

Excellent weather for Fly-In

Biennial float plane event draws hundreds to Old Town



Hal Logsdon/2011 photo

Most of the crowd watched the biennial float plane event from Pilot's Monument, but Plummer's Lodge dock at the Old Town Float Base was one of the best places to catch a photo of the float planes as they skimmed over Back Bay.

by Jack Danyichuk
Northern News Services

It was an excellent week-end weather-wise for the Midnight Sun Float Plane Fly-In, but for the second time in as many years, attendance was down for the biennial event.

"The weather was perfect; we had a nice crowd for the Ice Pilots Jamboree," said Hal Logsdon, president of the NWT Float Plane Association.

More than a hundred people thronged Pilot's Monument for the fly-past Sunday

morning, then lingered in Old Town for the MLA barbecue on the Ward Air dock. Another 200 attended the closing banquet Sunday evening.

There was no shortage of space for visiting aircraft. It might have been otherwise if a trio of pilots from British Columbia wasn't grounded in Fort St. John, B.C., for most of the weekend by bad weather. They appeared in time for the closing banquet Sun-

day, bringing the float plane total to 17 for the three-day Fly-In.



Hal Logsdon

In 2009, organizer Yvonne Quick blamed the global economic downturn when 22 planes made the journey to Yellowknife, almost one-third less than the 30 that attended the Fly-In two years earlier.

With the exception of Joe McBryan's Norseman and a brief appearance by Max Ward and his single Otter,

vintage aircraft were absent; most of the Fly-In pilots arrived in familiar Cessna

Far from dismayed by this year's turnout, Quick said she was pleased with the attendance at barbecues and banquets. She cited weather in British Columbia for keeping all but three of 10 pilots registered from the province from making it all the way to Yellowknife.

Smoke in northern Mani-

toba forced another four aircraft to turn back, she said.

"So I'm not disappointed at all," said Quick.



Yvonne Quick

Quick said several pilots used the Fly-In as a launch pad for exploration of the Northwest Territories, and included Great Bear Lake, Bathurst Inlet and Nunavut in their flight plans.

During the weekend, visiting float planes were scattered at docks around Old Town, with space

for several more.

"We thought we weren't going to have enough, but with the cancellations, we had plenty of space," said Logsdon, who welcomed a proposal for float plane docks and a walkway on Morrison Drive outlined in the latest version of the city's harbour plan.

"If there is parking for visiting float planes, people are going to come here. It has tremendous tourism potential. I'm convinced we would fill any space provided with visiting float planes."



Yellowknife Centre MLA Robert Hawkins demonstrates his skills on the griddle Saturday morning, cooking scores of pancakes for the hungry crowd who turned out for the opening day breakfast.



The oldest aircraft in the fly-past, Joe McBryan's Norseman, rumbles across Back Bay, towards its home dock on McAvoy Road.