

# Float planes ready to fly-in

Event honours bush pilots who opened Yellowknife up to the world

by Heather Lange  
Northern News Services

The NWT Float Plane Association is calling all float plane and aviation enthusiasts down to the Wardair float base on Latham Island for the 9th biennial Midnight Sun Float Plane Fly-In on July 22, 23 and 24.

This year's event features Douglas DC-3 rides, a fly-in poker rally and an NWT Ice Pilots jamboree, where NWT Ice Pilot stars Scott Blue, Joe McBryan, Mikey McBryan and last-minute additions will be cooking up some buffalo and sharing stories. The Ice Pilots Jamboree starts at 5 p.m. on Saturday at the Wardair float base.

Sunday at 11 a.m. 21 float planes will take to the skies from Back Bay. They will then go past Dettah and fly in formation past Pilot's Monument to honour bush pilots who lost their lives helping others.

During the weekend there will be some Yk pilots attending, such as Ray Weber and Brock "Rocky" Parsons, telling stories in an old-timer's tent at the Wardair float base, a gathering place for anyone interested in exchanging stories and flying adventures.

"If it wasn't for aviation, there wouldn't be a Yellowknife. It was the discovery

of gold and bush planes that opened up and started Yellowknife," said Paul Laserich, owner of Adlair Aviation Ltd.

Mikey McBryan, manager of Buffalo Airways, also sees the early bush float plane pilots as the reason Yellowknife exists as it does today.

"The most important part is Yellowknife was made by float planes before there was a road. There was no real airport so everything was brought in by floats or skis originally. It's very unique. Not many cities in the world can say they were built literally a float plane ride at a time. It's very important to recognize and remind the public of the real heritage about the whole thing," said McBryan.

Event organizer Yvonne Quick said there will be pilots coming from South Africa, Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Idaho, Washington and Oregon, flying in an Aero-spatiale, Beaver, Cessna 185, Cessna 172, Norseman a small Piper and many more.

"It brings people from different parts of Canada together, a get-together. Aviation is very incestuous. It's a small group of people, kindred spirits. It's good to catch up with people over the last couple of years," said Laserich.

Quick added there is a spe-



Carl Clouter and Norma Jean, the 1939 Piper Cub named after his wife, at the Midnight Sun Float Plane Fly-In in July 2007.

cial designation for this year's fly-in event.

"The city of Yellowknife has proclaimed July 23, Aviation Heritage Day," said Quick.

It's a distinction Laserich

said is a longtime coming.

"I'm glad the city is doing something right for a change," said Laserich.

One ongoing challenge facing float plane pilots in Yellowknife is a lack of

accessible dock space.

"For the guy just starting out, (Yellowknife) needs some space for them. It's part of the reason there is not too much going on. Land anywhere is so expensive. You're looking at

\$800,000 bucks for a property that would accept an airplane," said McBryan, speaking of Latham Island land prices.

For a complete list of all events go to the Float Plane Fly-In website.