

Veteran pilot's tales from his 40-year career should 'transport' readers

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*Pilot Kent Smerdon seen in this handout photo. Smerdon is promoting his new book, *Flight Lines, Assorted Lies, Recollections, and War Stories*.*

The sensation of leaving the ground, at the control of an airplane, certainly provides a thrill to anyone experiencing it for the first time. But to pilot turned author Kent Smerdon, that thrill has to be tempered with a sense of responsibility, for lives are at stake if that sense is ignored or forgotten.

"Flying takes concentration and many faculties working together to 'keep the blue side up'" Smerdon, promoting his new book, *Flight Lines, Assorted Lies, Recollections, and War Stories* tells BarrieToday, suggests the initial thrill of flying is quickly superseded by all the facets of flight to keep in mind to bring the craft home safely.

"In those early stages, we were all just excited to be airborne... but we were busy and working hard to advance along what was to be a long road."

Smerdon learned to fly in the Air Force in the 1970s and started flying commercially for Air Canada in January 1980, and asserts both modes of flight provide their own brand of excitement.

"Certainly Air Force flying, blasting around in supersonic fighters was a high point and a dream come true. Learning to fly a helicopter and the VIP world were also highlights. Airline flying brought (some) appreciated stability but less than I had anticipated, some world travel and the promise of higher pay as my career progressed."

And flying at that level of competence and esteem had its perks; it could mean assignments carrying around famous people, anywhere on request, not the least, Brian Mulroney, of whom Smerdon has the fondest memories.

"I flew the Mulroney family many times. They were all perfect passengers and their three children were always smartly dressed and behaved impeccably while on board."

If you want an insight as to why this was so, Smerdon says, there is a hint in the book.

Chris Hadfield crossed paths with Smerdon at an airshow in Abbotsford, B.C. about 10 years ago. Even if his personal memories about Chris are limited, Smerdon is effusive about the Space Shuttle hero.

"In my opinion, there is not a finer spokesperson or ambassador for Canada in general or the space program in particular than Chris Hadfield. He is also highly intelligent, talented, a pleasure to be around."

Smerdon says he's always had a flair for writing, inspired in part by his father's flight tales, plus "the notion that pilots love their stories but few write them down. (And so), I started making notes here and there and began writing about 10 years ago."

The book is now out on Friesenpress, a century-old publisher, which hails the piece thus "readers are treated to the inside experiences of a flying man, complete with intimate insights, technical asides and a steady current of entertaining stories about the enduringly compelling adventures of a full-throttle life airborne."

Smerdon imagines his tales of 40 years in the air should prove a good read, not just a run-of-the-mill collection of tales about this flight or that.

"There have been thousands upon thousands of pilots who have learned to fly fighters in their country's Air Force and then gone on to be airline pilots. I did that too, but I believe what makes the book a little different is the wide variety of flying I did, much of it simply because of good luck and timing while plucking some silver linings from some dark clouds.

"The book reviews seem to follow along the 'not-just-for-pilots' lines. That was my intention when I started to write."

To inquire about your copy of *Flight Lines, Assorted Lies, Recollections, and War Stories* click [here](#).

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About the Author: Glenn Wilkins

Glenn Wilkins, in a 30-year media career, has written for print and electronic media, as well as for TV and radio. Glenn has two books under his belt, profiling Canadian actors on Broadway and NHL coaches.

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