



Skywriter

Monthly Newsletter of the Calgary Ultralight Flying Club

July 2000

From The Cockpit

by Brian Vasseur

Well it's airshow season again and I'll be waiting impatiently for the magazines to come out with all the new planes. I managed to catch Aviation Days at the airport and was really impressed with the displays. Walking thru the KC-10 is quite an experience, and seeing those military jets up close really excites me. I missed out on the Harrier display which is something I would have really liked to have seen. Just seeing the planes up close and being able sit in all the cockpits is really a whole heck of a lot of fun. I was disappointed that the Canadian Forces didn't have more of their equipment out, the US forces brought a lot of their metal and it really is an impressive showing.

It's a good event to expose people to aviation too, and I brought a friend from work and our kids for the day. They all seemed really enthusiastic and I'm sure that more than a few people will pick up a serious interest in aviation just from being there and seeing what it's all about. A lot of the clubs and flying schools had booths setup including the RAA. There was a continuous row of C172's giving intro flights for \$20/person and heli flights for \$30/person (not in the C172's of course).

Obviously we couldn't do any intro flights but I'd like to consider having a booth there and maybe a few planes because I think ultralights are really misunderstood.

Overall the volunteers who put this on should pat themselves on the back, it was a truly professional job.

I also managed to get to Glenn Bishell's fly in on the 17th. About 15 airplanes and 30 people showed including the drive-ins. Sausages and potatoes are a nice change from pancakes and it was all extremely good. There were a lot of new airplanes there that I'd never seen, all of them done extremely well. Even the Glasair crowd showed up which is not something you expect at an ultralight fly-in.

As I'm writing this I've just heard that the guys have made it back from the Castlegar trip and enjoyed it thoroughly. I look forward to seeing the writeup.

Sadly too the new flying season also brings incidents. Luckily this one turned out to be minor, although it came very close to being a fatality. This incident deserves a writeup by itself once the reasons have been detailed because there's a lot we could all learn from this particular situation. Basically, the pilot had a plan in mind for the first circuit he was going to do in an airplane he had never flown before. The pilot didn't have a plan in place to determine under what conditions he should abort the flight and he ended up having

difficulties trying to fly the plane when he could have easily aborted during takeoff. The full analysis will be easy to write now that it's happened with all the wisdom that hindsight usually brings.

I'm bringing this up because being unprepared for unexpected events is exactly the type of situation that any of us can get into when we're flying a different airplane for the first time. That sudden gust of wind, lifting off unexpectedly or drifting off the runway may not get recognized in time for your instincts to kick in and recover the airplane. Calling off a flight rather than pushing an uncertain situation has proven many times to be the right thing to do.

I've written another article for the newsletter on how to plan for a first flight. I've heard lots of stories from club members who have crashed airplanes they've newly aquired because it did something they weren't expecting. Fly the plane is more than just wings level and watch your airspeed, it's knowing how the airplane is supposed to perform and then being able to maneuver it back to it's normal flight envelope when something unexpected happens. Practice makes you good at this, planning lets you be good at it the first time out.

Have a good summer. →

Flying Events

July 5-9 - Arlington NWEAA fly-in.

July 9 - Wetaskiwin Flying Club fly-in breakfast in conjunction with Reynolds Alberta Museum "Salute to Aviation", 8:00 - noon. Contact Jim Robson 780-352-1174.

July 15 - Kirkby's annual fly-in breakfast 8:30 - noon at Kirkby Field. Contact Bob Kirkby 569-9541.

July 15 - Nanton fly-in breakfast and lunch at the A.J. Ranch strip (newly paved).

July 16 - Vulcan annual fly-in breakfast, 8:00 - 11:30. Contact Cody Whiteside 403-485-2083.

July 16 - Cooking Lake fly-in breakfast, 8:00 - noon.

July 23 - Edmonton Homebuilt Aircraft Association fly-in breakfast at Villeneuve airport. Contact Orvis Bambush 780-450-1595.

July 26 - Aug 1 - Oshkosh Airventure 2000.

Aug 5-6 - Lethbridge International Airshow featuring the Snowbirds. See their web site for information: www.lis.ab.ca/cosmos/airshow.html

Aug 13 - Beiseker fly-in breakfast, 8:00 - 11:00 am, classic/antique cars and cycles.

Sept 16 - Rocky Mountain House fly-in breakfast/lunch and airshow. Contact Ken Fowler 403-845-4742.

If you know of any other fly-ins or airshows in Alberta this summer please e-mail info to Bob Kirkby for next month's Skywriter: kirkby@telusplanet.net

Skywriter

Skywriter is the official newsletter of the Calgary Ultralight Flying Club and is published 12 times per year. Forward your articles and letters to:

Editor: Bob Kirkby 569-9541
e-mail: kirkby@telusplanet.net

Assistant-editor: Bernie Kespe (see below)

Calgary Ultralight Flying Club

Meetings of the Calgary Ultralight Flying Club are held on the second Thursday of every month, except July and August, at 7:00 pm, at the Northeast Armoury, 1227 - 38 Avenue NE.

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Member Profile : Bernie Kespe

by Wilf Stark

Sometime in the next few months, we will once again see a picture-perfect Renegade bi-plane grace our skies. For Bernie, that moment will have come none too soon.

This re-incarnation will be better than ever. Having been painstakingly re-built, and improved upon, after its 'Rotax Music Stopped', as our friend Andy likes to describe it, it will hopefully provide Bernie with even more flying pleasure than he remembers.

I used to enjoy flying alongside Bernie, and watching him perform maneuvers that can best be described as 'being a porpoise in the air'. You could sense the sheer exhilaration he must have been feeling as that handsome airplane responded so deftly to his control inputs.

It took Bernie from '94 to '97 to build it the first time, and the last 2 years to build it again, better than ever.

His personal resolve has truly been tested, as his music had stopped once before, in 1990, about 1 year after he had finished building his beautiful Beaver Rx550. While attempting to dead-stick that bird to a safe landing, a power-line presented, too late to avoid. The resulting consequences were merely dire, instead of deadly. The Beaver is a memory, with photographs to prove it, and the major surgeries to the hip, including the hip replacement just last month, are reminders of the price he's had to pay for his share of the skies.

Bernie joined our club in '84. This UL world was probably a natural place to gravitate to, from the world of motorcycling he had enjoyed from '80 until just a few years ago, when hip finally won, and his pristine motorcycle had to find a new home. Personal Therapy in pre-ultralight days often consisted of an exhilarating ride, after work, from Calgary to Radium and back, or, through Kananaskis Park from the top

thru the bottom and home again. He remembers well, how easy it was to lose 6 or more hours of arduous cycling, in what seemed like mere minutes.

Having worked in many parts of Alberta in his capacity as a Land Survey technologist, it probably didn't take him too long to realize that his sailing days were over once he had emigrated to Canada's Wild West from the Center of the Universe (Toronto Ontario) about 20 years ago. Not many of us have grabbed the opportunity of enjoying 3 distinctly different pursuits of passion during our active years. I wonder what additional sport he will pursue as he nears retirement age? I'm looking forward to flying alongside the new porpoise again, soon. Get well fast, Bernie! We're waiting! →

For Sale

Murphy Renegade Spirit - 260 TTSN, Rotax 532, 60 SMOH, always hanged, ASI, VSI, Tach, T/C, ALT, CHT, water temp. intercom, two helmets, 3-blade Ivoprop, 80mph cruise, Red & White Endura, hole covers, \$25,900. Bob Kirkby 569-9541 (7/00)

Three Point Restraints - A local supplier has a surplus of new heavy-duty three point harnesses. They are available in any color as long as it's YELLOW. Cost of the harness is \$50 + GST. Belts feature a military style release. Interested parties should contact Kim Skulsky, 208-2813 skuller57@home.com (5/00)

Wanted - An ultralight for \$5000 or less, in good flying order, strut braced, and registered to the person selling the plane. Rex McCarthy 403-504-1962 (5/00)

Bushmaster II - 1986, Rotax 503, TTSN 120, cabin heat, complete logs, assembly drawings and construction manual. ASI, ALT, VSI, TACH, EGT, CHT, slip

indicator. White with black and red trim. Nice clean, well cared for aircraft. New throttle and choke quadrant, all engine and fuel lines and cables just replaced. Digital pictures available. Current location Edmonton, AB, \$16500.00 or best offer. Reg Lukasik 780-459-0813 (4/00)

Beaver RX-550 - Rotax 503 dual carb, Warp Drive prop, electric start, enclosure kit, TTAF 625, TTE 105, \$9900. Victor Thiessen 403-546-4449 (4/00)

Bushmaster - 1986, 2-seat, dual-control, fully enclosed cabin, 503 Rotax, ground adj prop, 510hrs, complete with crop spraying equipment, always hanged, \$12000. Ken Giesbrecht 403-572-3294 (3/00)

Skis & floats - Powder coated skis for tri-gear or tail-dragger \$850, floats \$1500. Don Leonzio 250-427-2046 (3/00)

Hanger - One half share in indus hanger for sale, 38 ft door facing east call Ray Waller at 274 4388 or cell 540 2492 (3/00)

Flying-Flea HM-293 - Famous MIGNET Aircraft redesigned by GRUNBERG as an Ultralight. More than 100 flying. French plans and brochure with English translation, \$110.00, mailing included. Paul PONTOIS, 1890 Rang des Chutes, STE-URSULE (Quebec) J0K 3M0 (3/00)

Yarrow Arrow- Enclosed heated cab, dual control side by side seating, 55 HRS TT on new 503 dual CDI dual carb, 100 CH Alpha/100 radio, alum. skis, hanged, \$13,000. Located in Lac La Biche AB. PH: 780-798-2404 FAX: 798-3011, e-mail: rckb@telusplanet.net (1/00)

MiniMax - Rotax 447, GSC Ground adjustable prop, full panel, always hanged, only 115 hours since new. \$9,500. OBO. Dale 293-3826. (12/99)

Forward ads to Bob Kirkby 569-9541.

Anybody Listening?

By Carl Forman

Having a radio and GPS in my Minimax increases safety and flying pleasure. I have an Icom hand held radio. I also fly with a Magellan 315 GPS.

When I built my Minimax, I obtained a copy of an article that Bob Kirkby had written regarding the installation of radio antennas. I installed an aluminum base and an antenna of the appropriate length internally. The excellence of the setup was verified on several occasions when I could communicate clearly with aircraft that were more than fifty miles distant.

My first cross-country flight taught me that I had to engineer a decent mounting for the radio as well as a push to talk mechanism. On that flight I carried the radio in my breast pocket and had to fumble to locate the push to talk switch. Changing frequencies was also a problem as my near vision wasn't so great with my glasses on and I needed two free hands to do the job. I wanted to devote my complete attention to flying the airplane without undue effort spent communicating.

The first thing I did was build a small wooden box to hold the radio. I mounted the box in the airplane at a convenient spot both for my vision and for my right hand. The radio is securely held in this box with its belt clip. I built my own push to talk button from scratch. This is not rocket science. I bought a round spring-loaded push button switch, wire and an appropriate male electrical connector at Radio Shack. There are no issues with polarity so the wiring and soldering is straightforward. The switch sits atop my control stick. It has performed flawlessly for a year and a half.

Later, when I flew to Cold Lake, I found the management of battery power both for the radio and the GPS not to my liking. I had to discharge the nicad battery on the radio before I could recharge it. It could take a few hours to discharge and fifteen hours was required to get a full recharge. On one occasion, I forgot to recharge the battery and flew nordo as a result. The rechargeable batteries in the GPS were hard pressed to last for an hour and a half and required frequent changing. Although the battery issues were minor, they detracted from the convenience and enjoyment of flying and I decided to investigate alternatives.

The most obvious and common solution is to buy a regulator that is designed by

Rotax to run off of engine power. The power is fed into a battery and the battery powers the radio and GPS. I was concerned about radio interference which this system has a reputation for producing. I decided instead to install a small motor cycle battery that would be recharged with a solar panel. I bought a 125-milliamp solar panel at Canadian Tire Store. The solar panel is attached to my hangar exterior. According to the instructions, it will not overcharge my battery. Changing the various terminals for the power supply connections proved troublesome. I finally settled on mini XLR connectors that I purchased at MRO Electronic Supply Ltd. I had MRO do the soldering. Polarity was a serious issue so I was pretty careful to get it correct. My recent cross country flight to Castlegar proved that the system is far superior to the old combination of Nicad battery for the radio and rechargeable for the GPS. I'm still tweaking the system for small improvements in convenience and reliability but feel the experiment is a success.

None of the above enhancements to my electrical system are complicated but they have contributed significantly to convenience and safety when I fly. If I had been flying a certified aircraft, the cost and paperwork would have been prohibitive. The ease and low cost of enhancing your aircraft systems is one more (as if I needed one more) reason to fly ultralights. →

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Who said those controllers don't have a sense of humour...

As I was taxiing at Penticton airport in BC I overheard the following:

C-Gxxx: "Request taxi clearance to Kelowna."

Ground: "Cessna Gxxx, we would prefer if you flew there."

C-Gxxx: "Then we would request taxi clearance to the active."

Cypress Hills or Bust

by Ed D'Antoni

Envious of the adventuresome group of Ultralighters who could find a week in their schedules to head west on a 120 mile trip to Castlegar, I thought I would try a trip of shorter duration. Barry Halliwell, one of the owners of our Rans S-12 often spoke of flying into the Sand and Cypress Hills of Saskatchewan. Barry was familiar with this area as his roots go back to Empress, a southern Alberta ghost town on the Saskatchewan/Alberta border. I suggested the S-12 owners fly to Medicine Hat then spend a day making 30 to 50 mile sightseeing trips. Poling the other owners; Don Ward, our 8000 hour ATP pilot gave up his search and rescue course to come along, and Wilf Stark was to busy with work and his Eureka Ultralight to come along.

We planned a 3 day trip, one airplane and one ground support vehicle. Medicine Hat Monday morning with sightseeing in the afternoon and evening, day trips on Tuesday, returning to Calgary via Empress Wednesday evening. Distance traveled, not including sightseeing trips from Medicine Hat was estimated at just over 400 miles. Starting with full fuel and 400 lbs of crew we anticipated a fuel consumption of 27 litres per hour. This provides an absolute maximum flight time of 2 hr. 15 minutes. We always plan on a maximum of 1 hr. 45 minutes. Fuel consumption with one person on board drops to 17 litres per hour and a flying time of 3.5 hours. For some strange reason fuel consumption on every leg of this trip was 20 gph or less. This improvement extends our safe flying time at gross weight to 2.5 hours.

Barry and Don flew the first 85 miles to Brooks, then Don and I the 70 miles to Medicine Hat. Medicine Hat Radio is very friendly and helpful, a delightful change from the "wanabe air traffic controllers", we encounter at Red Deer. The approach and landing into Medicine

Hat's aerodrome, busy with Air Canada, Canadian and a lot of mid sized turbo prop commuter aircraft, was uneventful. Upon Landing we headed to the tower where friendly Flight Service personnel provided advice on what to see in the area, and how to view the Sand Hills and spectacular South Saskatchewan River Valley while avoiding interception by the British Air force as we pushed the edge of the Suffield Military Reserve. They also suggested we tie the Rans down securely and give up flying for the day as a weather update forecast strong winds and thunderstorms. After securing the aircraft we spent an enjoyable and interesting afternoon touring local attractions. Just after finding a place to stay, Wilf called, he was in Medicine Hat on business. He met us for dinner. The evening was clear and calm, no sign of the wind and thunderstorms previously predicted. The weather remained fine throughout the evening. Since we had all had a drink with our meal we could not go flying that evening, too bad.

We were at the airport by 0645 the next morning and made two previously planned trips over the Cypress Hills. One trip was over and around the town and lake of Elkwater. To clear the 4800 ft. elevation of Elkwater from Medicine Hat's 2580 feet, after reaching circuit altitude I continued a climb of about 100 fpm. This put me at about 5500 feet as I passed over the top of the Cypress Hills.

The scenery is spectacular, first over desert like prairie, the heavily forested north face of the hills south of Elkwater then Elkwater lake near the Maximum elevation of the Cypress hills. I wondered where the pristine lake water came from. There is a large flat clearing and runway at the top of the cypress hills. Being unsure of the rules we chose not to land in the park we later learned large numbers of wild turkey inhabit the clearing and runway area. The area south of the clearing is heavily forested, then the land is clear as it drops about 1000 feet. A number of deer and other large animals graze and sun themselves on this sunny leeward slope.

Barry and I ate lunch at the terminal while Don took one of Wilf's customers (an ex pilot who had lost his license due to medical reasons) for a trip around Medicine Hat. After lunch Barry and Don flew along the edge of the Suffield weapons range then up the South Saskatchewan to Empress. There was no military activity in the area, and the small City the British build and destroy every year was still intact. After passing the Suffield Range Barry and Don did some sightseeing over the sand hills then dropped down into the Saskatchewan River valley. They followed the valley all the way to the confluence of the Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers. Recounting the trip through the Valley, *(continued on page 6)*

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Cypress - continued from page 5

Don remarked that he ran into the perfect chance to fly under a power line but discretion told him to climb up out of the Valley and fly over it. Looking down as he flew over he noticed a suspended cable pipeline crossing a few hundred yards past the power line.

After securing the aircraft at 1400 hrs. we headed into Empress. We toured the ghost town, craft and art stores and socialized with many of the town's 160 inhabitants. Most had stories of Barry's parents and grandparents, Barry had a great time revisiting his roots. There is a great full-service campground in Empress, but at 6 PM we made the decision to take a long route home through Hanna and Drumheller.

The 95 mile Hanna trip into a headwind took about one and three quarter hours. The terrain between Empress and Hanna is totally uninhabited. Although largely virgin land it is spectacular to view from the air. One sees miles of untouched streams, sloughs, brush, bush and native prairie grass. In the event of an emergency landing, my concern was not where to land, but rather, what to do afterwards.. Don and I decided that in the event of a forced landing the only option would be to walk the 20 miles due north to Highway nine. As we approached Hanna, navigator Don pointed out a large lake and suggested I head for it as Hanna was on the east edge of the lake. According to other landmarks and a huge structure on the lakefront I suggested it was probably a cooling lake at the edge of a coal fired power plant. Later we learned it was the Sheerness coal powered Power Plant. The straightness of the twenty mile long pile of strip mining overburden should have made us twig to the fact glacial moraine just isn't deposited in that straight a line.

Hanna was exactly where the GPS said it should be. We tied down at Hanna, spent some time with a "Miranda" owner then went into town for supper. Hanna is booming, at 7 PM on a Tuesday evening we had a hard time finding a seat at one of the many new hotels or restaurants in

town. After a great meal we headed back to the airport where we spent the night.

Don and I left Hanna for Drumheller at 8:00 AM the next morning. Approximately 20 miles on the Hanna/Drumheller route are the Hand Hills. They are about 1000 feet above Hanna's 2740' elevation. This poses no problem, but directly en route is a 600 ft. tower. Just south and east of the 600 footer is another 300 ft. tower. The 600 ft. tower is well lit, but we could not find the 300 foot tower so I climbed to 5200 feet, well above both towers. We eventually saw the smaller tower, it is unlit. Not a very good situation. An unwary pilot might go south around, instead of over the tall tower and smack

Although I have flown to and over the Drumheller Valley more than all other destinations I have flown, it was great to again tour the familiar and unfamiliar sights. As we descended toward the airport and over "Trumble's Coulee" I remarked on how great the scenery was. It was then that Don remarked "Of all the flying I have ever done, the most enjoyable flying has been in this airplane." (Don is an Air Transport Pilot with time in everything from the Snowbirds Tudor Jets to Heavy Transports.)

Don and Barry flew the last leg from Drumheller to Calgary. →



Pete Wegerich's Cuby at Glen's fly-in. Photo by Brian Vasseru.

into the smaller unlit tower.



Dan Pandur flew his Titan from St. Albert to Glen's fly-in.

Surviving Your First Flight

by Brian Vasseur

The best approach when flying any airplane for the first time is to plan like the test pilots do. This applies whether it's a brand new design or a pre-owned aircraft the previous owner had no problems with. Even if that model is known to be a good performer it doesn't mean that you're prepared to fly it safely. Put a mission plan together that covers off everything from takeoff to the flight to the landing. If the plane doesn't meet the expectations laid out in the mission plan then abort the mission and come up with a new plan. Here's an high level example of what your plan should contain. Obviously your plan should go into a lot more detail but it should encompass all the points below.

1. What is the scope of the mission. At a high level this might be takeoff, handling in the air, stalls to calibrate the airspeed indicator, 2 touch and goes, then a full stop landing. Starting with a circuit may not be the best idea because now you're trying to land an airplane that you haven't really learned to fly yet. Get some air time to get familiar with the airplane before you start attacking the ground.

2. Are you going to do a full flight first or are you going to crowhop. Be prepared, crowhops and high speed taxi testing often lead to unexpected flight so if you pull the airplane onto the runway you must be prepared if you find yourself airborne unexpectedly. I'm personally biased against crow hopping because it doesn't give you altitude to recover. If you are going to crowhop stay over a hard surface, you're more likely to become injured if you crash on soft ground (i.e. a plowed field) than on a paved surface. NASA did some testing on this in the 70's and found that pavement allowed a forward deceleration, while soft surfaces caused instant stopping inflicting significantly more damage to the occupants and aircraft.

3. How much runway will you allow yourself for the takeoff, and how much before you reach 200 feet. Set some orange cones on the runway at your abort points such as 600' for takeoff and 1000' for 200 feet of altitude. If you haven't met your goal by the time you reach the cones then abort and rethink your plan. What does your plan say about engine failure, or less than full power, or temperatures that aren't in the green. A review of the homebuilt accidents listed in the NTSB database showed that a significant number of these were caused by engine failure or engine performance problems during the first flight.

4. After takeoff get some altitude, 1000 feet or more so that you can get a feel for the controls. Check your airspeed indicator against your GPS to see how close it is. Slow the airplane down and get a feel for the controls as you lose airspeed. Now is not the time to wring out the aircraft, save that for another day. Just get comfortable with the airplane and learn to make it feel instinctive.

5. Include some power on and power off stalls in your plan. This will tell you how your airplane will handle when it comes time to land. What does the airspeed indicator say when it stalls. (You'll need to know this when it comes time to land). How does it compare to the GPS.

6. What kind of stall warning do you get. In the EZ-Flyer the tail starts to shake as you get close to a stall and it mushes slowly away. Unless you come at it at a steep angle in which case it breaks suddenly and feels like it points straight down before it recovers. The airplane recovers in about 2 seconds losing 200 feet, the pilot usually recovers in 4 seconds after losing his lunch the first time this happens. Other aircraft I've done this in are even less forgiving and have shaken me up pretty good. Steep stalls are exactly the situation you might get into after takeoff if you catch a gust of wind unexpectedly so do some to get the fear factor out of your system.

7. Power on touch and go's give you a good chance to evaluate the approach and get a feel for what to expect from a landing. If you get behind the airplane then go around,

relax and try again. If after three tries you don't have it worked out then break it off for awhile, relax, rethink the situation and when you're ready head back into the circuit and try again. Don't keep pushing it, pressure forces you to make bad decisions and you need to avoid getting trapped in a self induced drive to get it done.

8. Now the landing. You've done successful touch and go's and now the landing is just more of the same. Once you've had your successful landing it's time to quit, park the plane and then evaluate how the actual flight went in comparison to the mission. The next time you fly this airplane you'll know what it's supposed to do at takeoff, what it will feel like if it does something unexpected and the experience you've gained will help ensure that every flight after this one is a safe one. Sometimes we feel a little invulnerable in a small plane that doesn't go very fast, but remember that on soft ground a plane will nose over at even 5 mph. Those who have done this in a high wing airplane will tell you how glad they were for that extra support over their heads. Fewer pilots in the low winged planes can tell you the same story.

Sometimes you have an engine failure you couldn't prevent and you have nowhere but a soft field to land in, which damages your airplane. The rest of the time you'll find that even a little planning ahead of time can prevent an inconvenience like an engine failure or weather from becoming an accident or an injury. →

Saturday, July 15
Kirkby's Annual fly-
in breakfast
8:30 - 12:00

Nobody's Flying School

Come in, come in, and welcome to Nobody's Flying School. In today's session, we're going to go back to the dark ages of our sport—back to the days when Nobody thought twice about trimming a stabilizer with cable twists or carrying fuel in a bleach bottle.

Here's a little tale from Nobody's past, a true story about one of the places where Nobody went to flying school. When I listen closely to my own experience, I can still hear "The Rainbow's Roar".

It was one of those August air-shows the Tynytown Lion's Club Annual Air Affair, or some such hoopla afoot. The mix of aviating contraptions was enough to defy any singular description.

Gyrocopters, P-51s and the "new fangled" ultralights all competed for citizens' attention. Mayor Fogbottom gestured and sprayed his oratory upon those of the crowd unwise enough to seek the shade of his girth.

Standing by a sleek, red ultralight, I watched the people come and go. Middle-aged men were stopping; most were jerked back to motion by a wife or girlfriend.

But one girl, dressed in not much more than blue shorts, walked up boldly, stared in my eyes and challenged: "Are you going to fly that thing?" The cute little babe had my complete attention. "Maybe," I said. "Maybe later." Actually, I was looking hard for an excuse not to fly. Something just didn't feel right.

I whispered to myself as I watched her walk slowly away: *good-bye, judgment.*

We used to attend a lot of these little air-shows; they're the rural "summer stock" of aerial show business. And we introduced a lot of "regular" people to ultralights, people who had shown no prior inclination to exhibit the kind of behavior which drives someone to fly an ultralight.

There's a big difference between curious people and serious shoppers. I guess I could have walked away from that show; probably without losing one sale.

Such rational thought was truly winning ground when I looked up to see a familiar pair of blue shorts, floating through the crowd at a distance. Gulp!

As the windsock whipped from pole to magnetic pole, the warbirds and other "heavies" thundered hundreds of miles an

up, the crowd has turned to watch me and I'm all set to dazzle 'em. But do I believe what the major is saying?

"We're going to clear the sky," he had said. I was watching the Mustang's slow, dirty approach, imagining the hurricane which must surely follow in its wake. The sky may never clear, I thought.

Our little ultralights have their own definition of rough air. But to the crowd, it was just another "alleged" flying machine. If it can't fly on such a beautiful day, they will ask, then when will it fly?

I'd rather croak than answer that question again, I argued with myself. Then I caught the cute little babe's eye. End of argument.

So I mounted the noisy machine and taxied out to my promised grass runway.

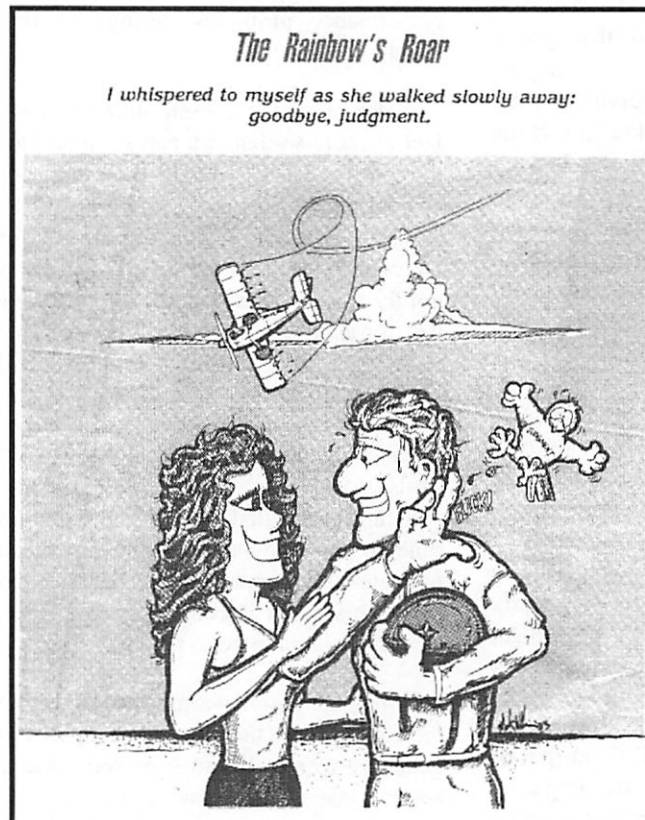
It wasn't necessarily too windy to fly; I had flown the same type machine in worse conditions. And it wasn't necessarily too crowded in the sky. Then why was I nagging myself to death?

There was just something telling me to watch out. An uneasy kind of premonition about the place. My inner voice was insistent: *don't fly it.*

I looked over at the announcer's stand to see the major waving me on. I could tell by the attention of the crowd that I had been announced — in fact promised — to the audience, some of whom did not believe my contraption could fly.

Oh well, I remember thinking. The show must go on.

(Continued on page 9)



hour down the runway. Major general Mufti (retired) waved me over to his position below the announcer's box. As I walked over to him, I kept one eye on the ultralight. It seemed about to blow away.

"The next five minutes are yours," he said. "We're going to clear the sky. Get ready, and launch as soon as the Mustang lands."

Now, boys and girls, can you spot the danger in the conversation I just described? They're getting ready to announce my show, the curtain is going

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But after about 20 feet of a normal ground roll, my instincts caught up with the moment. "Stop!" my instincts cried. And I stopped.

Imagine the full house at Carnegie Hall; all eyes on you, the fanfare fades, you take a deep breath and burst upon the stage. Then you stop dead in your tracks, drop your jaw to the floor, and scream at yourself: "What are you stopping for? You turkey!"

There I sat, without an apparent excuse for stopping, feeling small enough to hide inside my helmet.

Then whoosh! Up from behind, a fully-laden cropduster blasted directly overhead—not 10 feet up —dumped the water he was using to simulate his

spraying routine, and peeled off for a quick 180-degree reversal. The ultralight and I surged ahead, nearly airborne in the maelstrom of his wake.

As he began the dive to his next pass, he must have finally discovered my presence on the grass runway. I'm sure he was cussing as loudly as I was. But he wasn't soaking wet.

Obviously, he had not gotten the word about me, nor I about him. At least, not officially. But in that moment, we knew of one another. And as that sheet of water spray settled to earth amid its own private rainbow, I developed a lasting fear of crowds — and the things a crowd might encourage me to do.

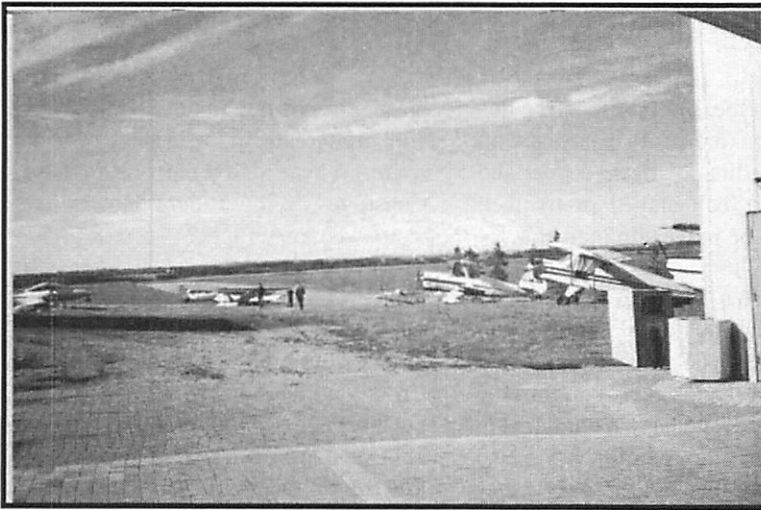
SUMMARY

Don't let the silent pressure of observers

push you into something you are too wise to tackle under other conditions. The temptation can be great, especially when honor, or even sales, may be at stake.

Ask yourself:

- * Would I choose to fly under these conditions, just for fun?
- * Is anything on my craft untested?
- * Can I expect better conditions if I wait?
- * Would I trust this crowd with first aid?
- * After I take off, aren't they just going to gossip about me anyway?
- * Is ET going to bring his mothership in for an oil change while I'm trying to fly my routine?
- * Can I still exercise good judgment, even while suffering from terminal Polanski-itis?
- * Is there anything which can't go wrong while the crowd looks on?



The flight line at Glen Bishell's fly-in on June 17. Photo by Andy Gustafsson.



The late Jack Barlass's Cobra at Glen's Fly-in. Photo by Andy Gustafsson.

Hooked on Tail Draggers

by Andy Gustafsson

I have been exposed to the world of tail draggers. For years I have thought that this kind of flying was only for a select few. Yes, those special cool pilots with ice-water in their veins. Pilots that could keep their tongues straight in their mouths and not lose their composure on final. I have on occasion flown in these nostalgic flying machines, a Cessna 180, a Fleet Canuck, a Piper Cub back in Sweden in the 60s, and even a Stinson on Christmas Eve 1997 in Outlook Saskatchewan, to name a few. We have a number of 'dragers in the club, mostly 'Mini Maxes and Hi Maxes. Once airborne the flying skills are not that difficult to master, but with more than 350 hours of airtime I have never tried to take off or land one of these tail steering birds.

I have been looking lately for an airplane that can cruise around 90-100 mph and be rugged enough for both floats and skis, yet have that short and rough field capability. I was aware that Wayne Winters and his team at Blue Yonder Aviation were building what they call an EZ Merlin, a refined copy of the now defunct Macair Merlin out of Ontario. Wayne had heard of my interest in tail draggers and he invited me for a ride in his recently completed EZ Merlin aircraft. This latest copy has a white paint job with yellow and blue trim



Andy landing his Challenger II at Glen's fly-in.

inside and out. It has a wide stance and wide doors for easy entry. The 582 Rotax is the standard powerplant. Wayne took the Merlin off the grass strip at Indus airport for me and then handed the controls over. The aircraft is roomy and solid. It is overbuilt in key areas and therefore, the strength of the airframe is not an issue. Just look at the size of the tubing. It has the feel of a heavy aircraft. The control pressures however, are very light and responsive. The Junkers-type ailerons are very effective. With full fuel and two mature pilots the Merlin flew as steady as one can wish for in the increasing midday



Blue Yonder's EZ Merlin and E-Z Flyer at Glen Bishell's fly-in. Photo by Brian Vasseur.

turbulence. You feel pretty safe flying this aircraft. The turns are easily executed with only slight co-ordination of the rudder and aileron, and the ball stayed pretty well where it should be in the slip indicator.

Visibility could be better in the turns. A larger skylight could be installed to broaden the view. The center-mounted stick feels comfortable and has a natural feel in the Merlin. It also makes for easy entry and exit. I am right handed when I fly so the left seat is natural. Final approach is standard but the test came by the time the flare was started. As soon as the tail-wheel touches the ground the dance should start, or so I thought. Touchy rudder work is not new to me so I was ready,

With Wayne screaming instructions in my right ear, (we had no intercom) I easily managed to stay on the runway. He yelled "Lets go again" so I fire-walled the throttle and "Off we go" again.

I almost immediately got the hang of the toe dance on the rudder and we roared skyward again, climbing out at 50 mph. On the next landing I was ready and Wayne did not have to yell as much. He said that I nailed the landing (nice of him) and with the aircraft tracking straight down runway 34 we slowed for the turnout to the hangar area. The EZ-Merlin that I tested is not a

"fast" aircraft but an aircraft that you can feel pretty safe in with a lot of room to spare. Wayne delivered one to the East Coast, yes, flying it there. How is that for a cross-country flight?

I have gotten the tail dragger bug partly thanks to Wayne. I still need lots of practice but I do understand the principle. Crosswind landings could be a challenge, but I was always up to new challenges. I believe that tail-draggers are not for the low time pilot, as they are more "finicky" on the landing-run. The pilot has to stay ahead of the airplane even more so than in other types of aircraft. Well, it was a nice experience and I will certainly try this type of aircraft again. Like the saying goes: "So many airplanes, so little time."

Lets be careful up there. →