

# George Miller

## Man on a Mission

“DARE TO SUCCEED” COULD easily be George Miller’s personal mantra. The spry, 70-year-old’s current success as manager of Langley Regional Airport is one marker of many in a lifetime of achievement.

Seventeen years ago, the former Canadian fighter pilot decided to take a stab at resurrecting the dilapidated community airport at Fraser Highway and 216th Street. Verging on closure, the facility needed a visionary manager to take the controls. In the intervening years, Miller has turned the Langley-Township owned airport into a top-flight operation that now generates \$69 million annually for the community.

Miller’s bravado in the face of the unknown has been a constant throughout his career. In 1953, when he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force at 18 years of age, he had never even been

inside a plane. By age 19, he was on a tour of duty in Europe, the youngest RCAF pilot flying F-86 Sabres over Germany in the Cold War. He earned accolades as one of Canada’s top fighter pilots, returning home in 1958 to work on the DEW line in the Arctic.

In the 1960s, he flew with the celebrated Golden Hawks aerobatic team, and in 1973, returned from a coveted post in Germany to become the founding flight commander of the Snowbirds national aerobatic team. When promoted to Colonel, Miller served as military attaché to Egypt, and upon his return, became base commander at the Royal Canadian Air Force base at Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. Later, he formed his own air show company, then worked at Canadian-based Spar Aerospace in Brazil.

When he heard that Langley Regional Airport needed a manager, Miller was enthused.

“I had always wanted to come out West,” he says. “And the Township of Langley was so welcoming to me. The airport was really disintegrating and there was talk of turning it into university grounds.”

Rundown, with short runways, no lights, only four leasing businesses and little infrastructure, the airport was a big challenge to turn around. Miller admits, “Having run a large military base with 1500 people, running Langley wasn’t a huge issue for me.”

Through careful planning, negotiation and cleanup, including improved safety standards and beautification projects, Miller built Langley Airport into a multi-million dollar business. In the process, he forged solid relationships

George Miller at Langley Regional Airport



Through careful planning, negotiation and cleanup, including improved safety standards and beautification projects, Miller built Langley Airport into a multi-million dollar business.



Miller in Moose Jaw, SK, ready to fly a CT-114 aircraft

with local media and the community. "And we decided to make helicopters our number one priority," he adds.

Today, the airport hosts 48 aviation businesses and is the helicopter operations capital of Canada. There are also three helicopter schools and two fixed-wing aviation training schools as well as programs in aircraft maintenance affiliated with local colleges. As the only community airport in the Lower Mainland still operated by its owner, Langley is an anomaly. "And it's run without using any taxpayers' money," says Miller proudly. When the north-side development is completed the airport is anticipated to generate revenues in excess of \$110 million, and the number of employees is expected to jump from 250 to about 400 by next year.

Harbour Air recently opened a terminal there, operating regularly scheduled flights between Langley and Victoria.

"This place has been screaming for a service directly to Victoria Harbour for some time," says Miller. "Harbour Air provides an extra service that really adds the big C in the community airport."

Miller's son, also an ex-RCAF fighter pilot as well as a commercial airline pilot and flight instructor, has joined him full-time. "He is the future of the airport," says Miller, although, with much growth for Langley Regional Airport on the horizon, he admits he has no immediate plans to retire.

How does managing a community airport feel for someone who has worked in everything from the Cold War to military intelligence, and once spent his days flying aircraft travelling at twice the speed of sound?

"Just being in the middle of the challenge is the fun of it. It's not like a job, it's like a great hobby." —Belinda Bruce

POETS COVE • PENDER ISLAND • BRITISH COLUMBIA

## ESCAPE AND UNWIND IN PARADISE.

Escape to incomparable beauty, luxurious accommodation and wonderful cuisine on beautiful Pender Island. Rediscover your adventurous side or revel in the pampering you deserve, at Poets Cove – the Gulf Islands' premier resort and spa, just 20 minutes away from Vancouver via Harbour Air Seaplanes.



Poets Cove  
RESORT & SPA

888-512-POET (7638) • WWW.POETSCOVE.COM



Just two blocks away from  
the Seaplane Terminal

- Conveniently located in the heart of downtown Victoria •
- Within steps of the Inner Harbour & the Victoria Convention Centre •
- Directly across the Bay Centre •
- Complimentary high speed internet •
- Complimentary breakfast •



1140 Government St. Victoria BC

1-800-665-6501 | 250-384-6835 | [www.bedfordregency.com](http://www.bedfordregency.com)