



REMEMBERING John Spronk

May 13, 1926 - June 15, 2014



(b. May 13, 1926) left us on June 15, 2014 at Abbotsford Regional Hospital. He had been in hospital for 3 months but his death was still unexpected. He will be greatly missed by his wife of 62 years, Patricia, his two daughters Margot and Trevi, and grandchildren Mariel and Bryn. He is survived by his two sisters, Mart and Sally in the Netherlands, and many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews in England and in Holland. He will also be missed by his many friends in the flying fraternity and others in B.C. and abroad. John was born in The Hague, and almost immediately embarked on an ocean voyage with his family to their new posting on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia. At six years of age John returned to the Netherlands where he attended school and spent the later war years evading capture by the Nazis. After the occupation ended, John enlisted in the Royal Netherlands Air Force. His first flight on New Year's Day, 1947 ended in a crash in the middle of a forest. Undeterred, John solo'd in a Tiger Moth on April 14, 1947 and went on to enjoy a successful career flying Harvards, Spitfires and Gloster Meteors, attaining the rank of Captain. In September of 1951 John married his British sweetheart, Patricia Lee and they lived in Holland until he retired from the RNLAF in 1957 when the young family immigrated to Canada. John's Canadian flying career began as an instructor in Kelowna and Penticton, and in 1961 he became the Chief Flying Instructor at the first civilian flying school at Abbotsford Airport. He trained many pilots who went on to careers in aviation. He was one of the founding members of the Abbotsford Flying Club, and instrumental in starting the Abbotsford International Airshow in 1962. Many will remember his "How Not to Fly" act from those early years. As well as flying aerobatics, John raced Stock planes at Bakersfield, Pendleton and Reno and was quite successful, winning second place several times. John joined Pacific Western Airlines in 1969 and retired as Captain in 1986 having flown the DC-6, C-130 Hercules and the B737. While flying the "Herc" John traveled all over the world, from Angola to Argentina,

and a number of exotic and dangerous places in between. He was a great story-teller, and told many tales about his adventures during this time. After retiring, John continued flying, instructing, mentoring and examining new pilots and instructors as a Designated Flight Test Examiner until his 81st birthday. He continued to be a staunch supporter of the Abbotsford Flying Club and the Abbotsford Airshow and his lifelong love of flying remained the focus of his life until his last day. John loved spending time with his family and was very proud of his grandchildren, Mariel and Bryn. John enjoyed photography, and most of his subjects were his family and friends, illustrating how important they were to him. He was a great traveler, extensively touring Europe, Africa, Mexico, the US and Canada with his wife Patricia. He especially treasured the time spent with his family and friends in Holland and England. John loved classical music, and was particularly fond of Mozart. A Celebration of Life will be held at the Abbotsford Flying Club at Abbotsford Airport 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, July 13, 2014. In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to a charity of your choice.

