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Painting of Martin Mars makes splash in acrylic

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By Martin van den Hemel
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When Burkeville artist Karen Lorena Parker first met her neighbour, Dan McIvor, he seemed like he was a nice enough man. But it wasn't until McIvor was named to the Order of Canada in 2003 that Parker realized McIvor's enormous contributions to the country.

So when the aviation pioneer passed away in 2005, she thought it would be a fitting to memorialize the former volunteer firefighter's accomplishments on canvas.

"Dan McIvor was an incredible character and a wonderful person," said Parker.

McIvor developed water-bombing techniques that have saved thousands of acres of forest in B.C. over the decades. As the chief pilot of Flying Tankers Ltd., he coordinated the transformation of Second World War navy planes into water bombers capable of accurately targeting forest fires.

Parker's work, a three-by-six foot acrylic painting of the raging 2003 Kelowna fires with a water bomber flying overhead, was donated to the Sea Island fire hall last week.

"The firefighters do so much for our community," Parker said.

She wanted her painting, entitled "Dan McIvor's Martin Mars," to be dynamic, strong and timeless, and thought what better way to honour McIvor's contributions than to display it in the new fire hall's community room, for everyone to see.

McIvor was a craftsman, building tables and bowls, and got a chainsaw when he turned 92 from his children, she said.

"I don't know of anybody in Burkeville that didn't know him," Parker said. Fire Chief Jim Hancock said displaying the painting is a perfect way to memorialize McIvor.

"Not only does it celebrate a noble life and an important invention, the painting depicts a significant aspect of firefighting in Canada," he said.

McIvor was a bush and Distant Early Warning Line pilot and was inducted into the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame.