



# Skywriter



Monthly newsletter of the Calgary Ultralight Flying Club - COPA Flight 114

## June 2004

### From The Cockpit

by Dave Procyshen

Now that we have completed a century of powered flight the time has come to start the flight of the 2nd century of dreams and reality.

Burt Rutan's SpaceShipOne flew again on Thursday May 13th 2004, this time reaching an altitude of 212,000 feet in its third powered flight test to date.

This flight marks an additional milestone for Paul G. Allen, Burt Rutan and the innovative aerospace design team in their ongoing efforts to complete the first non-government manned space flight. The

test is part of Scaled Composites' Tier One program, funded by Allen, Microsoft co-founder and CEO of Vulcan Inc.

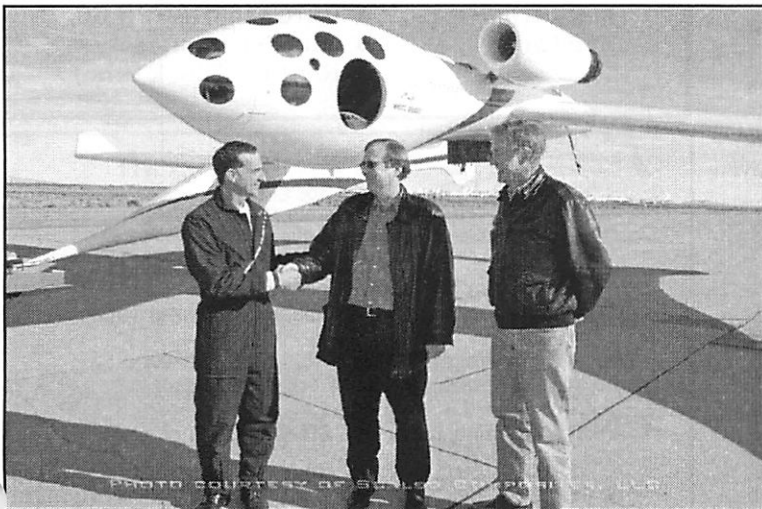
"The SpaceShipOne team will announce the results of this test flight once it has completed an analysis of the data. The future's looking up ... way up!", said Rutan.

Scaled is vying for the newly-renamed Ansari X-Prize, a \$10 million reward for being the first company to fly three people 60 miles into suborbital space.

Twenty-seven teams are competing for the prize. There is also a Canadian team that is going to use Kindersley Saskatchewan as a base for the X Prize launch. →



Carl Forman is back in the air, pictured here after the first flight in his rebuilt MiniMax. Photo by Bob Kirkby.



Congratulations are in order for Paul Allen, centre, and Burt Rutan, right, standing in front of their launch vehicle, White Knight.

## CUFC Annual Fly-in Breakfast

This year the annual club fly-in breakfast will be earlier than normal - June 27<sup>th</sup>.

COPA President Kevin Psutka will be in attendance to meet everyone.

**Date: Sunday, June 27**

**Place: Chestermere-Kirkby Field**

**Time: 8:30 am to 11:30 am**

Breakfast will be served rain or shine.

Contact Dave Procyshen for more info and to volunteer to help: 257-8064.

# For Sale

**Murphy Renegade Spirit** - S/N50, less than 100 hours on airframe, built under amateur built category and later changed to basic ultralight and modified to single seat. 18 imp gals fuel, full instruments, ELT, Icom A5. New Rotax 582 DCDI MOD 99, less than 10 hours, electric start, 2.58:1 "B" gearbox, 2-blade 74-34 Tennessee prop, \$26,500. Bernie Kespe 403-255-7419, office 403-259-5498 Ext 233, email [bernie.raymac@shaw.ca](mailto:bernie.raymac@shaw.ca) (0504)

**Cavalier** - 2 place side by side, zero time O-290-D2, low wing, tip tanks, 80% complete, selling due to health, \$18,000. John Ehrmantraut 256-7530 (04/04)

**Engine** - Arrow 500 GT, 65hp, 2 cylinder, horizontally opposed, 93 hrs, \$1200. Peter Wegerich, 403-862-7148, email [wegericp@telusplanet.net](mailto:wegericp@telusplanet.net) (02/04)

**Cuby II** - 2-place, side-by-side, 65hp MZ202, low time. Beautiful yellow airplane I need money for my next project, \$19,000. Peter Wegerich, 403-862-7148, email [wegericp@telusplanet.net](mailto:wegericp@telusplanet.net) (02/04)

**Phantom One** - 1982, 135TT airframe and engine, flies weekly, \$4,200 OBO. Dick Rankin 403-286-5735 (11/03)

**Avid Aerobat** - Advanced Ultralight, 102 hours since rebuild completed in January 2003, new Rotax 582 engine 3:1, Powerfin 2-blade 74" prop, new VFR instruments, new interior, new fabric and paint (red and yellow), wings rib-laced, new wide stance gear, new double tail spring with Matco tailwheel, tricycle gear option included, new cowling with twin rads, folding wings provide easy storage in garage, cabin heat, all maintenance logs up to date, cruise 95 to 100 mph, \$24,900.00, Troy, (403) 936-8424 or email for pictures [brancht@tseesteel.com](mailto:brancht@tseesteel.com) (10/03)

*Notice: Classified ads are free to CUFC members. Contact Bob Kirkby to place or renew your ad (see masthead). Ads will be dropped after 6 months unless renewed.*

## Ads reprinted from the St. Albert Flying Club Newsletter

**Team MiniMax** - blue & white, Rotax 447 with electric starter, drycell battery, 35 US gal tank, speed fairings on wing struts, wired for radio (power, PTT and antenna), skis, 185 TT, hangedared at St. Albert, \$10,000 OBO. Ben Strafford 780-458-1606 or [larandbe@telus.net](mailto:larandbe@telus.net)

**Modified Himax partially complete** - fuselage 65% complete, empennage complete ready to cover, spars/ribs built, sufficient material to complete wings. Volkswagen engine with Colin Walker prop. Complete set of instruments. Excellent bargain for knowledgeable builder, \$3000. Viv Branson 780-460-8753 or email [vbranson@interbaun.com](mailto:vbranson@interbaun.com).

**1998 Folgore ST** - highwing taildragger, side-by-side 2 place, Rotax 912, 200TT, flaps, stalls at 38 mph, cruises 85 - 90, 1200 lb gross. Amateur built category but can be flown with U/L permit. Heated, full instrumentation, ELT, radio, nav lights, skis, 17 gal tank, 4.5 hr range, 25 lb baggage compartment, Red and yellow, in excellent condition, \$28,000 OBO. Rob 780-720-5597 or 780-476-9312.

**Team Airbike plans** - complete set, manuals, excellent condition, \$200 including shipping, OBO. Reg Lukasiak 780-459-0813.

**Puddle jumper amphibious floats** - used, \$2500. Dan Pandur 780-418-4159.

**Gas tank** - plastic, US Coast Guard approved, 11.5 US gals., new in box, \$75. Ron Swan 780-477-6112.

## Skywriter

Skywriter is the official newsletter of the Calgary Ultralight Flying Club - COPA Flight 114 and is published 12 times per year. Forward your articles and letters to:

Editor: Bob Kirkby 569-9541  
e-mail: [bob@skywalker.ca](mailto:bob@skywalker.ca)

## Calgary Ultralight Flying Club COPA Flight 114

Meetings 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, Calgary.

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## Little Known Plans-Built Designs: Wag-A-Bond

by Ken Beanlands

This is the fourth in the series of articles looking at little known or forgotten scratch-built aircraft suitable for BULA registration. This month we will be looking at Wag-Aero's Wag-A-Bond.

### History

As most folks know, the Wag-A-Bond is a direct descendant of the Piper PA-15/17 Vagabond. The original Piper aircraft has been described as the plane that saved Piper. After the war, when it became obvious that the expected boom in light aircraft did not happen, Piper's largest creditor sent in a "trouble-shooter" to try and salvage the company. Almost immediately, over 2000 employees were laid off bringing the total workforce to only 157. He then tasked the engineers to come up with an inexpensive, side-by-side plane that could use the large stock-pile of J-3 parts in inventory.

It took about 2 months to come back with the PA-15 Vagabond and less than a year to certify. Piper engineers had already looked at a short-wing J-3 by cutting 3' off the inboard of each wing (this later became a common modification for J-3's, but not from Piper). The new aircraft had a span of less than 30' and nearly full span ailerons. Cost cutting was paramount in its design. Mild steel tubing was extensively used and the less expensive Lycoming O-145 was hung on the nose to save on shipping costs as the Lycoming plant was much closer. The landing gear was rigid with the balloon tires providing the only shock protection. The panel had the bare minimum FAA required gauges and the cabin had but one door and control system. There are virtually no stringers (except for a short one behind the door on each side) and even the customary J-3 "go-faster" stripe was considered to be too expensive.

The next model year (all PA-15's were built in 1948) saw the introduction of the

PA-17 which included such luxuries as a rear window behind the door, bungee shock cords, dual controls, optional left-side door and, most importantly, the more powerful Continental A-65. Only 387 PA-15's and 214 PA-17's were built but the short-wing design was to spawn a number new designs such as the PA-16 Clipper, PA-20 Pacer and PA-22 Tri-Pacer and the plane did indeed save the company.

### Wag-Aero

Fast forward to the '70s and we find Wag-Aero. This "Princess Auto" of the aviation world is well known for stocking numerous NOS parts for classic aircraft. The business was built on buying bulk lots of aircraft parts from manufacturers and supply houses and selling them back to the public. One example was the thousands of new Spitfire attitude gyros purchased at auction, still available for \$44.58 USD and fully functioning (granted, they probably weigh more than a Rotax 503!) One lot included a large number of Piper Cub parts. This led them to design the Sport Trainer J-3 Cub replica, Sportsman 2+2 PA-14 replica and the Wag-A-Bond.

Not content with the original design, the Wag-A-Bond incorporates some of the best features from numerous Piper designs as well as some of their own innovations. One such change was the addition of a sleeping surface behind the 2 front seats. They also added an electrical system and expanded the available power plants to include all the 4-cylinder Continentals (well, except for the A-50) and the Lycoming O-235. The plans also have full dual controls (the elevator system is pretty much redundant all the way back with the design that's used) and 2 doors. The gross weight was lifted to 1450 lbs with the larger engines.

### Kits and Plans

Wag-Aero provides numerous kits and parts for the plane including full wood rib and spar wing kits, metal spar and rib kits,



*The classic Piper Vagabond.*

fuselage material up to fully welded fuselages, tail kits, landing gear kits, fuel tank kits, etc. Although they don't sell a "complete kit", I do believe that nearly every component can be purchased from their catalog and at reasonable prices. If you were to buy everything firewall back as complete as possible, the price would come in around the \$25K USD mark complete with covering. If you're prepared to weld, and build your own wooden wings, that price drops significantly to \$10K-\$12K USD.

The option I like would be to buy the aluminum wing spar and rib kit, the aluminum aileron material kit and the dual wing tank (26 gallon total) with the 2 gallon header tank. The rest of the plane would be built from scratch. The firewall back price would probably come in at around \$15K USD (\$6,150 in the 3 wing kits. This would provide for a relatively quick build time and a very light structure. In general, a good compromise of cost, build time and performance.

Wag-Aero markets the Wag-A-Bond in 2 models, the Classic and the Traveler. The Classic is a fairly faithful reproduction of the original PA-17 with the optional left side door and is designed for the A-65 through O-200 (without electrics) engines and has a gross weight of 1250 lbs. The Traveler is designed around the O-235 with electrics and has a gross of 1450 lbs. The main difference is the power available and (*continued on page 4*)

Wag-a-bond - continued from page 3

the space and the length of the cowl with the Classic having the shorter, original Vagabond cowls. The Classic has a single 12 gallon nose tank and the Traveler has a pair of 12 gallon wing tanks and a 2 gallon header. In talking with the Wag-Aero folks, an O-200 with electrics would normally be built as a Traveler and have a 1450 lb gross weight.

Plans are available for \$85.00 USD and probably represent the best deal in plans anywhere. The plans are well drawn and include numerous photos and building notes utilizing the back of the drawing sheets. I have found a few places where the material dimensions are missing, but nothing that couldn't be clarified on the mailing list. Some parts are definitely drawn with the intention that the builder by the parts from Wag-Aero (like the strut fittings in the wings). The only tedious part would seem to be building the "birdcage" on top of the cabin.

**Performance**

A lot of folks assume that the Vagabond/Wag-A-Bond will perform the same as a J-3 on the same engine. Although I've never flown one, the flight reports I've read indicate that the Vagabond is a better cruising airplane (90-95 mph cruise on an A-65) but does not have the climb and short field capabilities that the Cub has. The Vagabonds are also quite a bit more responsive ("fun"?) to fly due to the full span ailerons and the short coupled fuselage.

Another benefit of the Vagabond, especially when flying solo, is the greater visibility it has over the nose when landing or taking off (especially considering that the J3 is solo'd from the rear).

Finally, the short wings and smaller wing area make for a fairly steep approach without the need for flaps. Even without flaps, the stall speed is listed at a docile 45 mph.

From my discussions with Al Botting,

this seems to be a true assessment of the plane. However, with the small 65 hp engine and our higher elevations, you should really choose your passengers well.

**Ultralight Considerations**

There's not a whole lot to change on the Wag-A-Bond Classic with respect to Ultralight eligibility although the Traveler would be too heavy. Limiting the gross weight to 1200 lbs would not be difficult although you would have to be diligent in the weight control area. Removing the left side door and the rear quarter windows would be a good start as well as replacing the heavy galvanized firewall with a thinner stainless steel one.

If the plan is for a single place aircraft with occasional passenger capabilities then even an A-65 or Rotax 582 would be suitable. Given the cost for a good used A-65, this may be a very good option. I've seen them go for as little as \$1500 for a serviceable one with \$3000-\$5000 being more the norm. For training or passenger carrying, I'd look to the Rotax 912 or 912S or possibly a non-electric C-85 to O-200 Continental.

**Conclusions**

Even over a half century later, the original design criteria are still valid today: inexpensive, 2-place side-by-side, simple construction, attractive looks and easy to fly. This is basically one the simplest certificated plane to be designed and its appeal still holds true today.

**Specifications**

Wag-A-Bond	Classic	Traveler
Span	29.3'	29.3'
Length	18.7'	19'
Height	6'	6'
Engine, hp	65-100	108-115
Fuel capacity, US gal	12	26
Empty Weight, lbs	625-700	700-800
Useful load, lbs	625-550	750-650
Gross weight, lbs	1250	1450
Wing area, sq ft	147.5	147.5



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Maximum cabin width	39.25"	39.25"
Headroom	39"	39"
Seats	2	2

**Performance**

Wag-A-Bond	Classic	Traveler
Wing loading, lb/sq ft	8.5	9.8
Power loading, lb/hp	19.2-12.5	13.4-12.6
Stall speed, mph	45	45
Max speed, mph	105	136
Cruise speed, mph	95	120
Baggage capacity, lbs	40	60
Rate of climb, fpm	625	850

For more information, contact:

The Wag- Aero Group  
1216 North Road  
Lyons, Wisconsin 53148  
Phone: 262-763-9586  
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## Joe Pilot

by Brian Vasseur

Everything I've done so far has been leading up to this moment; the flight test. I've got the minimum 35 hours now and I think I know how to fly so there's really no excuses. I've booked the flight for a Monday morning so that I have the weekend to get some extra flights in. If you've read my previous articles you know that I don't cope well with rough weather so I'm hoping Monday is a good day.

Things got off to a bad start when I went to take the plane out on the weekend to practice. I had booked the 172R which is the plane I had a handbook for and which I am a little more comfortable in. Looking through the logbook I find that there's only 0.2 hours left before an AD is due. The mechanics have gone for the weekend so this airplane is grounded. It also means that this plane won't be available for me on Monday morning for my flight test.

With the help of the dispatchers we do a bit of juggling and they reserve the 172S for me on Monday morning for the flight test. The two airplanes fly the same and have the same cockpit but the 172S has a different prop and engine. This means I now have to memorize a completely new set of performance numbers and the power settings I was familiar with are different. I had known exactly what RPM I needed for tight turns, approach speeds and the other maneuvers so now I would have to put a new plan together.

The dispatchers were really helpful and got me a few hours on Saturday in the 172S to practice on. I was able to get through all the flight test items and write down the performance numbers but it didn't leave me enough time to repeatedly practice anything. For someone who has more hours in the Cessna's a minor difference like this wouldn't mean much, but for me it meant that I wasn't flying with the same level of precision as I was in the 172R.

At this point I'm still two days away from the test and I'm feeling pretty good.


Sunday, it's only one day away from the test and I'm still feeling confident but the anxiousness is starting to build. On Monday morning I still felt pretty good, at least until I got to the airport.

My plan today had been to get there before opening and pre-flight the airplane, then do up my flight plan with the latest weather and the correct POH as soon as the office opened. Unfortunately the airplane was inside and out of gas, so this took up time that I wanted to use doing my flight plan.

For flight planning I have an ASA electronic flight computer which is pre-programmed with all the required functions. It makes doing a flight plan almost trivial. I got all the weather details and the weight and balance numbers done. I had just started entering crosswind calculations when the display blanked completely. No Panic, I have spare batteries...Ok, Panic, the new batteries aren't working either. At this point my only option is to go back to the manual E6B to finish the plan and this is painful. I haven't used this thing since ground school and I'm drawing almost a complete blank as I struggle to finish the calculations.

Just to add to my stress, the examiner just showed up and he's early. I hurry and finish up what I'm doing but now I'm feeling rattled and there's no hint of the confidence I had a few days ago. He started with the Oral exam which took about an hour. I did extremely well on my written exam so I had expected this would go as well, but I drew a blank when he asked me if you could get a cab in Drumheller. I knew to look it up in the CFS, but completely forgot what it was I was looking for. In any case I got through the rest of the items well enough that I could go on to the flight test.

Now I have about 20 minutes to relax and get the plane ready. I did try and relax but I was worried about how I'd be able to figure out the enroute flight plan information using



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only the slide rule. I put it out of my mind for a minute and focused on just the next steps. Ten minutes later I'm out of Calgary and on course and I notice he's marked my departure procedures 5 out of 5. I'm feeling better, and as I get to my first waypoint the clock says exactly 10 minutes so I was able to do the enroute calculations in my head. It was a bit windy but not too bad so I did begin to feel things were improving.

The first routines we did were stalls, steep turns and instrument flight under the hood. These weren't too bad at first but the few minutes under the hood after the unusual attitudes got me quite disoriented. Now I'm queasy, I've got the vents wide open and I'm checking to make sure my airsick bag is still in my shirt pocket. Next was the diversions, forced and precautionary approaches and onto landings at Beiseker.

Beiseker is a familiar airport for me, but the windsock has long since blown away so all I have for reference is a couple of the tiny hangar windsocks that only indicate a direct crosswind of some kind. I did a normal circuit and got lined up with half flaps but it was difficult to keep everything lined up and stay focused. I'm feeling really lousy now and hoping we can just finish up and get home. The landing itself was OK but the approach was weak so I lost a few points. All I have to do is to get back to Calgary and do a soft field landing, which to me meant that I only had 15 more minutes in the plane, in what seemed to be much rougher conditions than when I started.

The landing in Calgary started off bad  
*(continued on page 6)*

# Flying Events

**June 5** - Linden sports day and fly-in breakfast. Breakfast served 7:00am to 9:30am. Contact Dennis Wickersham 403-546-4306.

**June 6** - Lacombe annual fly-in breakfast, 0700 to 1300. Members of the CUFC have specifically been invited to attend. Contact Penny Nielsen 403-782-3320.

**June 12** - Lethbridge annual fly-in breakfast and Young Eagles event, 8:00am to noon. Contact Joe Harrington 403-381-0574.

**June 12-13** - Hinton annual fly-in barbeque and camping Saturday and fly-in breakfast on Sunday. Contact Doug Liske 780-817-1450.

**June 12-13** - COPA Flt 107 Swift Current, Regional Fly-in. Starts at noon Saturday with lunch then afternoon events and evening BBQ with special guest Kevin Psutka, President and CEO of COPA. Overnight camping available and pancake breakfast on Sunday. Contact Jeff Kurtz 306-773-3299 if you're coming.

**June 13** - Innisfail annual fly-in breakfast, 0700 to 1100. Contact Herluf Nielson 403-728-3457.

**June 19** - Annual Bishell fly-in at Carstairs-Bishell, smokeys and beans, 8:00am to noon. Contact Glen Bishell 403-337-2564.

**June 19-20** - Calgary Aviation Days at the Calgary International Airport.

**June 27** - CUFC/COPA Flt 114 fly-in breakfast, 8:30 am to 11:30 am at Chestermere-Kirkby Field, special guest will be Kevin Psutka, President and CEO of COPA. Contact Dave Procyshen 403-257-8064.

**June 26-27** - Welding workshop hosted by RAA Calgary at Don Mueller's farm airstrip located half way between Three Hills and Drumheller. For details contact Paul Swift at 403-686-7430 or

pswift@shaw.ca.

**July 10** - Annual Chestermere-Kirkby Field fly-in breakfast. 8:30 am to Noon. Contact Bob Kirkby 569-9541.

**July 16-18** - Annual COPA Convention and AGM in Fredericton, NB. Info: [www.copanational.org](http://www.copanational.org)

**July 17** - Fly-out to Vulcan to meet up with the Lethbridge Sport Flyers club. Breakfast at the golf club. Contact Dave Procyshen 403-257-8064.

**July 24** - Nanton Lancaster Air Museum annual fly-in breakfast and lunch at AJ Flying Ranch.

**August 7-8** - Lethbridge air show, [www.albertaairshow.com](http://www.albertaairshow.com)

**August 15** - Westlock air show and fly-in breakfast. Contact Fred Primrose 708-349-3533.

**August 22** - Hanna fly-in breakfast, 0730 to 1100. Contact Mark Fredericks 403-854-4522.

**August 23-27** - Annual CUFC Air Adventure Tour. Contact Stu Simpson 255-6998.

**September 12** - Rocky Mountain House Air Show, 1300 to 1600. Fly-ins must arrive before 1200. Contact W.J. Horemans 403-845-7053.

**September 18** - CUFC/COPA Flt 114 fly-in BBQ - details TBA.

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*Joe Pilot - continued from page 5*

when I had to cross over a 737 on final to get to runway 25. I'm feeling like the pilot in the movie *Airplane* with sweat pouring off my forehead and everyone else in the place screaming that they're going to die. I got lined up on 25 but now I'm high and I need to lose airspeed to get to the 60 knot approach speed to do a soft field landing by the book. With time to spare I got everything lined up and hoped the turbulence would settle down close to the runway. No such luck, and with a rough last

few feet I touched down without a bounce while the airplane immediately settled onto the nose. The examiner just looked over and reminded me that a soft field landing means to hold the nose off the ground.

We got back to do the debrief and he totaled up my scores. Although my scores showed a gradual decrease as the test progressed I had enough points to pass, except for the zero on the failed soft field. Another day of practice, a sign-off from my instructor and the examiner had me do one circuit at Calgary. This time I did it right and I was done.

The final step in the process is to get the chief instructor at the flying school to sign the PPL application. This is when I find out that ultralight cross country time doesn't count towards the solo cross country. No problem, I immediately book the plane for some cross country time to get this finished. I did forget to arrange this with the weatherman though, so it took another two weeks to get a day good enough to go. Two cross countries on the same day and I've now got everything taken care of.

What's next? You'll have to read my next article to find out, and also to get my thoughts on the whole adventure. →

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## Rotax Announces 503 Trade-in Program

A Limited Time Program is being offered by all Authorized Kodiak Service Centers For ROTAX Aircraft Engines. Between now and December 20, 2004, owners of ROTAX 503 aircraft engines can exchange their engines (regardless of age!) for a new ROTAX 503UL engine which includes the carburetor, fuel pump and exhaust. The cost is \$2500 US, plus shipping.

Contact Bob Robertson at Light Engine Service for more details and an exact quote in Cdn dollars. 1-866-418-4164.

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## ...And Lived On the Wind

by *Stu Simpson*

It's tough to believe but I was the only one there. On a nearly calm morning with a high, cool overcast and promise in the wind, I was the only guy on Kirkby Field. Admittedly, this was because the others have jobs. But some of my flying mates are retired, and so I was puzzled. I resolved not to concern myself over it, though, and instead set about readying the Giant to fly.

Linden would serve well as a destination. I'd have breakfast and buy a pie for my wife. One of the immutable truths for married pilots who fly for fun is that it never hurts to have a few extra air miles in the bank.

Once aloft and climbing strongly, the Giant felt sure and solid as it always does. It'd been too long since I'd had the controls in my grasp, nearly a week. That was when some of us wound up at a rancher's strip in the foothills southwest of Calgary. The rancher's name is Butler.

I love places like Butler's for a number of reasons. They're often set in beautiful places, in Butler's case a shallow but narrow valley running roughly northeast to southwest. Airstrips like these practically throw a gauntlet at a pilot's feet, so blatant is their challenge. But a pilot must be cautious answering the dare because such strips' approach regimens require care and imagination to defeat any obvious and less obvious dangers.

The biggest problem at Butler's is how the west end of the runway abuts a road. Naturally, the road has power lines beside it - lines without marker balls on them. Thus, the pilot bears the responsibility to see the road, spot the lines and take every pain to miss them on landing. If you're unwilling to shoulder such a burden you're well advised to fly to another, less demanding runway.

As testing as places like Butler's are, the real reason I like them so much is that I've

never been there before. I must now confess to a barely contained aeronautical wanderlust. I'm constantly at odds with myself over flight. Part of me wants to load a few belongings and tools in the Giant and just fly away to places where I've never been before, and then keep going. Of course, my logical

side recognizes the folly of such action and keeps me on a reasonably satisfying, though occasionally chafing tether. Places like Butler's, and other treasures that few pilots know of, turn up close to home with just enough regularity to keep me here.

Wegerich and I found Butler's strip last summer, but declined to land. I returned on my own one winter day to locate it again and mark it on my map. I considered a landing then, but I was alone and didn't want to alight when there were no other friends with whom I could share the adventure.

As I drew overhead of Butler's this time, I spotted the road and power lines and thus warned my wingmen, Huzzey and Bishell. Huzzey piloted his Challenger II carrying his lovely wife, Chris; and Bish was in his Bush Caddy. It's a shame Wegerich wasn't around.

I cleared the power lines and set down on the surprisingly smooth runway. I knew I'd very much like any man who keeps a runway so well. After my wingmen landed we met Pierce Butler and I did like him. He was very down to earth in his muddy rubber boots and flannel work jacket. He built the airstrip to harbour his Cessna 182, a suitably capable craft for such a locale. Butler mentioned how he enjoyed reading my stories in COPA's newspaper and I immediately liked him even more.

Our takeoff from Butler's was exciting as we clawed our way up between the heavily treed hills from his runway's 4200'



*The BushCaddy and Bushmaster at Butler's strip. Photo by Stu*

elevation. The Giant handled it well but I'd be reluctant to try it on a hot day at gross weight.

The memories of Pierce Butler and his airstrip brought a smile to my face as I steered the Giant a bit to the right for Linden. It seemed the wind was pretty hefty aloft and a quick check confirmed it to be about 17 mph, but right on the nose. Good, I'd get to fly a little longer.

The village of Irricana peeked into sight ahead. I'd stay west of there and consequently of Beiseker, too, about 5 miles further up the road. That would leave sufficient distance to clear Beiseker's ATF because there'd be training flights landing there for sure.

A few little rain drops splashed onto the windscreen and skittered back in the propwash, leaving tiny droplet trails. But the clouds, benign in their appearance, showed no sign of spewing more. Perhaps a breeze had simply dusted these drops from a cloud the way someone sweeps crumbs from a table top.

Irricana passed beneath my right wing with its toy-sized houses, streets and cars. One house was oddly arranged, clearly defiant of the village's architectural conservatism. Triangular in shape, like an alpine chalet, it was also canted at a rakish angle to the perfectly squared property boundaries. It would take some courage to build a house like that in Irricana. All the other houses

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*On the Wind - continued from page 7*

nearby were much less adventurous being staid, square and parallel with the streets and each other.

I wouldn't have seen that house if I flew higher or faster. I'd have never known for sure there's at least one person in Irricana who likes things a little different than his neighbours. And I wouldn't have admired the owner's bravery like I do now. You come across interesting people when you're flying low and slow, even if you never meet them.

I avoided the power lines landing at Linden. They have balls to mark them, which is very considerate of whoever hung them there. A beautiful young Mennonite girl served me breakfast. Then she sold me a banana cream pie to take home to my wife, who loves them, and hopefully me, for bringing them.

I turned sharply right once airborne again from Linden's runway and headed for some land to the east that I wanted to see before I turned for home. Presently, the farm my uncle owned when I was a boy was clearly visible. Adventure then was riding dirt bikes with my cousin Byron through pastures and coulees, and camping among the gigantic poplars out back of the farm house. We'd fish from a row boat on a small reservoir nearby. I suppose when you're twelve most things are an adventure, but even then I couldn't wait to be up here.

Things have changed down there since I was a kid, but not everything. The farm

house has been painted and the trees cut down, but the reservoir still bears trout. And I still can't wait to be up here.

My ground speed was measurably higher heading home. From east of Linden the route back to Kirkby's would certainly impinge on Beiseker's airspace. On Beiseker's frequency a young Asian-sounding man in a C-172 stated he was approaching from the southwest. He sounded a little unsure, but still brave in his efforts to conquer the Cessna at Beiseker, or perhaps Beiseker in the Cessna. Either way, he seemed admirably determined.

The student inadvertently keyed his radio mic on final so that anyone listening heard his instructor patiently talking him through the landing.

"Bring the airspeed back to 60 knots for final approach and adjust the ...". He suddenly released the mic button, maybe as he stretched his fingers trying to relax. The instructor, apparently a young woman, sounded forgiving and tolerant as she shared with him her gift of wings.

I envied the student for the challenges ahead and silently wished him well. I wanted to radio and tell him so, but thought it might distract him in his conquests.

Where will he go with his flying? Will he be one of so many who learn to fly and then get bored and quit? Can he even afford to keep flying after he achieves his licence? I hope so. I like pilots and would like to see more of them.

I sailed the Giant back to Kirkby Field completely enraptured with airplanes and flight. Occasionally, I'd giggle to myself just



*Reid Huzzey pilots his Challenger II over the Foothills near Butler's strip. Photo by Stu Simpson*

from pure joy. For a couple of moments I could hardly believe my luck being up there flying - and in my own airplane, too! Grinning incessantly, I hauled the Giant around Kirkby's circuit a couple of times, telling myself I needed the practice. Truth is, I just didn't want it to end.

My first approach was way too fast and I touched long, but with barely a tremor from the landing gear. Very pleasing, that. Ultralight pilots, though, admire short landings more than smooth ones. It's neither vanity nor exhibitionism. At the places we land such skill might one day separate a pilot from his demise. There's never been a runway that's too long.

My next landing was a peach. I set the Giant down firmly and still made the intersection turn-off a few hundred feet from the button. I remained completely saturated in satisfaction and contentment as I taxied the Giant in.

It dawned on me for the millionth time - this must be what it was like. This has to be how the barnstormers felt as they cast themselves to the clouds and lived on the wind. They'd have reveled in the absolute wonder and freedom of just being up there flying. They'd feel giddy and thrilled, knowing they'd just lived a whole minute in the sky and were about to do so all over again. And every breath they took aloft would be the most precious they'd ever drawn. I just know they felt that way. M' God, how could they not? ➔



*Simpson's Bushmaster, the Green Giant, not far from Linden. Photo by Dan Mitchell*