

CFB Trenton gets first female pilot for C-17s

Editor's note: The author, Steph Crosier, is the sister of Elizabeth Crosier.

By Steph Crosier

Elizabeth Crosier never planned on paving the way for female pilots in the military, but she's ready to take off.

Crosier, 25, a-135-pound captain in the Canadian military, with seven years of flying experience, is piloting a C-17 Globemaster, a 170-foot-long monster, with a wingspan of about 170 feet.

She is the first Canadian female officer to fly the Globemaster since the Canadian Forces started flying the planes in 2007. Quite the feat, considering only 15 per cent of officers in the Canadian military are female, and only 4 per cent of pilots are female.

"I feel very fortunate," says Crosier.

The Globemaster is the largest aircraft in the Canadian Forces. It can transport up to 102 troops or three armoured vehicles.

Crosier is now flying the Globemaster for a living. Her first official flight was a trans-Atlantic one to Cologne, Germany.

"I was 80 per cent excited and 20 per cent nervous," says Crosier, "but I think it went really well. But I'm still learning."

Crosier has been "learning" to be a pilot for 10 years. At 16, her uncle, Alan Crosier, sent her and his girlfriend, now wife, to Florida to get their private pilot's licence because he knew how much Elizabeth wanted to be a pilot.

"I just remember seeing people flying at air shows, so it probably was when I was 10 or 11, and I thought it was really cool," says Crosier. "I just remember my dad saying, 'if you ever want to do that, then you can, but it requires you to work hard in school and do well.'"

Her father, Maj. Brian Crosier, and mother, Cathy Crosier, encouraged her to work hard, but it was her father's experience in the military that lead her to the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ont.

"By the time I had gotten into Grade 10, I had decided that yes, I will try to get into RMC," said Crosier. "A paid university degree, and I knew that I wanted to be in the military, so it seemed like a good choice. And I chose mechanical engineering at RMC because I knew that if I couldn't be a pilot that I would want to work with aircraft, so engineering would do that for me."

A week after her last high school exam, at 17 years old, she was sent away to Saint-Jean-du-Richelieu for basic training.

From basic, Crosier was sent to RMC to begin her engineering program.

In the summer, between her second and third year at RMC, Crosier trained on the Grob aircraft.



Steph Crosier

Canadian Forces pilot, Capt. Elizabeth Crosier, 25, had her first professional flight after seven years of training — a trans-Atlantic trip to Cologne, Germany.

"I was actually the first female military pilot to finish the Grob course," said Crosier.

In May 2009 Crosier trained in Moose Jaw, Sask. for almost a year.

At the end of the course, she discovered she would be flying a multi-engine aircraft, which includes either the Airbus, the Aurora, the Hercules, or the C-17. The next phase was the multi-course in Portage-la-Prairie, Man.

When pilots graduate from the course, they receive their wings. Crosier said that knowing she would get her wings one day got her through basic, long engineering nights at RMC, and the distance from family.

The night she received her wings was

the best night of her life.

"That was a long time coming, and it was a great feeling to get those wings pinned on my uniform," said Crosier. "It was funny; one day someone tried to take them off my uniform and I was like, 'don't touch my wings. You don't know how long it took me to get those, so don't play with them.'"

A few days before receiving her wings, Crosier was posted to 429 Squadron in Trenton to fly the C-17.

"I really thought there were no spots, so when they said I got 429 Squadron, I was a little confused," said Crosier. "I thought I got my squadrons screwed up. But it

turned out that the spot opened up the day before we were selected. So I got really lucky. And when I realized I'd gotten C-17 I thought, 'Oh my God, I got C-17; this is everything I ever wanted!'"

When she met with her first commanding officer, Lt.-Col. Iain Huddleston, she was told to prepare for some publicity.

"He was the only one who ever said anything to me," said Crosier. "Well, except for a couple of my girlfriends who were on the squadron already."

In August 2011 Crosier was sent to Altus, Oklahoma to learn to pilot the C-17. Upon completion she was assigned her

flight to Cologne.

Her current commanding officer, Lt.-Col. Jason Stark, has no doubts about having Crosier in his squadron.

"I worked with Crosier before, and she was a very capable officer," said Stark. "The fact that she is a female makes no difference to me. I know that the squadron has gained a very capable young officer."

Crosier knows she has worked hard but also acknowledges the luck involved.

"I would say that I've been pretty fortunate timing-wise," said Crosier. "It doesn't matter how well you do, if those spots aren't open, you're not going to get that spot."

Mother Nature messes with baffled farmers

By Jennifer Bowman

Courtesy of the Rural Hastings Advocate

Fluctuating weather this winter is causing some crops to rot, while others are freezing, local farmers say.

Over the past week, temperatures have risen from -3 C to 7 C overnight and a day later plummeted from 9 C to -6 C. The drastic changes are the beginning of a problem for some farmers.

Oliver Haan, president of the Farmer's Union, is a pig farmer who grows his own crops. This fall he planted winter wheat and winter barley; he's concerned about how much will survive.

Haan said the freeze and thaw cycle breaks off the roots.

"I expect to have damage at this point," he said.

Just how much damage, he won't know until spring.

Dreatha Thompson, co-owner of Old Homestead Farms, sells produce and flowers. She said her problem is rotting garlic.

All the rain in the fall was too much for the garlic, she said.

When it's not warm enough for the garlic to rot, Thompson said her perennials are being killed by the frost.

The biggest problem is that Thompson needs the snow to insulate her plants.

Snow works as insulation so that the plants aren't as affected by the cold. Without snow, there is a higher risk they will freeze.

Unstable weather also weakens the plants, said Thompson. As a farm that works without any chemicals, pests are a constant battle in the best of years, but when the plants are weak, pests are a bigger problem, she said.

"If you have weakened plants, you're going to have more devastation with pests and everything else," Thompson said.

Rene Van Acker, professor in the department of plant agriculture and associate dean of the Ontario Agricultural College, said other than winter crops, the warm weather won't cause much damage.

The good news is most plants are more sensitive to extreme weather changes in March than they are in January, he said.

That's when plants are more likely to come out of their winter hardness.

James Pott, a strawberry farmer, isn't concerned at all — not yet.

"This winter is shaping up nicely. As long as the temperatures stay where they are [mild], it's not a problem," said Pott.

The lack of snow hasn't been a problem either.

Strawberries can handle minus 20 degrees without any snow, said Haan. If there are a few inches of snow, they can handle -30.

Van Acker said the big concern is the unpredictable climate change.

"It does mean that we need to make farming systems more resilient to unpredictable weather."

Van Acker said that includes breeding crops to be more resilient as well as planting a diversity of crops.

Fun and safety ride the same lift at Batawa Ski Hill

By Steph Crosier

Professional skier Sarah Burke passed away Jan. 19 from a tragic brain injury sustained during training. Officials at Batawa Ski Hill say there are always risks to skiing and snowboarding.

"In her type of an injury, those things do happen," said Darren Lobb, general manager of Batawa Ski Hill. "As industry is concerned there's an element of risk. When you're obviously doing things like super pipe or riding a rail in the terrain park, or hitting a jump."

Though there is a natural risk to the sport, Lobb said Batawa does its best to reduce injuries as much as possible.

"For example, in a pipe you will see the walls are painted or have different degrees so they can actually see where the wall goes from straight up and down to where it starts curving out," said Lobb. "So when someone is doing an invert they have a perspective of where they need to land and do it safely."

Not everyone is a professional skier like Burke, and there are other ways to get injured on the hill. Batawa has padding and fencing around light posts, sheds, and hydrants. Stephanie Adams, administration supervisor at Batawa Ski Hill, said the typical injury with a skier or snowboarder is wrist injuries when falling either frontwards or backwards.

"Bruises, sprains, the occasional whiplash if you fall back too quickly or something like that," said Adams. "We see them quite often. But nothing to the extent of the Sarah Burke accident or anything like that."

Though Batawa hasn't had any ambulance visits this year, Lobb said the biggest injuries on the hill are collisions with other skiers. To prevent this, Batawa, along with



Steph Crosier

From left: Cody Weekes, 16, CJ Fox, 14, and Chris Fox, 42, prepare for another run at Batawa Ski Hill. Officials at the hill encourage safety measures such as the use of helmets and awareness of the alpine responsibility code.

other ski hills, uses slow zones when trails merge together.

"That is something we are very concerned about," said Lobb. "That's where some significant injuries can come out."

To prevent injuries on the runs, Adams said to always follow the alpine responsibility code.

"They're just 10 rules to know while you are on the hill," said Adams. "Who's got the right-of-way, how to merge — it's just like driving."

Another big way to prevent serious injury is to wear a helmet, said Adams. In Batawa's terrain park and for school groups helmets are mandatory. To promote wearing helmets on the hill, Batawa includes one in

each rental package. With that, Adams said, the helmet is becoming a fashion statement.

"To wear a helmet nowadays is considered cool, whereas even five years ago it wasn't," said Adams. "We still see a lot of older adults who still don't wear helmets because they never skied with a helmet growing up. But you'll definitely see kids wearing them these days — it matches their outfit."

Austin Watts, a heavy equipment operator and visitor to Batawa Ski Hill, said he wears a helmet to protect his head and because it's comfortable.

"It just helps to protect the melon," said Watts. "The helmet, to be honest, is exceedingly comfortable."

Local artists thrive with encouragement from Quinte Arts Council's community programs

By Nick Liard

Local artist Daniel Vaughan knows if he makes it big he will pay tribute to the Quinte Arts Council — which helped him showcase his work, as well as many other local talents' work.

The council is a non-profit organization that attempts to raise awareness within the community through programs and services that engage artists.

"They are not obligated to pick me out and show my work, so when they do that, it's a privilege," said Vaughan.

Vaughan grew up in Belleville, moved to

Toronto, and is now back home in Prince Edward County. He is a multi-talented artist. He is a photographer, who got his first photo of the Mississauga train derailment published in 1979. He is also a budding musician who has composed over 200 pieces, and a graphic designer in his day job. On top of that, he finds time to give photography workshops to beginners as well as seasoned veterans.

He recently grabbed the attention of the Quinte Arts Council while showcasing his work at Loyalist College.

He and his brother David have their picture exhibit currently on display at the

council's head office on Bridge Street in downtown Belleville.

Vaughan is one of over 390 solo artists involved with the council, and that number is growing. That number doesn't include the various theatre groups and bands involved as well.

Carol Feeney, executive director, took charge of a program called Art in the Community when she came to the council eight years ago.

"We have been showcasing local artists since 1967, but this program is fairly new," said Feeney.

Some of the featured galleries include

the Gallery ArtPlus and gift shop, Gallery 121, The Belleville Art Association, and the John M. Parrott Art Gallery.

The art featured has no boundaries, ranging from photographs to native arts.

"Absolutely not; we have no restrictions," said Feeney. "We are actually looking forward to more opportunities to work with digital art and multimedia."

Feeney started Art in the Community to help artists young and old come forward.

"There are a lot of emerging artists, some who have been around and some who are new, and want to let people know that they are doing work," said Feeney. "The best way to do

that is with the arts council or other organizations around the area. It also gives artists an opportunity to network with other artists."

The downtown office is not even close in terms of how far they have expanded in a blooming art community.

One of those events was supposed to take place Jan. 12, but due to the bad weather it was cancelled. The Vaughan brothers' photos were to take centre stage and Daniel was also supposed to perform his new CD called *Twelve Guitars, Nine Months, and a Pair of Boots*.

He also had some advice for young artists. "Don't be better; be different."