Kenneth (Ken) C. Lett

Kenneth (Ken) C. Lett, a distinguished veteran, and esteemed business leader, passed away peacefully in Victoria, B.C. on May 15, 2024, at the age of 100.

Born on July 13, 1923, Ken led a remarkable life marked by bravery, leadership, and unwavering dedication. His lifelong affair with aviation began as a teenage pilot in World War Two. He was a member of RCAF 402(F) Squadron flying the famous Spitfire aircraft and, while stationed in England, participated in many raids on the continent to disrupt Nazi Germany's logistical efforts to support their war effort. In his own words, he attacked anything that moved with a swastika – including trains and truck convoys.

His highlight of the war was his participation in the D-Day landings at Normandy by flying many sorties of "top cover" for the Allied troops coming ashore in France; an invaluable contribution to the success of the D-Day landings. He continued in this role for several weeks until the beachheads, and surrounding areas in France were secured.

Ken joined the post-war Royal Canadian Air Force/Canadian Forces and served in many capacities from squadron pilot to senior command and staff positions. A highlight was his membership on the selection team that chose the CF-104 as the replacement for the Canadair F-86 Sabre in the early 1960's. As such, he was a natural choice to be the first Commanding Officer of #6 Strike/Recce Operational Training Unit at RCAF Station Cold Lake, Alberta, the unit responsible for training military pilots on the new CF-104. Rising to the rank of Major-General, Ken retired from the RCAF as Deputy Chief of Staff Operations in NORAD, after enjoying an outstanding military career.

After retiring from the RCAF in 1977, Ken transitioned to the

business world, where he brought the same determination and leadership that had marked his military career. He successfully ran two companies, Executive Flight Centre and Business Flights, demonstrating his acumen and passion for aviation. In addition to his active duties as President, he could often be seen flying one of the many company Learjets on charter flights around the world. His passion for flying never wavered as he was an active pilot from 1941 to 1989. In 1991, he took a bold step into business ownership, purchasing Executive Flight Centre with his partner, Dean Buckland. Ken served as President and later as Chairman, guiding the company with a steady hand and insightful vision until he was 100 years old. His leadership and strategic guidance helped Executive Flight Centre grow and thrive, leaving a legacy of excellence and integrity.

His contributions to the overall aviation community included directorship roles with the Alberta Aviation Council, the Air Transport Association of Canada, and the Calgary Airport Business Association. As a board member on the Calgary Airport Authority and member of the Calgary Transportation Authority, Ken helped shape aviation in his hometown Calgary, Alberta. His greatest contribution was as a founding member of the Airforce Museum Society of Alberta where he was a major financial contributor to the original Airforce Museum in Calgary through donations provided by Ken and his predeceased wife Roma Lett.

Ken and his partner Patricia have been loyal supporters of many charities, including large donations to the Air Cadet League of Canada supporting an academic scholarship fund for cadets, Mount Royal College supporting an expanded aviation curriculum, and the Airforce Museum Society of Alberta supporting a Cold War exhibit.

Ken was the recipient of numerous prestigious awards throughout his life. He was awarded France’s highest honour, the Legion d’Honneur, for his contributions during the Second

World War. Recognizing his selfless contributions, he received the Aerospace Museum Lifetime Achievement Award and the RCA Association's Meritorious Service Award. In recognition of his contributions to aviation, Ken was honoured with the ATAC Lifetime Achievement Award culminating in 2023 being inducted into the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame.

Beyond his professional achievements, Ken was known for his personal qualities – his integrity, wisdom, and kindness touched the lives of all who knew him. He was a mentor to many, always ready with sound advice and a supportive word.

Ken is survived by his loving partner in life of 11 years, Patricia Firth. He was preceded in death by his wife of 65 years Roma Lett. Ken will be deeply missed by his family and countless friends and colleagues who will cherish his memory.

A memorial service to celebrate Ken's extraordinary life will be held at the Uplands Golf Club, in Victoria, at 2PM on June 26. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Airforce Museum of Alberta(www.rcaf.museum), reflecting Ken's commitment to promoting awareness and understanding of the role played by the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Ken Lett's life was a testament to the power of dedication, bravery, and leadership. His memory will continue to inspire and guide those who had the privilege of knowing him.

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

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