

Fern Villeneuve Feature

If you have ever been around Fern Villeneuve you might be surprised to find out that this very quiet and modest Canadian Swifter is also a Canadian hero and founder of the first Canadian Flight Demonstration Team.



Fern Villeneuve



Fern's C-GLYN

I may have some of the facts screwed up a bit since my knowledge of Fern is a bit second hand but I'll give it a go. For starters I think I heard that Fern is now 82 years old, still flies his Swift actively to Athens, Oshkosh, and anywhere he desires. He also sleeps in a tent when he comes to Oshkosh. Not a camper, not a motor home – a tent. In 1959 Fern was approached about starting up a Canadian Flight Demonstration team. He considered this an assignment of a lifetime. Fern was the Commander of the first Canadian Flight Demo team called the “Golden Hawks.” The Golden Hawks operated until 1963 when they were shut down for a brief period of time and reemerged in 1967 as the “Golden Sentinels” and then changed their name to the “Snowbirds” in 1970.



F-86 in Golden Hawk colors



Fern – Commander of the Golden Hawks

Fern gave us some brief history on his flying career. In 1946 Fern learned to fly in a J-3. He later flew the T-6 Harvard, P-51, Vampires, T-33, F-86, F-104, CF-100, and CF-101. He is very modest to the fact that he is one of only two living individuals with his picture on a Canadian coin. He shares this honor with the Queen of England. The question was asked of Fern to talk about his closest call in aviation and his answer was something about, "I almost got run over by a mule." The rest of the story is that he dead-sticked an F-86 and chose to stay with the airplane as opposed to bailing out over a congested area at night. He freed himself from the airplane after impact and managed to get to a grassy area before the aircraft caught fire. Because of a broken back he was unable to move once he laid down in the tall grass and was nearly run over by a mule that was bringing some rescue folks out in the dark. That is the gist of the story as I heard it. What a guy.



Fern in his office



The Warbird Interview

The Warbird community obviously appreciates Fern's accomplishments and restored an F-86 to the Golden Hawks colors. Fern was interviewed in a special Oshkosh setting about his life and the history of the Golden Hawks.



The Warbird interview Staff with Fern



As a fellow Swifter I am proud to share the skies with this gentleman. He is an example of quiet professionalism and humility. He doesn't need to speak. His actions have spoken for him.

More Pics of Fern in the 2010 Oshkosh report at:
<http://members.cox.net/jdicker/home.html>

Stan Price