



Skywriter

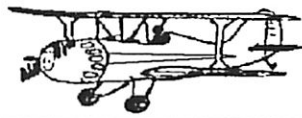


Monthly Newsletter of the Calgary Ultralight Flying Club

September 1995

One Pilot's Opinion

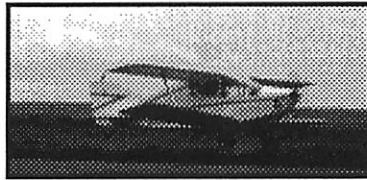
by Bob Kirkby



Good flying days were few and far between this summer. This was one of the wettest summers I can remember in Calgary. Through a stroke of luck, however, the weather did cooperate for the third annual Kirkby fly-in breakfast on July 22.

It turned out to be the best one yet with 13 airplanes, 2 helicopters and lots of drive-in visitors. Everyone seemed to enjoy the opportunity to get together over airplanes and food. We were busy flipping pancakes right up to 1400 hours. It was also great to see a good turnout of spouses.

I would like to thank everyone for coming out and making the get-together a great success.



REG'S AIR COOLED ENGINES

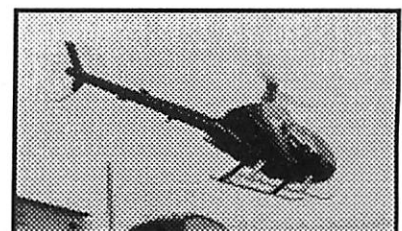
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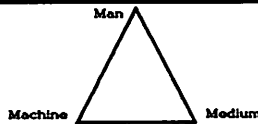
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Safety Corner

by Paul Hemingson



The Quiet Walkaround

Most of us are bothered by distractions. For example, when you are trying to talk or listen on the phone, while others around you are talking or making noise can be very annoying and lead to poor communication. Or when your driving through the city looking for a particular address and your passenger turns up the radio because his/her favorite tune just came up, or the person in the backseat begins to talk about some unrelated topic that doesn't concern you. Your concentration is sure to be scattered.

For me, quiet surroundings are necessary to allow me to focus on the job at hand. Pre-flighting is on job that should be done under quiet circumstances, even solitude.

We all know what happens at any particular airport or ultralight park. You arrive to enjoy some flying, and note on the way to the hangar that several people are wondering about looking at airplanes. They are well meaning people and will surely approve of your airplane. Because you look proficient, professional, pilot-like and personable they are sure to try to engage you in conversation once they realize that you are actually going flying.

Within a few minutes or less they are peering in the hangar doorway, just as you prepare to do your preflight. You like to be courteous so you shout, "Hello there", to them, and continue on your preflight duties. That's all the cue they need. A few seconds later they are beside/around you and asking all kinds of questions.

Just as you are about to check the condition of your elevator or rudder cables, one of them asks, "How far can you go in this thing?" You've heard this question before and go into an explanation, involving headwinds, tailwinds and ground speed and airspeed and that in airplanes it's not how far you can go, but how long.

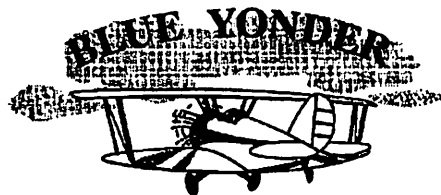
You try to continue your preflight but forget where you left off, and perhaps missing a few things, you continue checking with the strut attachments. These are critical checks, and you are about to check for the integrity of the cotter key in the castellated nut, when another question comes your way. "Hey Mister, how high can this thing go?"

Your mind wanders to thoughts of things like density altitude, when you remind yourself that this concept might require more time to explain

than a simpler half-truth. So you merely reply that "it can only go about 10,000 feet because the air gets thinner with altitude and the engine loses power as it runs richer and richer in the air starved environment, and that it's akin to pulling on more choke the higher you go.

This seems to satisfy the onlookers for a few more microseconds before another comment or query is directed your way. There seems no escape until or unless you take-off, and leave them behind. In your haste to continue your preflight and get airborne, you may forget to do a thorough check.

You can fly further, longer and higher if you try to conduct your preflight with a quiet mind and in an environment without distractions. Some pilots use a written checklist. Others start at some point (say the left strut attachment) and finish at the same point in an orderly fashion. The secret to a good preflight is to do it when nobody is around, giving it the full attention it deserves.



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Skywriter is the official publication of the Calgary Ultralight Flying Club and is published 12 times per year. Opinions expressed by our writers are not necessarily those of the club. Articles and letters to the editor are very welcome from any readers. Address correspondence to: Bob Kirkby, RR 7, Calgary, AB T2P 2G7 or Fax to 403-291-1112.

Meetings of the Calgary Ultralight Flying Club are held the first Wednesday of every month at 7:30pm at

R.C.A.F. Association
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Around The Patch

by Stu Simpson



Thinking Like A Pilot Again

The final assembly of my Himax has gone well, albeit, frustratingly slowly. Once the wings were back on, a bazillion little things had to be tended to. Things like incorrect wiring connections, instruments that weren't working, and proper control rigging. But eventually, all was ready for the engine run-up.

Then it was back to the Kirkby Field for more "final touches". With Bob Kirkby's help, we did the weight and balance, which turned out well. The C.G. wound up being at about 29% chord, right where the factory said it should be.

I've certainly benefitted from constructing the plane to amateur-built standards, and from the inspections it's undergone, but in the end it came down to dollars and cents as to how I registered it. I was given the letters C-IETT.

Now, everything was set for taxi tests. Under the watchful eyes of Vasseur and Kirkby, both experienced tail-dragger jocks, I rolled onto the runway.

To be honest, just driving the Max on the runway proved to be a bit hairy at first. This was partly because I didn't have enough turn leverage built into the tailwheel steering bar (which I've since corrected).

I decided I'd try things pretty slowly at

first then gradually work around to getting the tail up, all the while hoping like hell I didn't make shredded wheat of the grain fields on either side of the runway.

My first few runs up the runway probably looked like one of those airshow clowns. But I assure you, it was no act. Those were real-life weeds I wound up in (only once, though).

I discovered, or rather, was reminded, that a tail-wheel airplane needs aggressive footwork to track straight. When the power comes up in the Max the nose really wants to pull to the left. But what I failed to realize was that when the power comes back, the nose will, more or less, return to tracking the direction the plane is headed.

The evening was drawing to a close so I decided to try one more run. I ran the engine up to near full power, lifted the tail, and coasted for a while. Suddenly, everything felt very smooth. I knew immediately that the Max was airborne. The wings were still on, and everything felt good, but I wasn't about to try a go-around. I was just too chicken. Hey, it beats dying.

At mid-field or so, I gently eased the throttle off and settled back to the comforting rattle of ground movement. Then I taxied back to the hangar and shut down.

I was extremely happy with the landing gear. Being a rigid gear, I was

curious to see what it would feel like. But with the large 6.00 x 6 tires I've installed, the ride is very similar to that of a single-seat Beaver. Impressive.

I knew I was very close to the first flight, but I wanted some more time in the plane first. I had to wait four days for my next opportunity.

The wind on August 9th was blowing at about 10kts from the north-northeast, and was reasonably steady. I decided to at least do some taxi-tests, which would be good practice. After all, Calgary isn't exactly well-known for year-round perfect weather.

Taxiing out felt familiar and comfortable, my experience growing quickly. I tried a few more runs down the runway, with some crow-hops thrown in for extra terror. I noticed the airplane was handling the wind much better than the Beaver ever did.

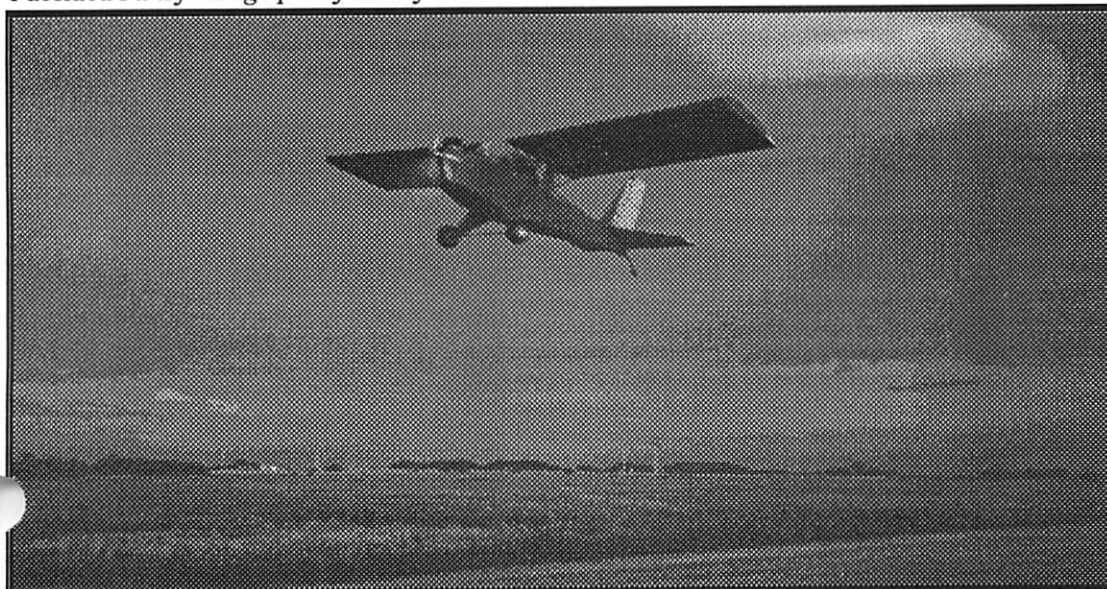
The wind was stronger at altitude than on the ground and seemed to be gustier, too. But the Max has plenty of control authority to keep things in line. The full span ailerons give excellent, instant roll control, and the rudder is very dominant. But MY control harmony was poor and uncoordinated. It was clear I'd need a few hours to get familiar with the Max.

On downwind I concentrated on getting my position correct for a good approach. I extended just a little further south to allow more time to set up the approach. I was talking out loud to myself now, and making sure I listened to every word.

I realized the wind was going to ease off toward the surface and would likely be turbulent near the ground after having traversed the hangars on the field. I was right on both accounts. Everything happened just as I thought it would, but I was ahead of the game and able to compensate.

My landing was very acceptable, though a touch hot. The Max bounced once, then stayed down. I figure that's when I started breathing again.

I neglected another circuit in order to do a
(continued on page 4)



The HiMax flies! 16 months all leading up to this.

Photo by Brian Vasseur

(Around - continued from page 3)

very careful post-flight check to make sure all was still in order. I taxied in and shut down.

Kirkby ran over and congratulated me with a hand shake, then was off again for a flip in his Cherokee. I just stood there staring at the beautiful blue culmination of 16 months work. Then I said a little prayer of thanks.

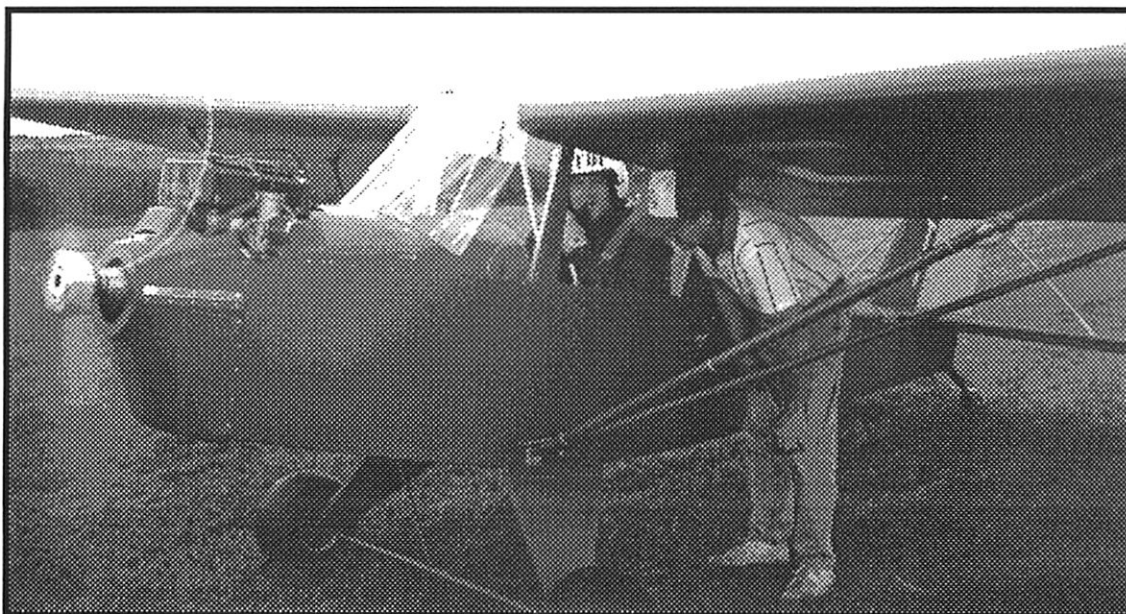
Over the next week or so I explored the Max a little bit more deeply with each flight. I wanted to become very familiar with it's handling before attempting any stalls.

A tool bag added to the nose, and a small trim tab attached to the elevator solved my slightly tail-heavy condition. Now the nose wants to tuck over just a bit when I release the stick.

So I carefully explored turns and how to get them coordinated. It seems best to lead with just a touch of rudder, then feed in some bank about half a second later.

Because the prop turns to the left, the airplane is much more inclined to turn that way also, and at higher power settings it requires a bit of right stick to stay neutral in the turn. Right turns work well with stick held neutral.

I eventually got around to performing a



Kirkby gives pointers on tail-dragger technique.

Photo by Brian Vasseur

series of stalls and discovered the plane either just mushes along, or else breaks sharply with little warning. It seems to depend on a combination of the pitch attitude and how quickly the throttle is pulled back. The altitude loss is very minimal, maybe 30' or so. There was no tendency for a wing to drop, and I didn't do any spin tests.

I've also discovered I need to be a bit more stingy with my speed on final approach. The airplane retains its energy well, much more so than a higher-drag machine like a Beaver. I find flatter approaches to work better than steeper ones, which leaves much less excess energy to bleed off over the numbers.

All in all, this plane is a ball. And it seems to get better with each

successive flight. It's nice to see my learning curve climbing upward again as I gradually make friends with the Max.

I'm in a "flying" frame of mind now, which I really enjoy. Sure, it's back to bitching about the weather and the high cost of parts. But I'm also watching the world from up top once more, and doing the stuff I love to do... flying.

Yup, it's nice to be thinking like a pilot again.



Getting it up - tail wheel comes up on initial taxi trials.

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September 10 - Medicine Hat airport day fly-in pancake breakfast, 0800 to 1100, door prizes. For info call Bob 403-526-5248.

I Should Have Bought The Kit

by Brian Vasseur

I'm halfway through building a Team Minimax from plans, and I'm thinking I should have bought the kit. Not because building strictly from plans is more difficult than building from a kit. It's just that plans-building doesn't have the benefits I thought it might have.

When I first started looking for an airplane to build, I was sure that a kit would be mandatory. I thought building a plane would be a very complex project, with thousands of specially fabricated factory parts. But after seeing the Team Aircraft video, and seeing some other homebuilt planes, I decided building looked quite easy after all.

I was also convinced that I could save thousands of dollars if I built from plans instead of a kit. Well, I certainly haven't saved thousands, and at this point, I'll be lucky if this airplane doesn't cost me more than a kit.

The biggest reason for this is that there are a lot of small parts in an aircraft. Things like bolts, turnbuckles, brackets, fittings, and dozens of items cut from aircraft grade metals. If you're building from plans, you'll have to acquire these things on your own.

I've wound up getting many of the needed parts through Team. My experience so far is that Team's prices are competitive with any other aircraft supply house.

It's important to remember that each

of the fittings on a Minimax (and on most other planes) use only a small amount of metal. For example, some of the metal pieces on the Minimax are shipped from the factory in 4 inch lengths. The shortest length I could have bought in Calgary was 20 feet. That's a lot of wasted metal.

Another problem was getting the right grade of material. For structural parts, I needed to make sure I was really getting 6061 or 2024 aluminum. On many occasions, I just couldn't verify that the locally obtained metal was the correct alloy. So I had to go back to Team for quite a few pieces.

Additionally, there's the time I've spent actually driving around trying to find particular pieces. I haven't kept track of the gas I've used, but I've wasted a lot of Saturdays looking for the right stuff, and not found it.

So a few months ago I sent an order down to Team asking them to send me all the pieces I hadn't found yet. The only items I still haven't ordered are the cowlings, fuel tanks, and Lexan windows. I'm still convinced that I can fabricate these at home. But I suspect I'll change my mind about the cowling.

I have to admit, a year ago it would have been difficult to lay out \$5000 all at once. But maybe I could have bought factory sub-kits, or maybe saved the money over the course of a few more months.

I still wouldn't hesitate to build from plans again, particularly after seeing some aircraft that are plans-only projects. But I won't expect to save thousands of dollars, or to make fantastic improvements. I'll just build

the plane the way the instructions say to build it. And I'll count on spending the amount the designer says I'll spend. And the only customizing I'll do will be in the paint job. But if the plane is offered as a kit, I'll buy the kit.

And then I can save my frustration for something other than my airplane.

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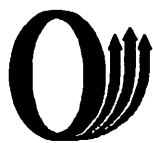
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A Note Of Thanks

by Stu Simpson

As some of you already know, my TEAM Himax is up and flying now. But I have to tell you that while I may have built the plane, I damn sure didn't do it alone.

The past 16 months have taught me more than I've learned in years. Besides the obvious things like woodworking and aircraft construction skills, I also learned what a powerful force a dedicated group of people can be.

No one can finish a project of this magnitude on their own. I couldn't have even started one. So before I began building the Himax, I spent a lot of time with Chris Kirkman, who provided me with plenty of encouragement and advice. He's built the low-wing miniMax, and was a well-spring of information for me.

Then there was Gene Peters, who owns Western Aircraft Supply. The resident tree monger sat with me for hours explaining the intricacies and secrets of building wooden airplanes.

Brian Vasseur lent both his back and imagination from start to finish. Together, we conquered some of the more difficult steps of construction and completion.

The list goes on, and on; Kespe, Stark, Wright, Castro, Kirkby, Kuzyk, Creasser, Swartz, Forester, Rogers, Orlick, Tarditti, Rasmussen, and more.

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Each is just a regular guy with a dream of wings. But each helped me take a step closer to my dream. Each one gave me their ideas, their support, and most important, their experience. Without them, I quite simply would have failed.

But the most helpful person during the whole project - the key, in fact - was my wife, Tina. She agreed to the time and money required to build. She put up with the noise and the dust. And she believed in me.

I can't count the times I walked away from the work bench disgusted, or

frustrated with what I'd done. Tina just waited for me to calm down, then offered a few well chosen words that helped put things back in the proper perspective. She might not have known much about what I was doing, but she believed I could do it. And she was right.

So if you see my plane flying around, or sitting at an airport, have a good look at it. But please remember all the other people who spent their time and effort to help me put it there.

I hope I can return the favor.



Proud Papa with his new HiMax.