

Hi Tom,

I am J.P. Bickell's relative and commissioned and co-wrote the book, J.P. Bickell The Life, the Leafs and the Legacy. Here is a picture of J.P. Bickell outside of his **941** Grumman Goose Mk. II G-21A 1061, CF-BQE.

You have my permission to use the photo.

Here is a listing of his two Grumman Goose Planes, which he donated both to the War effort and some additional information on his War Service.

Additionally, his firm Thomson McKinnon New York, financed Grumman Aircraft out of NJ. His good friend Sell Em Ben Smith or Bernard E. Smith did the transaction.

Canadian Military Gooses from: http://www.odyssey.ca/~bwalker/rcaf1_999_main.html
By R. W. R. Walkier

924 Grumman Goose Mk. II

G-21 1013

first date: 12 September 1939 - **Given to RCAF as a gift**

Manufactured in May 1938. First registered as CF-BKE, to J.P. Bickell, Toronto. Later to McIntyre-Porcupine

Mines, 1938. Used by No. 13 (OT) Squadron, RCAF Station Patricia Bay, BC, 1940 to 1942. Coded "MK-G".

Operated by No. 120 (BR) Squadron from RCAF Station Coal Harbour, BC, c.1943. Used by No. 122 (K)

Squadron, RCAF Station Patricia Bay, BC, 1942 and 1943 (same code?). Still carried this code in September

1943, while with the Photographic Flight, RCAF Station Rockcliffe, Ont. Used by No. 167 (Comm) Squadron, RCAF

Station Dartmouth, NS, 1943 to 1945. To US register postwar as NC18175, sold to Union Mining Co. of Pittsburg on

1 January 1945. Later registered as N121H. Converted to G-21E, McKinnon S/N 1211.

last date: 1 January 1945 - Sold as surplus.

941 Grumman Goose Mk. II

G-21A 1061

first date: 1 November 1940 - **Donated by owner to RCAF**

Manufactured in December 1939. Registered to J.P. Bickell, Toronto, as CF-BQE, on 29 January 1940. Used by

No. 13 (OT) Squadron, RCAF Station Patricia Bay, BC, 1940 to 1942. Operated by No. 122 (K) Squadron on west

coast, 1942. Exported in February 1945, to Northwest Air Services of Seattle, Washington. To Alaska Coastal

Airlines, January 1945-1962, as N48550. To Alaska Coastal-Ellis Airlines 1962-1967. To Alaska Airlines, 1967-

1972. To Antilles Airboats 1972-?. To Larry Teufel Portland, Or. 1990, current owner, c.2000.
last date: 5 January 1945 - Sold to civil register.

Here is an excerpt from the book on the donation of both planes;

Perhaps more generous were Bickell's actions at the outbreak of the Second World War. When war was declared, Bickell donated his Grumman G21 to the RCAF where it was taken on strength with the military serial 924 RCAF.^[i] Bickell did have some issues with the initial terms. It was no secret that he was not a fan of the current federal government. As former Auditor General and *Ottawa Journal* reporter Watson Sellar confirmed, Bickell was "not enthusing over the Cabinet in office."^[ii] Bickell's asking price had been a bit steep for those at National Defence, so he was finally persuaded by Henry Borden to donate the plane as to avoid any public criticism. J.P. was fine with the donation but wanted a promise that *if* and *when* he purchased a replacement, the plane could enter Canada free of duty and sales tax, which was a sticking point.

Regardless, Bickell's sense of duty to the nation prevailed and his commitment to the war effort on both sides of the Atlantic was unassailable. J.P. soon donated his other plane, a Grumman "Goose" G-21A, which became RCAF 941 on 1 November 1940. This particular plane would later become part of the Alaska Coastal Airlines fleet after the war.^[iii]

While the headaches and harrowing experiences associated with these still early days of flight might have turned off most people from future risk-taking, Bickell's sense of adventure seems only to have been electrified, and 'Smiling Jack' chose to fly regularly up until his death. In 1950, just one year prior to his death, Bickell and Smith flew from the south of France to Germany, where the latter had business to attend to, and then home *via* Tokyo, Alaska and Edmonton. When the pair arrived in Toronto, they headed immediately to New York where Bickell, as director, needed to attend a meeting for the International Nickel Company.^[iv] Such

was the often unforgiving schedule that Bickell maintained. It is safe to say, however, that those who knew him believe that he wouldn't have wanted it any other way.

His War Service with Lord Beaverbrook was part of the RAF and the formation of ATFERO, Bickell was the Controller (ie. He set it up), then he came back to Canada to be president of Victory Aircraft at Malton Airport for the increase production of the Lancaster Bomber.

Here is more excerpts from the book...

J.P. Bickell's commitment to the war effort is incontestable. The *Star Weekly* would later surmise that during the war, Bickell was likely "the biggest individual sender of food parcels to Britain."^[v] While this humanitarian initiative surely counts for much, Bickell's real value in stopping the Nazis would take place in the air. At the outset of the war, Bickell donated his two amphibious planes to the RCAF, but these were merely token gestures. Ultimately, Bickell's efforts were concentrated on sourcing, building, repairing and making operational those planes required to thwart Operation Sea Lion: Hitler's plans to invade the United Kingdom. By the time Bickell arrived in England, Britain was the last nation in Europe still standing up to the Nazis. Yet, Britain was only just hanging on.

Bickell was recruited by the Ministry of Aircraft Production, as led by Max Aitken, *aka* Lord Beaverbrook. Chiefly, Bickell was called in to help speed up the production of aircraft to fight the Luftwaffe in the all-important Battle of Britain in 1940. Aitken was a Canadian financier, politician and successful newspaper proprietor in Britain. He had made his fortune through the amalgamation of Canada's cement industry. After moving to England in 1910, Aitken bought a majority interest in London's *Daily Express* and later founded the *Sunday Express*. Later still, Aitken acquired London's *Evening Standard* and Glasgow's *Evening Citizen*. The newspaper baron became a real baron, accepting a peerage in 1916. During the First

World War, Baron Beaverbrook served in the cabinet as chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Information, which made him the man responsible for propaganda in Britain and in Allied countries (especially his home country Canada), as well as in neutral countries. As a good friend of Winston Churchill, Beaverbrook was called upon to lead the Ministry of Aircraft Production. Indeed, the then sixty-six-year-old Churchill called his sixty-one-year-old friend Aitken incessantly over the course of a 24-hour period until the latter finally acquiesced and accepted the position.

Max knew he needed help, and that included help from his friend Jack.^[vi] Beaverbrook's simple cable stated: "If you will come here and assist me we would welcome you."^[vii] Before Bickell could help Beaverbrook, however, he first had to get to England, a task that was often rendered a difficult prospect in wartime. Bickell travelled by clipper from North America to Lisbon and from there to London. When the plane was only a few hundred miles off of Britain's shores, the pilot was ordered back due to the presence of enemy aircraft over England. With not enough gas to make it back to Portugal, the pilot chose to press on, streaking through clouds to keep out of sight.^[viii] They made it.

Once he arrived in England, Bickell joined a foursome what would soon be known as the Four Busy B's. It was an all-Canadian group of men that consisted of Lord Beaverbrook, former Canadian Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, Toronto-born British MP Beverley Baxter and, of course, J.P. Bickell.^[ix] Beaverbrook chose his aides wisely. As the *Winnipeg Tribune* attested:

...[Beaverbrook] took all authority and shared it jealously with men of his choosing, men who knew their jobs and were willing to accept responsibility...Lord Beaverbrook drives his organization just as he drives himself—at high speed.^[x]

Led by Beaverbrook's boundless energy and determination, the Busy B's worked tirelessly to procure the necessary planes for the Allies during the dreadful and dreary days of the Blitz.

Bickell was dearly valued by Beaverbrook who sought advice from the former on several issues.^[xi] Yet, Bickell was specifically in charge of moving aircraft from the factories to the airfields for both training and operational procedures. As Bickell informed Toronto reporters in 1941:

We had to move the aircraft, because if we didn't the enemy would be able to destroy them during air raids on the factories. We started with a very small personnel and our transfer pilots were civilians who were either too old or for physical reasons were unfit for the R.A.F. We couldn't spare any men from the R.A.F. for this duty as they were needed too much in the battle against the German Luftwaffe. In September of last year, not a fit man could be spared from that. From a small nucleus this organization has grown until last August, when I left England, it was over 1,600 strong and was moving aircraft to safety as fast as they were turned out by the factories.^[xii]

As part of his responsibilities, Bickell was charged with making sure that damaged planes would be retrieved from squadron bases and taken to the depots so that they might be repaired and returned to service as soon as possible.^[xiii] To be certain, Bickell was right in the thick of it.

When Air Marshall Billy Bishop visited Bickell's Belgrade Square home in London during the Battle of Britain, a bomb crashed just outside the residence scattering plaster and glass.^[xiv] It was the production of the desperately-needed aircrafts required to stop the Nazis that earned J.P. and the other B's their well-deserved credibility.

The Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) in which Bickell worked with directly, was commanded by Commander Gerald D'Erlanger. Like Bickell, D'Erlanger had come to England to help Beaverbrook at the ministry of aircraft production. Together, D'Erlanger and Bickell were able to accelerate production of aircrafts in the factories so that they could get out to the fighter and bomber stations where they were so urgently needed. Officially, Bickell was the controller of the ATA and was much admired by his colleagues due to the speed in which he secured his positive results.^[xv] Given his rather high-ranking position, Bickell was privy to many of the Allies' top secrets. Through his connections to the Scottish scientist Robert Watson-Watts,

the man responsible for the development of radar, Bickell knew that Britain had had the main installation of radar completed as early as 1937. The Germans wouldn't learn this information until after the Battle of Britain had been decided. Such vital information was shared only with a precious few people. Bickell was among this high-level group.

Circumstances called on Bickell to go back and forth between Canada and Britain. On one occasion, having just completed a two-week trip to Ottawa and Washington on behalf of the British Air Ministry, Bickell was set to return to England from Newfoundland. Before he left, Bickell dropped in at the Royal Canadian Air Force Officers' Mess. Spotting a few freshly-caught speckled brook trout, Bickell asked one of the officers if he could take some back to England with him. The officer agreed and soon Bickell and his fish were on their way. J.P. arrived in England only minutes apart from when C.G. Power, Canadian Air Minister also touched down. Bickell, according to the *Globe and Mail*, "produced the tin and the cook in the Royal Air Force Officers' Mess prepared a tasty dish, which was shared among the passengers of both aircraft. All the fish disappeared."^[xvi]

Far more importantly, the Busy B's had, in February 1941, managed to produce a greater number of bombers and fighters than any single month up until that point in the war. The success was due in part to Beaverbrook's unconventional ways. As Colonel John Jestyn Llewellyn opined in March of that year, Beaverbrook's methods "got a move on in the whole aircraft industry which has been completely phenomenal since the time he came into office." The peculiarity of Beaverbrook's ways, Llewellyn added, "must be put in the vast perspective behind the man largely responsible for helping to defeat the enemy all last year."^[xvii] Beverley Baxter corroborated Llewellyn's findings:

The house has to accept this extraordinary man with all the difficulties of temperament he undoubtedly possesses to a marked degree. At any given moment Lord Beaverbrook can

be proved wrong, but in the end he has a terrific habit of being proved right. I beg the House not to exaggerate the importance of these temperamental difficulties which occur wherever this Minister is in charge.^[xviii]

Beaverbrook and indeed the other B's "temperament difficulties" proved to be a huge boon for the Allied cause. This gumption and guile won the admiration of Winston Churchill, who said that through the Busy B's efforts, the increase in aircraft manufacturing had been "astounding".^[xix]

Bickell also handled, at least for a time, the Atlantic Ferry Organization or ATFERO, the chief responsibility of which was to ferry aircraft from the Canadian Pacific Air Services to Britain. Bickell ran ATFERO from the British side during the first half of 1941, and his good work made news back home.^[xx] In *The Caduceus*, the staff magazine of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, Bickell was lauded for his new position:

The Bank can indeed feel justifiably proud of the service being rendered to the nation and the Empire by Mr. MacMillan [*who had been appointed Chairman of the Wartime Requirements Board*] and by his fellow Directors, Mr. J.P. Bickell, who has joined Lord Beaverbrook's Ministry for Aircraft Production, and Mr. George R. Cottrelle, Oil Controller for Canada.^[xxi]

Cottrelle, it will be recalled, was also an executive member of the Maple Leaf Gardens Board of Directors. During this same period, Bickell's friend Sydney Logan was appointed a committee member representing the Secretary of State for the British Air Ministry. It seemed that all of Bickell's pals were rolling up their collective sleeves to get the job done.

Bickell was exceeding expectations during the war. He was, as one *Toronto Star* headline exclaimed, doing an "impossible job" for the war effort.^[xxii] Captain Norman Edgar, director of the Auxiliary Air Transport Service of Britain, was particularly pleased with Bickell's resolve and resources:

...[Bickell has done] one of the really fine jobs of the war. In a year under his leadership, the auxiliary air transport service has been expanded 500 per cent....He has built up one

of the largest and smoothest-working civilian organizations in the history of warfare. He has been in control of all ferrying and delivering of planes in the United Kingdom.^[xxiii]

Yet, it was his work in the service of ferrying bombers across the Atlantic for the RAF where Bickell was perhaps even more effective. Edgar explained that by cutting through red tape and “by direct action and amazing drive and organizing ability, Mr. Bickell has done a work which appeared impossible to accomplish within the time it has been effective.”^[xxiv] Bickell was a key reason that the transatlantic plane ferry service became functional. Lord Beaverbrook himself told reporters that “Jack Bickell thinks red tape is something that should be thrown into the waste-paper basket...He gets things done and he gets them done quickly.”^[xxv] How quickly Britain needed those planes to keep Hitler on the other side of the channel.

BICKELL THE BOMBER

Beaverbrook and Bickell were in Washington in the summer of 1941 to obtain further weapons and foodstuffs from the Americans who were still a few months off of joining the war.^[xxvi] Following this meeting, Bickell returned to Canada with Beaverbrook. The latter was on his way to the famous Atlantic Charter Conference that occurred just off the coast of Ship Harbour, Newfoundland on 14 August. With Roosevelt and the Americans now taking a more muscular stand against Hitler, and given the resolve that the Brits had demonstrated during the Blitz, Bickell told reporters that he was more optimistic as to the outcome of the war: “I think things are looking more encouraging all the time.”^[xxvii]

On reflection, Bickell, who had personally borne witness to the horrors of the Blitz, saw the British people – a people he already admired so deeply – during their finest hour:

There is no doubt but that we have won the first battle, the battle for survival. And I am certain that we will win the second one, that for victory, although I cannot tell how long it may be before that is gained. It may be a long, hard, struggle, but we will win in the end.

Today our armies are well equipped and there is no intention of just blundering through. It is altogether different from slightly over a year ago, just after Dunkirk. Our losses in material and equipment there were enormous and we were lucky that Jerry didn't follow up his advantage then. If he had, we would have had to fight the invaders with pitchforks and stones. Everything that was lost there has been replaced with better materials and equipment, and we have lots more. Our position is such that we have every confidence in the final result.^[xxviii]

When pressed on specifics as they related to his duties, Bickell kept his descriptions vague, telling those who had assembled to meet him in Toronto: "You might say that I have finished the work I was doing. I think that is the best way to put it."^[xxix] As it happened, Bickell's war-work was far from finished.

In 1942, Bickell cut a cheque for \$5,000 which he donated towards the RCAF's Benevolent Fund. In a letter that accompanied the cheque, Bickell wrote with warmth and deliberation about his feelings towards the RCAF's fighting men and their contribution to the war effort:

If there is any branch of the services which merits recognition in a deferential degree, surely it must be that in which the personnel suffer the highest percentage of casualties in relationship to their numbers, namely the air force. Furthermore, I am firmly convinced that had it not been for the indomitable courage, skill and sacrifices endured by them during the Battle of Britain, the destiny of democracy everywhere would long since have been shattered beyond recognition, if not completely eliminated. When one realizes that the age range in this group comprises mainly of those just on the threshold of life and normally therefore with the longest expectancy before them, the tragedy to both them and their families becomes even more poignant.^[xxx]

Bickell's gift was, according to him, but a tiny symbol of his respect, admiration and esteem for the men of the air force and their "immortal deeds".^[xxxi]

Bickell's own immortal deeds were not yet complete. His return to Canada in 1942 did not signal an end to his toiling on behalf of the Allied cause. Central to the British Air Ministry's operations – and indeed the war effort – was the government-owned Malton's Victory Aircraft.^[xxxii] Vitialy, Victory Aircraft, with Bickell as president, manufactured Lancaster

Bombers for the air-war against the Nazis. At the end of July 1943, the *Financial Post* confirmed:

Canadian-made Lancaster bombers will soon start coming from the assembly lines of Victory Aircraft, Malton, Ont. Head of the Crown company producing the bomber is James [*sic*] Paris Bickell, Ontario mining millionaire, who served with Lord Beaverbrook when the latter was Minister of Aircraft Production in England. Like Churchill, Bickell is famous for his preference for cigars.^[xxxiii]

J.P., puffing away on his trademark cigar, went about the crucial business of pushing out as many Lancaster Bombers as possible. In short order, the ‘Lanc’ would become the most important bombers used during the war. In over 156,000 sorties, the Lancaster delivered 618,378 tonnes of bombs.^[xxxiv]

The Lancaster was central in Air Chief Marshall Harris’ Operation Gomorrah in July 1943. The now controversial result was the utter destruction of Hamburg.^[xxxv] The bomber was also used in Operation Chastise that destroyed the dams along the Ruhr Valley and later supplied the story to the 1955 movie starring Michael Redgrave and Richard Todd, *The Dam Busters*.^[xxxvi] In Operation Manna, the Lancaster dropped much-needed food to those who were essentially starving in occupied Netherlands. The bomber was, according to the Commander of the Luftwaffe’s fighters Adolf Galland, “the best night bomber of the war.”^[xxxvii] For Air Marshall Arthur ‘Bomber’ Harris, the Lancaster was the “shining sword” of the RAF’s Bomber Command.^[xxxviii] In the end, the Lancaster Bomber was among some of the more important weapons that brought the war to a successful issue for the Allies, and J.P. Bickell played an essential part in the forging of Bomber Command’s ‘shining sword’.

[i] *Aerial Visuals: Airplane Dossier*, official website. www.aerialvisuals.ca

[ii] Watson Sellar, ‘Ottawa Goes to War’, *Ottawa Journal*, (24 September 1960), 31.

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- [iii] The plane swapped hands several times and is now, at the time of writing, owned by singer-songwriter Jimmy Buffett.
- [iv] 'Financier, Mining Magnate', *Globe and Mail*, 10.
- [v] 'J.P. Bickell: "Double or Nothing"', *Star Weekly*.
- [vi] For further discussion on Bickell and Beaverbrook's relationship, see, *The Beaverbrook Papers: Canadian Correspondence and Papers*, Parliamentary Archives, (London); *Lord Beaverbrook Fonds*, (London: Beaverbrook Library).
- [vii] 'J.P. Bickell Goes to London', *Ottawa Journal*, (16 July 1940), edition cover page.
- [viii] 'Won Survival, Will Win Out, Says Bickell', *Globe and Mail*, (15 October 1941), 4.
- [ix] 'Financier, Mining Magnate', *Globe and Mail*, 10.
- [x] "'The Busy B"—Britain's Go-Getter', *Winnipeg Tribune*, (29 January 1941), 7.
- [xi] Several official exchanges between Beaverbrook and Bickell from late 1940 through until the summer of 1941 survive in the *Lord Beaverbrook Fonds*, (London: Beaverbrook Library).
- [xii] 'Won Survival', *Globe and Mail*, 4.
- [xiii] 'Financier, Mining Magnate', *Globe and Mail*, 10.
- [xiv] 'Germans' Defeat in Air Certain Bishop Declares on Return', *Ottawa Journal*, (7 October 1940), edition cover page, 19.
- [xv] 'J.P. Bickell Thinks Red Tape Something to be Thrown Away', *Porcupine Advance*, (26 June 1941), 3.
- [xvi] 'J.P. Bickell's Brook Trout Pleases Palates in Britain', *Globe and Mail*, (3 July 1941), 3.
- [xvii] Douglas Amaron, 'Canada's Busy B's in Britain', *Globe and Mail*, (19 March 1941), edition cover page.
- [xviii] *Ibid.*
- [xix] 'J.P. Bickell Dies; Mining Financier', *New York Times*, (23 August 1951). From the end of the war until the end of his days, Bickell cherished a portrait Churchill that had found a prominent place in his Mississauga mansion.
- [xx] See, William Fong, *J.W. McConnell: Financier, Philanthropist, Patriot*, (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008).
- [xxi] I.A. McPhail, F.C. Biggar and R.K. McCarthy (eds), 'Ourselves', *The Caduceus*, Staff Magazine of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, *XXII*, 1, (Toronto: The Canadian Bank of Commerce, January 1941), 1, 4.
- [xxii] H.R. Armstrong, 'Bickell Doing "Impossible Job" in Air Output', *Toronto Star*, (26 July 1941).
- [xxiii] *Ibid.*
- [xxiv] *Ibid.*
- [xxv] "'Busy B" Bickell Controls U.K. Plane Ferry Service', *Winnipeg Tribune*, (2 July 1941), 7.
- [xxvi] 'Bickell Returns Home', *Globe and Mail*, 4.
- [xxvii] *Ibid.*
- [xxviii] 'Won Survival', *Globe and Mail*, 4.
- [xxix] 'Taking Over New Task For Britain Says J.P. Bickell', *Ottawa Citizen*, (15 August 1941), 15.
- [xxx] 'Bickell Donates \$5,000 to Air Force Benevolent Fund', *Ottawa Journal*, (30 December 1942), 3.
- [xxxi] *Ibid.*
- [xxxii] 'J.P. Bickell: "Double or Nothing"', *Star Weekly*; Logan, *From Tent to Tower*, 109.
- [xxxiii] 'Victory Aircraft Head', *Financial Post*, (31 July 1943).
- [xxxiv] John W. R. Taylor, *Combat Aircraft of the World: From 1909 to the Present*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1969), 314.
- [xxxv] For further discussion, see, Martin Middlebrook, *The Battle of Hamburg: The Firestorm Raid*, (London: Castle Military Paperbacks, (1980) 2000).
- [xxxvi] *The Dam Busters*, directed by Michael Anderson, (UK: Association British Pathé, 1955).
- [xxxvii] Adolf Galland, *The First and the Last: Germany's Fighter Force in WWII*, Fortunes of War series, (Black Hawk, Colorado: Cerberus Press, 2005), 119.
- [xxxviii] Tony Iveson and Brad Milton, *Lancaster: The Biography*, (London: Andre Deutsch, 2009), 82.