

Stuart Edward Soward

December 26, 1924 – January 10, 2011

Retired LCdr. Stuart E. Soward passed away peacefully on January 10, 2011. Pre-deceased by his brother, Maurice. He will be greatly missed by his wife, Sheila; daughters, Kathie Arundell, Beth Danskin (Danny), Fiona Soward (Lyse); son, Stuart (Sandra); sister, Jean Morrow; grandsons, Michael Danskin, Ross Soward and granddaughter, Susan Danskin and his many nephews and nieces.

Stu was born on December 26, 1924, raised in Vancouver and enlisted in the RCAF in June 1943 for pilot training, obtaining his wings in 1944. In 1945, he enlisted in the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm as a pilot, later that year transferring to the newly-formed RCN Air Branch joining 825 Canadian Firefly Squadron. He had a rewarding career as an operational naval pilot having flown 15 different aircraft serving extensively in first line squadrons flying both fighter and ASW aircraft aboard all three of Canada's aircraft carriers, participating in the Cold War with NATO forces. In 1954, Stu was officially commended by the Chief of the Naval Staff for his invention and development of an improved aircraft night landing signal system which was adopted by the RCN. His last tour of operational flying was as Officer-in-Charge of the 12 plane Tracker detachment aboard Bonaventure in 1961. Following command of the West Coast Naval Air Squadron and Staff appointments, he retired in 1970 at Victoria, where he first became involved in Community Affairs, serving on the Board of Directors of the Victoria Symphony Society and two years as President.

Stu's business activities began as a member of the Board of Directors of Data Processing Company, later being assigned the role of Manager and President. He subsequently purchased a fuel oil distributor and became the local Agent for Pacific

Petroleum Ltd. After selling the Agency he joined an Aviation Consulting partnership and was appointed the Vancouver Island Member of the Board of Directors of the BC Aviation Council. He then joined the Bureau of Management Consultants, Ottawa, where he prepared operational procedures for the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) various international projects.

In 1985, Stu began researching the biography of Canadian Naval Pilot Lt. Hampton Gray, who, flying from the aircraft carrier HMS Formidable, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, the only Canadian Naval Officer in WW2 to be so honoured. This first book, A Formidable Hero was published in 1987. Stu wrote and published a total of four books over the next eight years. All were on the subject of Canadian Naval Aviation history and related flying activities.

In 1988, focusing his interest in Lt Gray's heroic exploit, he initiated a project to erect a memorial at Onagawa Bay, Japan where Gray was killed. With strong support from the Canadian Embassy Tokyo, the monument was unveiled on August 9, 1989 adjacent to the Japanese memorial dedicated to their own war dead. The Gray Memorial is the only monument in Japan erected to a foreign hero. Accordingly, Stu was awarded the Naval Officers' Association of Canada Medal "For Exemplary Achievement in Service to NOAC and Canada". In recognition of Stu's achievements during his naval service, the Shearwater Aviation Museum has generously offered to dedicate the renaming of the West Wing to "Soward Hall". Stu felt very honoured.

In 1995 he was chosen as the City of Victoria's representative to the newly-formed Victoria Airport Authority. The same year Stu was awarded the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation, recognizing the efforts of those Veterans "who in an exemplary way have contributed to the remembrance of the sacrifices and achievements of Canadians in armed conflict" on behalf of Canadian Veterans.

The only business unfinished for Stu was the halting of the Mega Marina planned for Victoria's Inner Harbour. Stu worked relentlessly with his friends, Terry Milne, Peter Pollen, Patrick Finnigan and Peter Chance through the Victoria Harbour Defence Alliance and were pleased when the City downsized the development. He can rest knowing this issue is in their capable hands.

Stu requested no Memorial Service and in lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Cancer Society or Victoria Hospice. A gathering of family and friends is to be held at the Union Club, 805 Gordon Street, Victoria, B.C. from 2pm to 4pm on Monday, January 17th, 2011. Condolences may be offered to the family at www.mccallbros.com.