

FORMER AIR CADET RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED AWARD



Virgil P. Moshansky joined the 287 Lamont Air Cadet Squadron in 1945 and over the next four years rose to the rank of Cadet Station Warrant Officer. Through his cadet career he not only achieved his cadet wings but also the DCRA Marksmanship awards.

What did Air Cadets mean to Alberta Supreme Court Justice Moshansky in his career? Everything! The following is his story.

Reflections on my Air Cadet Experience - (1945-1949) -
The Hon. Virgil P. Moshansky. C.M., Q.C., FRAeS.

“I was interested in flying from my youngest days, voraciously reading everything I could about flight, aircraft and the flying aces of both WW I and WWII, whose names and their number of kills I could recite by heart. The WW II RCAF fighter Ace Buzz Beurling, and RAF Wing Commander Johnnie Johnson, were among my aviation hero figures, as were also several of our older neighbourhood boys who had joined the RCAF at the beginning of WW II and gone overseas, some flying Spitfire fighters and others the Lancaster bombers.

As a youth, I lived with my parent’s on their farm land on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River, about 18 miles Northwest of the town Lamont, Alberta, and about 35 miles Northeast of the Edmonton Municipal Airport where an RCAF Elementary Flight Training School was established during WW II. At our farm home during the early 1940’s I watched with fascination and envy the fledgling airmen from the Edmonton RCAF training base doing aerobatics and mock combat in the skies of the aerial practise area located directly above our farm lands, in their Tiger Moths, and I longed to join them, but alas I was too young.

I joined the No. 287 Lamont Air Cadet Squadron in 1945, when I moved to the Town of Lamont, Alberta with my parents, to attend high school. The Lamont Air Cadet Squadron was formed in or around 1942, and when I joined it in 1945 it had about 150 Cadets. The Commanding Officer was Squadron Leader Clifford Shook, who also was the Lamont High School Principal, a strict but fair disciplinarian. He was looking for someone to form a Cadet Rifle team to compete in the Dominion of Canada Rifle Association (DCRA) Championships.

As a kid whose father also ran a large mink ranching operation on our farm, I had the job of bagging jack rabbits, with a 22 calibre rifle, with which to feed the mink. The rabbits were in great abundance around our farming operation on the banks of the river, and in

the surrounding forested areas. I thus became an expert marksman and proved it to Cadet C.O. Shook on the Lamont Squadron's indoor small-bore rifle range, and by my winning the DCRA National Marksmanship Competition Gold Medal.

I was promoted to the Cadet rank of Sergeant in 1946 and assigned the leadership of the newly formed Lamont Air Cadet Rifle team, which went on to win three consecutive annual DCRA National Small Bore Rifle Championships. I was also active in Cadet sports teams including hockey and soft ball teams. The Lamont Squadron softball team, of which I was the Captain and pitcher, won the Western Canada Softball Championship in 1949. Our Squadron was named by the RCAF as the top Air Cadet Squadron in Canada.

I attended four annual summer Air Cadet Camps at RCAF Stations in Western Canada with my Squadron, between 1945 and 1949, including camps at North Battleford, Saskatchewan; Gimli, Manitoba; Penhold, Alberta, and lastly, at Patricia Bay, on Vancouver Island, B.C. At the Patricia Bay Camp in 1949, I was promoted to the rank of Cadet Station Warrant Officer, in charge of some 1,500 Air Cadets attending the camp from across Western Canada. During all of these camps I was privileged to fly in various training aircraft, including the Tiger Moth, the Chipmunk, the Harvard and even the B-25 Mitchell bomber, and my passion for flying was cemented. However, University and Law school intervened and it was not until 1965 that I received my Private Pilot's License with night rating and acquired my first aircraft, a rare Cessna 175 with constant speed prop, followed by a Piper Arrow PA28R retractable. The self discipline and respect for others, which I learned as an Air Cadet served me very well in my future career, and my four in the Air Cadets of Canada were among the most memorable years of my life."



On March 10, 1989 an Air Ontario Flight 1363 crashed near Dryden, Ontario. Justice Moshansky was appointed to head the Commission of Inquiry into the causes of the incident that resulted in the death of 24 persons. The Inquiry is recognized as the most exhaustive aviation system investigation. All the recommendations of his report were adopted by Transport Canada. These changes have unquestionably saved and will continue to save many lives.

On Thursday, September 22, 2016 Justice Moshansky received the **Distinguished Alumni Award** from the University of Alberta. The award recognizes alumni who have made outstanding contributions to their profession and community over a number of years.