

Peter William Edgar Austin

Yellowknife lost a pillar in innovation and unflagging optimism on June 7th.

The man, the myth, the aviation legend; everyone in the industry world knew the name, Peter Austin.

Born August 19, 1950 in Sainte-Jovite QC to mother Caroline Emma Webber, and father, William Edgar Austin, Peter—it would seem—emerged from the womb with aircraft maintenance tools ready in hand.

Mentored by his father, he soon established Austin Aviation, forging his way into a lifetime of entrepreneurship and bringing him, eventually, into the heart of the Northwest Territories.

Even today, it's a testament to his professionalism and attention to details, that Peter was solicited in the re-building of the P-51 Mustang for the purpose of resurrecting it for the Steven Spielberg film, "Empire of the Sun". It was this project that brought him the accolades of Princess Diana's father, who requested from him another rebuild. In typical Peter fashion, he declined—insisting the project need be pursued in Canada since English cuisine was deplorable.

His passion kindled by recovering, rebuilding and breathing new life into collector aircraft, Peter was soon emersed (1992) in a project retrieving Glacier Girl, a P-38 fighter plane abandoned after an emergency landing in 1942 on Greenland. It required engineering ingenuity, auguring down hundreds of feet beneath the snow and ice, and retrieved piece by piece up the shaft.

It seemed an inevitability that Peter would become Chief Maintenance Engineer in the employ of Joe McBryan at Buffalo Airways in Yellowknife. He distinguished himself as a committed man, caring as much for the pilots, the crew, and the cargo, as he did for the mechanics of the aircraft.

It was this passion that flamed anew, with his soon-to-be wife, Annette (Althouse). In 1996, the duo began a new enterprise: Tundra Transfer/Clear Arctic Springs. Always resourceful, they kept the wolf from the door by handling bus freight, selling and planting trees, Peter driving a school bus—anything, everything as unrelated to present day coffee and water sales imaginable. Twenty-six years later, Tundra Transfer Ltd. continues to thrive.

However, it was Peter's great reputation and the gift of timing, that brought stability when Terry Harrold hired Peter as Yellowknife Base Manager for Northwestern Air Lease. This did more than put steak back onto the table, it meant more time with the children, Sienna and Zachary, and put a happy hum into Peter's favorite last activity at the bus depot—mopping the floors.

Aside from personally greeting his customers, always offering a cup of his favorite Mountain Grizzly coffee and 'not-to-be-published' antics from the aviation industry, Peter dedicated his free time to his family—driving Sienna (Kellar) to the barn at 6 a.m. and turning wrenches with Zachary in the garage. He was peaked to see his commitment rewarded with Zachary becoming a gifted aircraft maintenance engineer with Buffalo Airways until his untimely passing in 2020, and Sienna earning full title of owner/operator of her own horse training company, Northern Hart Equestrian, in Innisfail AB.

Throughout his variegated career, indefatigable energy, and optimism, always at the root he counted on his sister, loving, all-embracing Marnie Lavigueur. He frequently traveled to his homeland in Quebec where Marnie satiated Peter's great joy for food, belly-jiggling laughter, and endless hugs.



(The "Austin Cut" needs no introduction for those who have dined at the Old Town Landing, and savored of the 20 oz prime rib entrée. Though, it bears mentioning, that his dining preference with brother, David Austin, after a tour of the Alberta Aviation Museum in Edmonton, invariably ended at the Swiss Chalet.)

Toward the end of his life, Peter became a permanent resident of the Stanton Hospital, where he was as likely to give the finger to the staff, as he was to instill fits of giggles in them and naughty reprisals. His best friend, Kenny Weaver, was a faithful, gracious, constant companion to him and brought him immeasurable comfort. We are all truly indebted to Kenny's unwavering vigil.

As well, we extend our gratitude to the staff at Yellowknife Home Care. Their genuine kindness and seamless professional care contributed so very much to Peter's well-being.

On June 7th, Peter passed away peacefully while watching his favourite television show, "Ice Pilots".

Peter is survived by his sister, Marnie, nephews Antonio, Carlos and David Lavigueur, and his daughter, Sienna Kellar.

**There will be a Celebration of Life held for Peter
at the aviation museum in Edmonton on August 4th 1 - 5 pm.
Friends, family, everyone is welcome to attend.**