, Maxwell received his elementary and high school education in Jordan Falls, N.S. (1946-1955). He became a carpenter and welder in 1963. His favourite hobby has always been shooting, and he often prac-



Maxwell takes aim

Courtesy of Vance T. Maxwell, Jr. (Shelburne Co., N.S.)

tises on his homemade rifle range in the evenings and weekends. Maxwell's deaf wife, Karen Faye (b. Nov. 13, 1944), and their hearing son, Robert, have also taken up the hobby.

Since winning his first trophy in 1972, Maxwell has competed throughout Canada. At the Nova Scotia Provincial Sharpshooter Championship in June 1976, he ranked first in both the sporting rifle marksman event and the sharpshooter event. His strong showing won him a place on the Nova Scotia Rifle Team and the opportunity to compete in the Canadian

National Rifle Championships in Kitchener, Ont. that year. His team took second-place honours. At the June 1984 Canadian Deaf Summer Games in Vancouver, B.C., Maxwell captured a gold medal in the Free Rifle (50 M) Prone (60 shots) event. He also won a silver in the Free Rifle (50 M) Three-Positions (3 x 40 shots) competition. His skills qualified him to compete a year later in the 1985 World Summer Games for the Deaf in Los Angeles, Calif., where he placed 22nd in the shooting field of 37 competitors, the highest ranking ever obtained by a Canadian.

At the North East Harbour Gun Club in his home province, Maxwell holds the highest average for small bore shooting during 1985, 1986, and 1987. He also broke the previous record by shooting the most bull's eyes at the nearby Bear Point Gun Club for three consecutive years (1982-1984). As the only deaf shooter in the Atlantic provinces, he has always competed against hearing persons at local events. He is entirely self-taught and, unlike his hearing peers, has never had a coach. His accomplishments were acknowledged at a special Night of Champions sponsored by the Nova Scotia Department of Culture, Recreation, and Fitness on December 6, 1985, where he received an award symbolic of outstanding sport commitment and achievement. It is Maxwell's intention to continue shooting as long as he maintains a steady hand. He once chuckled about his numerous trophies, saying that "the worst part is cleaning the dust off."³⁸