

Mary Swain Eulogy
June 2, 2013

Good Morning, my name is Tim Cole and I am here as Mary and Tony's friend and representing the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association (COPA), that Mary and Tony have been so deeply involved with for so many years.

To Tony and Anne please accept my sincere condolences on the loss of your dear wife and sister. Tony, I also bring condolences from your friends and staff at COPA from all across Canada and in particular John Bogie the founder of COPA, Kevin Psutka the President and CEO, and Paul Hayes, the Chairman of the Board.

There are so many other people and organizations that would like to speak today, and some will later as there is an open microphone, however due to time constraints, I am not only speaking on behalf of COPA but also bringing the sentiments of the many other COPA Flights, aviation clubs and organizations. In particular, the three local aviation organizations that worked so hard to put this Celebration of Life together are the Delta Heritage Airpark Committee, The Recreational Aircraft Association Chapter 85, and COPA Flight 5/The Boundary Bay Flying Club.

We also have representatives from The British Columbia Aviation Council (BCAC), EAA Chapter 1477 Chilliwack, CBAA, BC Floatplane Association, Quarter Century in Aviation Club, Transport Canada, the Transportation Safety Board and the BC Coast Chapter of the 99's (which is the International Organization of Women pilots that was founded by Amelia Earhart), who have asked me to read you the following:

"The BC Coast Chapter of the 99s remembers Mary with her arms wide open, ready with a big welcoming hug. She encouraged girls and women as they entered the world of aviation. She was the heart and soul of the Delta Heritage Airpark."

Mary had the amazing ability, when meeting both new and old friends, to immediately make direct contact with that person and have them feel that she was their best and dearest of old friends. It was a rare talent and she made so many folks feel comfortable and at ease, even when in strange surroundings. Mary would love this gathering today. This was her place and if it wasn't for Mary, Tony, Terry Wilshire and some of the other folks present, this Airpark would not exist. This is how I first met Mary and Tony back in the early 90s when they were fighting for the continued existence of the Delta Heritage Airpark. They were dark days, but through their tenacity and perseverance they won the right for us to be here.

Since then I have come to know and admire Mary and Tony and consider them both dear and cherished friends.

I would like to read you a short excerpt from a recent article I wrote about Mary. I know at least some of you have read this in the COPA or RAA publications, but please bear with me as many of the folks present today will not have seen it.

In 1971 Mary owned and operated Royal Seafoods, a very successful retail fish store in West Vancouver, and was dating an ex-Air Force pilot Tony Swain (later known as "the COPA Guy") who was soon to become her husband. During one of their Sunday outings, they were visiting the Delta Heritage Airpark and ran across a surplus Harvard which, on a whim, they purchased on the spot! This was the beginning of a love affair, not only with each other, but with an airplane and an aerodrome that would last over forty years.

The Harvard was dubbed "Bessy" and she sported "nose art" on her cowling of the "Fish Lady". This airplane became their magic carpet that transported them all over the western and central provinces and the western United States.

With Tony as the pilot and Mary as the navigator, expeditor, and general goodwill ambassador, they traveled to many, many, airshows, fly-ins, and other aviation events representing the Western War Birds and the COPA. Tony

became a COPA Director and, in doing so, he wrote articles in the COPA "Flight Newspaper" under the banner of, "The Pacific Perspective" and later as, "Tony's Perspective." In his many years of writing these articles, he featured "The Mary" and so she became even more widely known all across Canada. Their exploits and adventures were closely followed and, every month on receiving the newspaper, the first thing most readers did was turn to Tony's section to see what "The Mary" was up to next.

Over the years, the November 11th Remembrance Day Ceremonies took on a special meaning for Mary and Tony. In the earlier years they would participate with Bessy and be part of the Harvard formation that flew over the cenotaphs of the lower mainland and brought many a tear to the eyes of those who looked skyward and heard the sound of the mighty round engines as they roared over the silent crowds remembering those that had fallen in war.

In later years, a memorial ceremony has taken place at the flagstaff at the Delta Heritage Airpark that has added a personal touch to those of us who have gathered to remember the fallen. Afterwards, we joined Mary and her helpers as she provided steaming hot soup, a bun, and a cup of coffee or tea to the folks coming in out of the cold and wet Remembrance Day weather.

Wherever Mary held "court" (she was nearly always dressed in an apron for the occasion) and most often it was in her West Vancouver fish store or in the old coffee shop at the Delta Heritage Air Park, she drew a crowd of new and old friends that just wanted to be with her – she was that kind of person. But, it wasn't all love and hugs! If there was an injustice, or a cause worthy of her attention, she could be fiercely loyal, and she would fight the good fight for what she believed to be right. This was the case in the 1980s when the opponents of the Delta Heritage Air Park came very close to shutting down this wonderful grassroots aerodrome. Mary and Tony, in league with other supporters like Terry Wilshire, led the cause to save the aerodrome and it was only on the brink of closing that they successfully saved the Delta Heritage Air Park – now the jewel in the crown of the Greater Vancouver Regional District's parks system.

The park is now a mecca, not only aviation enthusiasts, but also for the urban dwellers and their children who want a short drive out into the country to experience grassroots aviation – where they can actually get out and touch, feel, and smell airplanes up close.

What a legacy that Mary and her friends are leaving behind. So, come on out to the Delta Heritage Air Park, walk around, talk to the folks that are building, flying, and loving aircraft. Come on in to the coffee shop that has now been dubbed "Mary's Place" and have a cup of coffee and a cookie and think of "The Mary" in her apron, welcoming you to stay a while and have a chat. By the way, smell the flowers - she planted them.

As already mentioned by our emcee Barney Dunlevy, the organizing committee are planning a suitable memorial to Mary's memory. We are hoping to be able to establish a scholarship or bursary for a young person to learn how to fly. It has already been mentioned that it would be most suitable to sponsor a young woman in Mary's memory. Friends, with Mary's passing we have lost not only a dear friend but also one of BC and Canada's, prime ambassadors for the general aviation community, we will all miss her. Thank you.