

## EULOGY OF A LEGEND

This must be a celebration, a joyous celebration. He insisted on it!!

This amazing old man was legally blind, but would drive to the airport at age

79 on his motorcycle when the traffic on the back roads was light, and it was a beautiful sunny still day. He would put on his old WWII flight coveralls and helmet, climb into his ultralight aircraft, take off and fly for 30 or 40 minutes, find his way back to the airport, begin his descent and touch down gently within feet of where he took off. Then he had to get home before evening dusk. I wonder how many of those flights Lorraine and I worried him through!

He wore his glasses, sometimes he would even clean them, but most of the time they were pretty dirty. He never wore goggles because they "interfered with his vision." How did he ever find his way back to the airport?

He was a strange and wonderful old man. Can you image he even got his doctor and friend to do his eulogy.

His name was:

**Don Braun; He signed his name Don C. Braun - Captain Don Braun.**

Bristol Freighter 170 MK31 stands on a pedestal on the outskirts of the city of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada in full flight position. This powerful old twin engine taildragger was donated by Wardair Canada, Ltd. and was officially dedicated by Max Ward at Bristol Park in Yellowknife in 1970.

The plaque beneath the monument reads: To commemorate the work done by this type of air freighter in developing Northern Canada by serving Trading Posts, schools, mining properties, oil exploration crews and unnamed Arctic Islands. This particular aircraft was retired from active service early in 1968 after making history on May 6, 1967, when, piloted by Captain Don Braun, it was the first wheel equipped aircraft to land at the North Pole.

Don's life, working for his closest friend Max Ward, as Chief Pilot in charge of WardAir Yellowknife Division was a lifetime of flying into uncharted and many times unmapped areas of Canada's High Arctic compressed into a relatively few short years. His memories of these precious years, with the help of his dear friend, John Warren, will hopefully soon be in book form and is tentatively titled "Fly Where the Eagles Fly -- Memories of the Arctic Fox."

Brilliant, constantly and quietly, and always superbly resourceful whether bailing himself out of tight situations encountered almost daily in those days of high Arctic flying or even more difficult for him, to leave the job he loved so much to return to St. Cloud to care for his wife, that until the end of her

days would always require his daily care and presence.

This one decision in this day and age of easy marriage dissolution qualifies him in our Catholic church for Canonization. I can assure you that Don Braun never felt he qualified for sainthood. Can't you just hear his laughter at the thought?

But, there was one virtue above all that to me, and I am sure to you also, that Don had, that I never observed in any person I have known or read about--and it wasn't that he was born without Original sin--but as long as I knew him, and from what his friends before this have told me, Don seemed to have no destructive self-pity that we all seem to have to a certain degree. He took the problems of life as they were dished out to him without ever feeling sorry for himself. What an example for all of us!!

He laughed constantly at his own mistakes and errors and, in fact, in later years this was one of his memory tricks for remembering his many adventures. His laughter and his sense of humor especially when talking about his own problems and mistakes are what I shall always hear when I'm walking down my runway in the evening of my years.

If Don had one weakness it was bowling. He just loved the game. When he was still able to bowl, I could usually tell at his followup clinic visits how he was doing by what weight ball he was using. He was down to a 10 pound ball on one occasion and his scores were lousy. Yes, a legally blind man bowling! He learned to associate names with voices even at age 80, especially at the bowling alleys.

Don and Marie could not have a family of their own, but they have three of the finest sons any parent could ask for. Joel, Charles, and Christopher have been a tremendous inspiration to me, especially during this past year. Their love and care and support they gave their father was tremendous and he never ceased to keep me informed of their successes.

---And then there was Jackie. Don could no longer see her, but her touch and the sound of her voice was the most comforting thing in the world to him right to the end. He loved her dearly, and she could, if anyone could, make him obey my orders.

If you wanted a good friend in time of trouble or otherwise, then Don would be describing his brother-in-law, Eric Mildebrath. With Eric and Fran, he had a friend he could always count on and a sister with as much courage and integrity as his own.

And, he loved music and particularly he loved Rita MacNeils songs, especially the one in which she sings: "You fly where the eagles fly; you dance with the stars at night; you reach with all your might for your moment in time." He wanted to get written permission to use this as a prologue to his book. The woman that he admired most and his special friend, Mrs. Max (Marjorie) Ward, I'm sure will accomplish this for him.

Don's other weakness and joy was his garden and his motorcycle. I hope the

story of his garden and the motorcycle accident are in the book. If not, I'll let Helen, Vern, and Eric tell it.

Who will pick the wild asparagus, grapes and morels?

I know two dear friends that aren't here and would want to say goodbye and will miss him dearly. They both have four legs. One is my Nikka and the other is Don's old buddy Skylar.

Last, but far from least, was Don's love for Rockhaven. It is located on the north side of Red Rock Lake on the Coppermine River just below the Arctic Circle. Rockhaven has to be felt as it seems impossible to describe in words. It was and is our magnificent paradise on earth. Max and Marjorie Ward's creation and dream place in the beautiful country misnamed the Barrens, north of Yellowknife. The "Arctic Fox" will be there in spirit as long as there is a Rockhaven.

Max and Marjorie Ward tried so hard to be here today to say a prayer for Don and bid a happy farewell to an old friend. Yes, I said "happy." No tears of self-pity for the passing of this dear friend.


Don would like me to give special thanks for all the love and care he received from Doctor Fredarick Gobel and his staff from Abbott Northwestern Hospital, and from Sister Germaine and Kathleen Scott from the St. Cloud Hospital Hospice Services, and especially from his wonderfully supportive brothers and sisters and all his bowling buddies.

After he left Yellowknife, in a short period of time, the Piper Apache and the Republic Seabee that he left behind, and two Bristol freighters were lost or demolished. They would fly for no one but him.

**Don Braun; He signed his name Don C. Braun - Captain Don Braun.**

An epic is completed and become a legend! One precious human life!

The Arctic Fox is still flying and dancing with the stars in the Arctic night!!!

  
Doctor Bob Cesnik  
4/14/93

Don C. Braun  
Born: Feb. 20, 1913  
Died: Good Friday  
April 9, 1993

