



The dragon and coat of arms of the City of London at London Bridge

Company Comments

Newsletter of the Honourable Company of Freemen of the City of London of North America

<http://freemenlondon.org/>

October 2020

Ray Gibson Memorial Issue

We remember Capt. George Raymond Gibson, founder of the Honourable Company of Freemen of the City of London of North America



Ray Gibson, test pilot, throws a paper airplane while reminiscing about the Avro Arrow, 2010
(Photo: *Toronto Star*)

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Obituary
George Raymond Gibson,
April 14, 1926 – August 14, 2020

George Raymond Gibson passed away suddenly on August 14, 2020, at his residence, surrounded by his family. Ray has gone to join his beloved wife June of many years. Cherished father of son Glenn Gibson and daughter Cheri Gibson. During his youth Ray was a talented pilot and had worked on many aerospace projects. Ray will be missed by his friends and colleagues in The Rotary Club of Bramalea, The Society of Manufacturing Engineers, and The Honourable Company of the Freemen of the city of London. In 2000, Ray Gibson was recognized in his hometown of Brampton with the honour of being named Brampton Citizen of the Year.

A Funeral Service took place at the Scott Funeral Home – Brampton Chapel on Wednesday August 19, 2020.



Master's Message: Ray's Legacy

by
Michèle McCarthy,
Master of the Honourable Company of Freemen of the
City of London of North America,
Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Scriveners

I was delighted when the Court took up my suggestion to mark the passing of a true gentleman, our founder Ray Gibson (April 14, 1926-August 14, 2020). If it were not for the pandemic, we as an Honourable Company would have gathered at Ray's funeral to commemorate a life well lived and to recall stories about Ray and his many contributions to a wide-range of endeavours. As gathering is not possible now and probably will not be for the foreseeable future, it seemed fitting to devote an edition of *Company Comments* to Ray. We invited the membership to reminisce about him in its pages. It is our hope that this newsletter will serve as a part of our tribute.

Ray devoted himself to family and community, including being a committed Rotarian. He was a talented test-pilot and engineer as you will read in the testimonial from the Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute. But his keen spirit did not stop there. Ray had a vision to bring the Livery Companies of the City of London to life in North America. His dedication to that goal prompted him to found the Honourable Company in 1979. His boundless energy led him to be not only the President of Rotary Club of Bramalea twice but also the Master of the Honourable Company *twice* (1979, 2000). In addition to being our founder and two-time Master, he continued to serve on the Court and to mentor incoming Masters. Ray was an outgoing and welcoming individual whose stories are remembered by many. The tributes by Peter Leach, Brian Lechem, Lynda Mitchell, Anthony Kemp, and Hans Bathija highlight Ray's kindness to newcomers.

As members of the Honourable Company of Freemen of the City of London of North American, we are blessed to enjoy the fruits of his labour. We hope to carry on the many traditions that he began and to do his memory proud.

While each of you will remember Ray in your own way, we welcome further submissions for our archives.

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The Past Masters, 2013. Back Row: Hugh Oddie-2002, Brian L.G. Lechem-1990, Neil F. Purcell-2001, **G. Raymond Gibson-1979 & 2000**, Michael Charles-2007, John S. Bishop-2008 & 2009, John S. Smith-2004, Michael Green-2010 & 2011, John V. Lawer-1992. Front Row: Ken B. Foxcroft-2012, Frances Sommerville (then current Master, 2013)

Captain Gibson Remembered by the Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute (CASI)



The Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute remembered Ray Gibson upon his passing: <https://www.casi.ca/news/9176653>

Captain Gibson was a CASI Associate Fellow Member and CAHS National and Toronto Chapter member (CAHS # 1220). Ray was a founding member of the Toronto Branch of the Canadian Aeronautical Institute (CAI) and which is known to-day as the Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute. He served many years on the Branch's Executive.

He worked for Avro Canada from 1953 to 1959 and was in charge of the jet engine tests on the ground prior to the first flight and then in the air of the Pratt and Whitney engines installed in the first five CF-105 Arrow (Avro Arrow) aircraft that Avro built and had test flown.

During his youth, Ray was a talented pilot and had worked on many aerospace projects.

Memories of Captain Ray Gibson

by

Peter Leach,

**Past Master of the Honourable Company of Freemen of the
City of London of North America (1997 and 1998),
Haberdasher and Member of the Guild of Freemen**

Shortly after I immigrated to Canada in 1979, I magically received a letter from William Miller, Master of the Honourable Company. Initially, I wasn't sure how to handle the invitation, as I was in a new country and with many other interests including a young family, but soon my fascination was piqued enough to reach a decision to join. On attending my first dinner in Toronto, my wife Kay and I were met enthusiastically by the very outgoing Captain Ray Gibson and his close collaborator, Captain John Storey. The quality and generosity of Ray and John's welcome had me hooked on the Honourable Company.

After attending several annual dinners, I arrived at one to be met by Ray, saying that he would like me to become a member of the Court. As usual, his enthusiasm carried the day, and that was a good thing as the Court had already agreed and my position was announced that evening as part of the dinner agenda. What Ray didn't tell me ahead of time was that I was to be made the Honorary Treasurer at the same time. Following some earlier financial trouble with a previous treasurer, and even after the recovery work of the Court and my predecessor Arthur Stevens (Master in 1994), there were still some issues to overcome. Ray was always there to try to help solve the outstanding issues with the Banks involved, but, with his encyclopedic memory, he was a game saver for the Company.

Ray was a great and entertaining speaker. As a test pilot for AV Rowe, he had the privilege of observing the launch of the unpowered test models of the Avro Arrow. Later, when archivists were searching Lake Ontario for these models, Ray would comment that they wouldn't find them as they were looking in the wrong place. Eventually, they were found exactly where Ray said they would be. Pity the searchers didn't ask him in the first place.



Avro Arrow (photo: Royal Canadian Air Force)

To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the initial meeting that sparked the idea of the Honourable Company, Ray once again stepped forward to become Master for the second time, 21 years after his first appointment. In the intervening 21 years, he served on the Court with great dedication carefully leading the Company from success to success and mentoring every Master through their year(s) in office. Ray rarely missed a Court meeting or an event for 20+ years so he was uniquely qualified to gently guide the Honourable Company to stay close to its core tenets.

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Ray was a true gentleman in every sense of that word, and he will be sorely missed by all who knew him. I don't think anyone can fill his shoes.

I am sure Ray and June are very happily reunited in a better place.

Ray Served the Company Well

by

Brian Lechem,

**Past Master of the Honourable Company of Freemen of the
City of London of North America (1990)**

I first met Ray when I joined the Honourable Company in 1980. My first experience was at the annual dinner under the Mastership of Tony Kemp, which, in that year, was held at the University Club on University Avenue. From my memory, it was a pretty good attendance with about 70 or 80 people present, and this marked the beginning of my involvement with the Honourable Company. Over the years, Ray and I became good friends and we occasionally had lunch together. He was a staunch member of the Rotary Club, and I remember one occasion joining him at the Royal York Hotel for a weekly lunch, which in those days, quite a reasonable meal was served to about 200 for the princely sum of \$12! In those days, Ray was still working as an advisor to the Ontario Government, mainly concentrating on aeronautical matters. In the Second World War, if I recall correctly, he had been a pilot and had many tales to tell of his experiences. Ray was a great raconteur and his repertoire of jokes and other Irish humor to all around him. He constantly amused and kept us in varying degrees of laughter.

But there was a serious side to Ray. Ray was dedicated to the cause of bringing those involved in the Freedom of the City of London and the various Livery Clubs to life in North America. In the early days, we had quite a sizable membership from the United States; in fact, one of the earliest Honorary Clerks lived in Washington, D.C., and or at least two of our past Masters came from the United States. Before too long, Ray began to suggest that I should also consider being in line for becoming Master, but I felt that there were others more senior to myself who should go first. Eventually, in 1990 I agreed and served my term. Ten years later in 2000, there was no apparent candidate to succeed to the Mastership, so Ray, in typical fashion, volunteered for a second term.

Ray served the Company well and without his enthusiasm and initiative I do not believe that it would exist today. He was a joy to work with and his sense of humour was infectious. He imbued in us a sense of dedication in the traditions of that great City of London in North America. May he rest in peace.

Christmas Cards from Ray

by
Lynda Mitchell

Ray sponsored my husband, Jim, and me to receive our Freedom of the City of London. In the fall of 2007, we traveled to London to receive this great honour. Jim and I were moved by the sincerity and the sense of pride we felt as we recited our oath to the Queen. Ray and I were fortunate to share our birth date. For about the last 15 years, I was blessed to receive a birthday card in the mail from Ray with a handwritten note included. I shall miss those cards from Ray, but the memories I will hold dear for my life time.



The Freemen of the City of London at lunch in Brampton on a Sunday, 1980. Ray Gibson is standing, sixth from the left. Photo courtesy of Anthony Kemp, Past Master of the Honourable Company (1981).

At the First Dinner

by
Anthony Kemp,
Past Master of the Honourable Company of Freemen of the
City of London of North America (1981)

I was invited by Ray and John Story to the inaugural meeting at the Royal York Hotel. It was a black-tie dinner in a windowless meeting room in the lower level. I arrived a little late, and the only seat available was one at the head table next to the chap who looked to be in charge,

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this was, in fact, Capt., Ray Gibson. I was furtively looking for an vacant chair in the gloom at the back of the room, but Ray, immediately beckoned me to take the seat beside him, it being the last available in the room.

Not yet even comfortable with my legs under the table did Ray lean over to me to whisper "would you mind taking a few notes?" as he smoothly slipped pen and paper onto my place mat. Notes I did take and then at the wind up of the meeting, he proudly announced the fledgling Honourable Company had acquired and appointed its first Honourary Clerk! Applause all round and I was in, and was, as I digested the reality on my way home, third in line to the top dog! Of course, the lesson of that evening, but all too late: arrive on time.

Such was the easy exuberant manner of our late Past Master.

Sharp As a Spitfire's Propeller

by

Hans G. Bathija, FRAS, FRSA

**Honorary Clerk, The Honourable Company of Freemen of the
City of London of North America,
Member of the Worshipful Company of International Bankers**

It is with great sadness that I heard about the passing of our Founder, Patron, and Past Master, Capt. George Raymond Gibson, on 14 August. It was just in July when I had spoken to him to inquire as to his health and that I looked forward to meeting him once again for lunch at Heritage Fish'n'Chips. He was in fine spirits during our conversation.. We spoke of the Honourable Company, and he was delighted that I had returned to the Court and would be taken on the role of Honorary Clerk. Amazingly his memory was still as sharp as a Spitfire's propeller as he recollected meeting my beloved parents, asked how they were and said to say hello to them. Ray had met my parents when I organised two lunches for the Honourable Company at Heritage Fish'n'Chips in Brampton in honour of Commonwealth Day on 10 March 2018, and in honour of Tartan Day and the Maple Leaf Tartan on 7 April 2018. They, of course, had in common their fond memories of London, and their love of fish'n'chips.

For each occasion, I had the honour of inviting Ray to lunch on behalf of the Honourable Company and picking him at his place of residence in Brampton and bringing him to his favourite restaurant. On each occasion, Ray was ever the gentleman and was suitably attired whilst wearing the tie of the Honourable Company of Air Pilots, of which he was a proud Liveryman. During our conversations on the phone and in person, with a twinkle in his eye and magic in his voice, Ray brought to life his legendary life. We talked about his life as a young pilot in Belfast, his surprise at being asked at a young age to join the Honourable Company of Air Pilots, his meeting the then young Princess Elizabeth, his views on the engineering flaws of the ill-fated Avro Arrow, his time working with the Ontario Government and his dedication to many causes serving as a board director.

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Ray could certainly spin a tale, but his most important tale was that of his love of the City of London and its Liveries, and his dedication to that which he gave birth to in 1979, the Honourable Company. For this topic, he was most passionate. He informed me the idea started in the 1970's when he met Dr. John Brown, a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Apothecaries, and later, Captain John Storey, a Liveryman of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners. After many trips to Guildhall, the Lord Mayor gave permission for the establishment of The Honourable Company of Freemen of the City of London of North America, with the first meeting of the Court in 1979. The rest is history.

The one message Ray gave to me is that he wished to convey to the Court and the Honourable Company, as its Founder, a message that was a common theme to all our discussions right up to just before his passing, was that the Honourable Company was set up to honour the City of London and its Liveries. He emphasised that the Court should seek to hold events that centred around the history of and the happenings in the City, the Court should be seeking out Liverymen residing in North America and asking them to join, and finally and most importantly, should be encouraging members to not only become a Freemen of the City of London, but to also join a livery with the aim of becoming a liveryman.

Ray was a gentleman to the end and embodied all that is best of the City of London and of Liverymen.

The Founding of the Honourable Company

Excerpted from "The Honourable Company of the Freemen of the City of London: A Short History", *Company Comments*, 25th Anniversary Issue, January-May 2014

The original idea for the creation of an Association to link together Freemen of the City of London living and working in North America arose out of a casual conversation between two Freemen who were also Members of the Rotary Club of Toronto in October 1972. Captain Raymond (Ray) Gibson, a Liveryman of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators, was then District Governor of Rotary International. Dr. John Brown, a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Apothecaries, was a Member of the Rotary Club of Toronto. John Brown and Ray Gibson mused about the possible number of Freemen living in North America and the possibility of bringing them together.

It wasn't until another link was put in place, the arrival in Toronto in 1975 of Captain John Storey, a Liveryman of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners and the past President of the Rotary Club of Singapore, that the idea of forming an Association was worked on seriously.

It was envisaged that the objectives of the current activities and ideals of the City Livery Companies and Guilds could be pursued using the communication capabilities of the modern age. It was the objective of the City Institutions to instil moral leadership; excellence in trade and commerce and probity in public life. Within these objectives, there is a fostering of brotherhood and sisterhood, charity and pride in good workmanship. In this, context, the

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membership could be drawn from Freemen regardless of their Livery affiliation and specific trade.

The Founders met on numerous occasions, and followed the practice of combining social conviviality with business. Their efforts were given even greater stimulus during the visit to Toronto of the Lord Mayor of London, the Rt. Hon. Commander Sir Robin Gillett, to Toronto in 1976.

Their investigations identified 59 Freemen who were unanimously enthusiastic about the formation of an association, and it was decided to have an inaugural Dinner. Regrettably, John Brown died and plans were temporarily put in hold as a gesture of respect. A year later on the 5th of May, 1979, the inaugural Dinner was held at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto. The event attracted significant attention and greetings were received from: the Prime Minister of Canada, the Rt. Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau; the former Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. John Diefenbaker; the Premier of Ontario, the Hon. William Davis; and the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, the Hon. Pauline McGibbon.

The dinner speech as given by John Storey on the “Ancient Guilds of London” and following this, a business meeting was held that appointed the Officers of the Honourable Company: Ray Gibson was elected Master; John Storey, Deputy Master; and Anthony Kemp, Honorary Clerk. The Court was also elected: William (Bill) Miller; Dr. Paul Minc; Barry Hall; Squadron Leader Colin Glen; Noel Ross-Russell; Rex Williams; Floyd Chalmers and Dr. Alan Bass. The Lord Mayor, the Rt. Hon. Sir Kenneth Cork, sent his blessing to the enterprise, and the Company received permission to use as its coat of arms the full coat of arms of the City of London. He also approved the formal name as “*The Honourable Company of Freemen of the City of London of North America*”.

Freemen of London Hang Capes Up in Toronto

by

Zena Cherry, Society Columnist, *The Globe and Mail*, May 17, 1979



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Editor's Note: the late Ms. Cherry was incorrect in stating that the Freemen of the City of London elect the Lord Mayor. In actuality, the Aldermen of the City of London elect the Lord Mayor from among themselves. In addition, the article was published a week after it should have been, since the date of the initial dinner was May 5, 1979. Contrary to what Ms. Cherry reported, we do not wear capes. The Globe and Mail also tended to use American spelling (e.g., "honorable") and Ms. Cherry did not always report position titles or name spellings correctly. The article is republished verbatim here for historical purposes.

The first meeting ever held outside London of the Honorable Company of Freemen of the City of London was held at the Royal York Hotel on Saturday evening.

Freemen go back to the eleventh century. They were members of guilds which were recognized by the Crown and they were given livery and uniforms. Now they're given capes.

It is the Freemen of London who meet every September to choose the Lord Mayor of London, from among themselves.

The dinner in Toronto was convened by John Storey of the Honorable Company of Master Mariners. He is a retired shipping agent who came from Hong Kong to Toronto in 1974. His wife, formerly Anne Davison of Sudbury, was a United Church missionary.

Co-convenor was G. Ray Gibson, a member of the Guild of Air Pilots and Navigators. A Brampton engineer, he is a policy advisor to the Ontario Government.

It was decided to form a new organization called the Honorable Company of Freemen of London residing in North America. There are 58 registered freemen living on the continent.

Mr. Gibson is master of this new group; Mr. Storey is deputy master, and the honourable clerk is Anthony L. Kemp of the Worshipful Company of Gardeners – in business, he's an architectural partner of the firm, Hamilton Kemp. The group plans to meet twice a year.

Also attending were two physicians, Dr. Paul Minc of Sault Ste. Marie and Dr. Allan L. Bass of Hamilton, both members of the Apothecaries Society; Barry Hall, a Burlington butcher whose guild is the Butchers Company; W. Noel-Ross Russell of the Honorable Company of Musicians, on the faculty of music of McGill University; and Rex J. Williams of Toronto, his guild is the Bowyers (long bow makers) Guild.

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Ray was also very involved in the Rotary Club of Bramalea and served as its President in 1964 and 2014, two terms 50 years apart (Photo: *Brampton Guardian*)

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Derwin Mak, Editor

We need articles and content for Company Comments. We want to read about your Livery Company, your London, and anything else of interest to your fellow Company members. Please send submissions to the Editor, Derwin Mak, at editor@freemenlondon.org (Submit by email only, please. No handwritten or typewritten submissions by mail.) Deadline for Submissions for the Winter 2021 Issue: December 1, 2020.