

Large unidentified piece, too heavy to raise, still sits in the darkness below —

Cont. from page 4

tory of Norwegian training in Muskoka during the war, it took 57 years to finally designate the event as one of national historic significance. The first attempt was made in 1943 with a letter of request written to the Historical and Monumental Board of Canada. But this request was turned down, as were several others written by those such as Johan Lovald, the ambassador of Norway, and Eivind Hoff, the consul general of Norway. Finally, after the District of Muskoka took ownership of the Muskoka Airport in 1996, Al Bacon became involved in leading the effort to honour the event. With the help of others in the community, he created a proposal, which proved successful in 2002.

"The designation was put on the back burner for so many years, and there it sizzled until the announcement was finally made," says Al. "It was such a significant accomplishment for Muskoka that Norway's King Harald V and Queen Sonja and 50 veteran airmen who trained here, came to visit 'Little Norway' in the spring of 2002." The King first visited Muskoka airport when he was only five years old. It was at this time that his father, Crown Prince Olav came to officially open the base.

After the designation was passed, Al approached the District of Muskoka with the idea of having a Norwegian-Canadian memorial and cultural centre built at the airport. The centre would feature artifacts and displays that follow the historic story of Norwegian training in Muskoka. Again, Al was successful in his endeavor and the proposal was passed and supported by the District of Muskoka. The plans for the \$1.8 million centre have been digitally produced and the District has received confirmation of funds from Fed Nor, Canada. Currently the board is waiting for further funding to begin construction on the project.

It was Al's effort that became known in Muskoka, and has ultimately led him to stumble across a rich variety of stories about two Norwegian planes that crashed into Lake Muskoka. As a result, he now holds pieces of a crashed Cornell PT-19 Fairchild in his possession.

These parts, which were accidentally discovered three years ago, are the first physical traces of the Norwegian planes found

in Muskoka since the 1940s. Local John Kokesh was scuba diving in Brydon's Bay on Lake Muskoka, offshore from the Fletcher's cottage, which was once rented out to the wives of the Norwegian airmen during their training here. To his surprise, Kokesh found a

wheel drum, hydraulic line, torque link and a piece of the fuselage from a Cornell trainer on the bottom of the lake. The pieces were leftovers from a crash that occurred in 1943 by two pilots, who miscalculated when performing a stunt to impress their wives at the cottage. The

pilots survived, and the RCAF raised the plane and returned it to Norway. But in the process, some parts broke off and remained in the depths of the bay. It was these pieces that Kokesh recovered and gave to the Fetters.

"Ted Fletcher knew that I was trying to have the

cultural centre built, so he thought I would be interested in keeping the parts and eventually displaying them at the centre," says Al. "Even after 60 years of submersion in Lake Muskoka, the parts still bear signs of the blue paint used by the RCAF." To this date, divers say that a

large unidentified piece, too heavy to raise, still sits in the darkness below.

At this point Al became interested in people's stories about the wreck. He also heard about a second Norwegian plane that crashed and may still lie in Lake Muskoka. While

Cont. on page 6

The quick way to a longer weekend.



Lease a 407 ETR transponder and we waive the \$10 activation fee and give you 20 kms free!*

If you use 407 ETR more than 7 times a year to get you where you need to be, a transponder will pay for itself in savings! Kiss heavy traffic congestion goodbye and make every trip easier with 407 ETR. Order your transponder at 407etr.com today ("Muskoka" must be entered in the Promo Code field to receive offer).



Keeping you ahead of the curve.

407 ETR
Express Toll Route

*This offer is open to new and existing Personal Accounts in good standing. Online Lease must be completed and submitted in July or August 2005 to take advantage of free activation and 20 kilometres free. "Muskoka" must be entered in the Promo Code field to receive offer.