

## **WILLIAM AVERY “BILLY” BISHOP, VC, CB, DSO and Bar, MC, DFC, ED**

**1894 – 1956**

William Avery “Billy” Bishop, was Canada’s leading fighter pilot in the First World War and is the top Canadian “ace” (having five victories or more) of all time, racking up a total of 72 confirmed victories before the end of the war.

Born February 8, 1894, in Owen Sound, Ontario, Bishop enrolled in the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario, at the age of 17. When the First World War broke out in 1914, Bishop, like hundreds of thousands of young men across the country, signed up to serve in the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

In 1915, Bishop requested, and was granted, a transfer to the Royal Flying Corps, where he would emerge as one of the most lethal aces of the war. Among his many military honours, he was awarded the highest military decoration a Canadian could receive – the Victoria Cross – “for most conspicuous bravery, determination and skill”, on June 2, 1917.

At the end of the war, Bishop achieved the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. Upon returning to Canada, Bishop and fellow Victoria Cross winner and Canadian air ace William “Billy” Barker founded a charter seaplane service operating out of Toronto Harbour with flights to fishing camps in northern Ontario.

At the end of his military service, Bishop maintained his links with the air force. In 1938, he was made an honorary Air Vice-Marshal in the Royal Canadian Air Force, and served as a celebrity recruiting agent. He promoted the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, which had been established in Canada to train Commonwealth pilots from around the world at the dawn of the Second World War.

Many of Bishop’s recruiting campaigns, including numerous flying exhibitions, took place at Port George VI Island Airport, Toronto’s first commercial airport.

In addition to over 30 years of military service and his status as a Canadian aviation pioneer, Bishop is also the author of two books on air combat, *Winged Warfare* and *Winged Peace*. He died in Florida on September 11, 1956, and is buried in Owen Sound.