



# SKYWRITER

**Calgary Recreational Flying Club**  
**COPA Flight 114**



## Our Mission

Promoting the safe enjoyment of aviation for pilots, aircraft builders and enthusiasts.

## Our Vision

Welcoming owners and pilots of all types of aircraft including ultra-light, amateur-built, certified and other types of aircraft.

Connecting members through regular meetings, monthly newsletters, our website, social media, BBQ's and fly-outs.

Exchanging knowledge and information about flying and flight safety, and aircraft construction and maintenance via meeting presentations, newsletters and other events.

Sharing and enjoying real-world flying adventures.

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## Featured on the Cover:

This ol' Merlin has been around awhile and through a few hands, including Stu and Bashar. It was once red & blue but looks sharper in yellow & white.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MARCH 2024

BRIAN BYL



## **As I write this President Message there are only fifteen more days until Spring!**

I can hardly wait. I do have to admit we have had a pretty good winter with only a couple of cold spells. What more can you expect from an Alberta winter?

There have been a few flying events held in the past month – the Lacombe Flying Club had their Family Day Gull Lake fly-in with over 60 aircraft attending including one from Saskatoon. The Fur Hat Festive Fly-In took place at the Red Deer Forestry strip February 10/11 and Lac La Biche Flying Club held their annual Winter Festival of Speed on February 24/25. Unfortunately I was unable to attend any of these events as I had other commitments but I hope some of you were able to join in the fun.

I was able to get airborne twice since my last flight/runway excursion in late January. Stu, Bob Kirkby and I did a two hour tour and inspected the Gull Lake runway during our flight. My landing was much better and less stressful than my previous landing.

My other flight was in an MTOsport gyroplane in Nosara, Costa Rica. I did a one hour flight around the Nosara area and enjoyed it very much. It was a blast! Now I understand why John Kerr loves his gyros.



At our February meeting Stu Simpson presented more information on the new NavCanada CFPS (Collaborative Flight Planning Services) which became fully operational February 28 and the Metar-TAF.com website. He did talk about another website but I can't remember what it was called. I hope there will be more information forthcoming.

Barry Davis also talked about a recent flight where he experienced not one but two precautionary landings! Everything turned out OK but it certainly speaks highly of being ready for unexpected problems which may occur. We all had a good chuckle at his adventure.

This month we have a guest speaker from the Avro Arrow Museum who will update us on the progress of the Arrow replica project. I'm looking forward to the presentation.

Don't forget our meeting is **Wednesday, March 13, at 19:00** at the Hangar Flight Museum.



**See you then!**

**Brian** 

# Newsletter Update

Director/Newsletter Editor *GREG LABINE*



## **“In like a Lion ...” and hopefully the lamb part too!**

Well, here we are facing the approach of spring. Like many of you, I’m hoping this snow we currently have is at the trailing edge of this winter and that spring is on the way.

I am nearing the completion of the EZ King Cobra restoration project I’ve been quietly working away at the last few years.

If all goes well, I’m hoping to get it taxiing and eventually flying this spring/summer, so good weather would be helpful. When I get to that point, I will pen an article to share my experiences, both good and bad, with you.

This month we have more great material for you to enjoy. Not as big an issue as last month but still chockfull.

This issue we have a fantastic article from Vice President, Brian Vasseur, on Mountain Flight Planning in Winter. This is quite apropos, as it fits nicely with the Aviation Survival Exercise “That night in the woods”, scheduled for April 06 & 07 at Red Deer Forestry (CFR7). See Calendar page below, for more info.

We also have the conclusion of a great article from Dennis Fox, about the Air-bertha Air Rally. It was quite an ambitious day, as he’ll relate the details to you. Stu Simpson caps his fun story of his trip stateside with his Wife and the Cavalier. Of course, we also have the, always good, President’s Message from Brian Byl.

I could use some stories from many of you out there, even if it’s just a short blurb about a recent flight or other aviation event you’ve attended. Please send it and any associated pictures, so we can share it with your fellow club members.

I won’t be attending the March Meeting, as I’ll be away, but look forward to seeing you all in April.

**See you next Time,  
GREG.**

# Mountain Flight Planning in Winter

by Brian Vasseur



**In a previous article I wrote about my flight to deliver a Zenair CH250 from Chestermere to a new buyer in Nelson, BC. In this article, I am going to write about what it took to plan and prepare for that flight.**

The first person I wanted to talk to was Stu Simpson. He's made many flights to Castlegar, just a few miles south of Nelson. Stu knows exactly where to take shortcuts, where to stay close to the highway, where to be high, and where I could drop down for a more comfortable flight.

The VNC has a lot of detail and even a suggested VFR route with the diamond indicators. That was a good starting point, but with Stu's input now I could fine tune that route.

In an RV9 or my own CH250 I could climb up to 12,500', go direct and be there in an hour and a bit. I have a pulse oximeter and it's pretty easy to rent portable oxygen if you think you'll be up high for more than 30 minutes.

In this case I would be flying a plane I had little experience with and which didn't have a working transponder. Since going to 12,500' meant part of such a flight would be in Class B transponder required airspace, going direct that high was not an option. What we ended up with was a route that kept me near highways and civilization, and at breathable altitudes with only a few places where I needed to hop over mountain ranges to avoid big long loops around them.

Three really good flight planning tools are Skyvector.com, Fltplan.Go (Android or IOS), or ForeFlight (IOS only). Each of these supports drag and drop, nav log generation and detailed airport info. Fltplan and Foreflight have Canadian VFR and IFR charts and supporting info.

Skyvector has the US version of the Canadian charts so it can be more difficult to plan with in great detail. Fltplan and Skyvector are both free, but Foreflight is a paid subscription starting at \$150/year CDN.

At work in my flight dispatch job I use Foreflight and Jeppesen. But when I need to come up with a new route quickly I use the free version of Skyvector to put it together, then use Jeppesen to work out the fine details.

With a bit of drag and drop magic Stu and I came up with a workable flight plan given the weather, terrain and season. I then manually entered the associated waypoints into my Garmin 496. I traded Carl Forman some avionics work for this amazing piece of technology and I can't imagine how I got by without it.

With the navigation worked out the next priority was to find weather that was going to be VFR from Chestermere all the way through to Nelson. I had a week off in November so we were hoping that at least one day would have a solid band of high pressure with no green crayon on the GFA to ruin the flight.

Stu is an expert resource when it comes to weather and since I rarely plan flights below FL200 his experience was more valuable than mine for this flight. We planned a flight for a cold Monday in November leaving me the rest of the week for contingency planning if I had to turn back and try again later. As it happened the first attempt didn't work, but a few days later we had a perfect flying day.

With the weather and routing worked out the last thing was to plan the survival gear required. To do this successfully it's crucial to have a clear understanding of the situation and the potential survival environment.

Google has a million articles on survival, but for the most part those aren't applicable to what I needed. I also had limited space for extra gear. To come up with the best use of space and available weight I defined three requirements.

The first was that I would be rescued no later than sunset on the third day. That seemed very reasonable given all the other factors involved, including the route and all the people looking out for me. For instance, Stu would be bird-dogging me along the route on the ground, and we were in touch by text. Gary Abel was also continually monitoring my progress from his home computer using my SPOT locator's shared page. The ELT was recently re-certified, and I'd filed a flight plan in order to have NavCanada looking out for me, too. I felt I was pretty well covered.

I didn't expect anyone to rescue me after dark, so I was planning to spend at least one night with the plane should the unthinkable happen. I brought four litres of water and I had gear to melt snow if I needed more.

For food I had two boxes of Larabars as well as an extra sandwich and some fruit. I would have to eat some of that food on the first day since it would likely freeze overnight. If you plan to eat then don't forget to plan enough water to go with it. Also, food attracts animals so a foil sealed pack was slightly safer than roast beef in a paper wrapper. I figured I wasn't going to starve to death in three days.

I didn't plan to be cutting down trees or building a Robinson Crusoe themed camp, so the only calories I would need would be to keep warm. I had two first aid kits with me but only enough for some nasty cuts or a simple broken bone. I brought some extra power banks to keep my cellphone charged as well as a portable VHF radio with extra alkaline batteries. I had enough power to keep a single LED light on for several nights. It's not that there'd be anything to see, but being able to turn a small light on from time to time does a lot to calm your mind when it is dark and you hear strange noises.

I always fly in running shoes and a sweater, but I also had an Arctic rated winter jacket, scarf, gloves, winter boots, and socks with me. Even if I didn't get out of the plane, the boots and socks are really warm. The plane had a wrap-around engine cover and I strapped that to the shoulder harness so it would remain handy. It would have made a warm blanket if I needed it. A small survival space blanket was in my backpack.

Next, I hoped to be able to use the cockpit of the aircraft as a place I could remain and protect myself from the wind.

I had a large knife, a hatchet and a manual chainsaw so I could gather some firewood or build a small shelter.



This might be necessary if the canopy was completely smashed out and I couldn't patch it with the roll of packing tape I brought with me. Duct tape is useless in the cold or on a surface that has frost on it.

Building a camp would be near impossible if I had broken any bones in the crash, plus, building stuff expends a lot of energy. Knowing I'd have only a few hours to collect firewood and fresh branches before dark if something happened, it didn't seem realistic to plan to build a camp on the first day, even in good conditions.

Even if I wanted to build a camp I might not be able to. The CH250 can be a difficult plane to get in and out of even with good agility. With a broken arm or leg that might not be possible.

That brings me to my third point. I made sure I could reach all my survival gear without leaving the plane, and that I wouldn't have to venture beyond the wing of the plane while I was at the site.

I kept my priority items (water, some food and first aid, flares and radio) in my backpack on the front seat, belted in, where I could reach it even in a crash. The remainder of my gear was in the baggage compartment. In a bad upset it may end up spread all over or buried in snow so having a pack full of gear in the seat belt next to me was important.

While you can roughly pick a place to crash you don't know exactly what the ground will be like. It could be in snow too deep to walk in, or on a difficult slope. I also wanted to plan for a possible injury that made mobility difficult.

I would not likely make a plan to walk out unless I was uninjured and could see a highway I could reach within a few hours. In reality if the highway was that close the rescuers would be able to get to me relatively easily, and with better equipment than I had with me. Proximity to the highways and other access roads was in fact one of the main reasons we chose the route in the first place.

In addition to what I mentioned above, I had a bunch of other stuff in a plastic tub that I brought with me, and which I keep in my plane. It contains a survival skills book, some knives and spare blades, electrical tape, duct tape and clear packing tape, survival blankets, pen flares, road flares and colored smoke. I had a can of Sterno, barbeque lighter, some barbeque starter cubes and lots of water proof matches in a few different containers in case I did decide to collect wood and start a fire. The can of sterno doesn't last more than an hour, but it lights easily and is useful to get a bigger fire started.

Finally, I had a portable single burner camp stove with a pan to melt snow, not to cook anything, as that attracts animals. The small propane tanks don't last long and carbon monoxide is deadly so this is just to melt snow, not to stay warm.

I knew I'd have to be diligent about any spilled fuel, too. Wet fuel on the ground will burn, but fuel vapors will explode. Either of these could make things more difficult.

If I had more cargo space I would have brought a small tent, sleeping bag, and a whole list of other things. In the end though the goal was to plan a safe trip in good weather and be prepared to hang out a few days in case something bad happened.



So, as you can see, this wasn't a complicated survival plan, but it was a thorough one. It had just three requirements to keep me going until a rescue.

Of course, as it turned out, the flight occurred without any problems. I got some terrific and exciting flying experience to add to my log book, the new owner got his plane, and Stu got the indisputable pleasure of my company for the 7 ½ hour mountain road trip back to Calgary. All in all, a pretty good day of aviation.

**Brian.**

**Ed note - Brian's article above, regarding Survival preparedness is quite timely as there is an upcoming Aviation Survival Exercise called "THAT NIGHT IN THE WOODS", that may be of great interest to many of you. For further info, please check the Calendar page in this issue of Skywriter.**

# THE (SOON TO BE ) GREAT



## AIR-BERTA AIR RALLY

PART THREE - BY DENNIS FOX

### **Day 3 of the Air-bertha Air Rally August 27, 2020.**

Another CAVU day and it will be a long one as we're headed to our most northerly airport destination of the Rally at Manning in the Peace River country. I got an early start at 7:45 and headed for Parkland-CPL6 just northwest of Edmonton. A direct course took me through Edmonton Int.-CYEG airspace and they are very accommodating with only a minor heading change to avoid traffic. One hour of flight time and I'm on the ground to check things out. CPL6 was built in 2013 about the same time that the Edmonton Muni was closed. The Edmonton Flying Club relocated to CPL6 after being at the Muni since the beginning of time (when it was first called Blatchford Field). I wandered around but didn't find anyone. It looks like all the Flying Club planes are out this morning.

Back to the RV and I waited my turn for departure following a 172. Next stop is a short 25 minute flight northwest to Barrhead-CEP6. It's located right beside the Golf course but no time for that today. I'm greeted by a very enthusiastic group from the flying club, the first actual live welcome of the rally. Thanks Barrhead, makes for a great start to the day. I happened to mention that I forgot to wear my cap today and the sun was very bright under the RV's greenhouse. A friendly local aviator made a quick dash to his hanger and presented me with a brand new "Commemorative Air Force" cap from his collection. Thanks ever so much, very much appreciated.

I departed at 9:53 and headed northeast for Athabasca-CYWM. As I'm outbound, a familiar voice came over the com and I recognized Mel inbound to Barrhead. A 35 minute fight put me on the ground at CYWM with time for a quick visit to the FBO maintenance facility and some friendly aviation conversation.

Time to make time, so I'm off at 10:36 for High Prairie-CZHP. The course is northwest and takes me along the south side of Lesser Slave Lake and the town of Slave Lake. There was a devastating wildfire in this area in 2011 which forced evacuation of the residents of Slave Lake and damaged much of the town. Today the area looks very green as regrowth of the forest is hiding the scorched earth.

High Prairie airport comes into view after a 55 minute flight and it's busy with traffic arriving. I hear Doug from High River in his Flight Designs light-sport. He is a long way from home. I join in the fun and fit into the lineup to land. High Prairie is rolling out the red carpet today with a barbeque and open house at the airport. The word got out because there are about a dozen aircraft on the ramp as well as a parking lot full of cars. Great hospitality, thanks. I was enjoying a burger when Mel and Allan showed up. They are riding together today but not in an RV. They decided that with the distance they had to cover, they had better have something faster. Mel just happened to have a faster airplane, a Glasair III. It's a good thing I got an early start, and I better get moving if I'm going to stay ahead of them.



High Prairie put on a Bbq lunch for the tour, well attended by pilots and town people.

With fuel and stomach both topped off I'm off to the north country as I head to Manning-CFX4. A direct route will take me over nothing but forest and water and I prefer more hospitable ground below so I followed the highways northwest to Peace River and then north to Manning. There were a few clouds as I turned north and as they got thicker I decided to descend from 8500 to below the cloud base of 6000. These were the first clouds in 3 days. The shade under the clouds was a pleasant reprieve from the sun. Into Manning at 13:34 for a quick stop. Lots of farming in this area and the spray planes are busy.

As I left Manning and headed back south to Peace River, I heard Mel call inbound to Manning so I know he is hot on my trail. From Peace River a slight turn to the southwest gets me headed to Grand Prairie. The track is close to Fairview-CEB5 and I decided to land for a photo op with the Fairview farmers Canso. The winters are long, dark and cold in northern Alberta. They decided they needed a project so they retrieved an abandoned Canso from the high Arctic and restored it to flying condition.



The Fairview Aircraft Restoration Society (FARS)  
Canso, a Canadian built aircraft of World War II.

It took a few years but they got it done in 2017. I was at the Fairview airport for the public debut of the Canso, and it was a great show. A quick pic with the grand old lady and then on to the next stop.

Grande Prairie-CYQU is the largest airport in the northwest and would normally be quite busy except this year things are rather quiet due to covid.

I met up with Claude in his RV9 out of Red Deer. He is doing the same trip except going the other way around and this is just his first stop. He will probably log some night time before he gets home. As Claude and I are chatting, Mel and Allan arrive. That means it's time for me to get moving.

Next destination is Drayton Valley-CER3 which is southeast about 200 miles over nothing but trees and hills. I like to stay closer to civilization so my plan was to keep the highways in sight. This makes the route longer than if I went direct. The sky is clear above a layer of scattered puffy whites and wind is favorable so I decided to climb up to 11,500 for some fast efficient cruising.

Mel and Allan are soon airborne and as we compared ETA's, it became apparent that my indirect route is not going to be a winning plan. After a few moments of contemplation, I consider the options.. follow the highways or direct over the green carpet of forest?? Hmmm... the sky is clear, good tailwind, high altitude, engine is smooth, what could go wrong?

So with a quick change of the magenta line, engage the autopilot and I've just reduced my ETA. It looks like it will be close now. A little tweak of the power setting and it looks a little better. Airspeed was nudging 175 kts, groundspeed was creeping towards 185.

A quick call to Mel and he is up even higher. My distance to go was less but his airspeed was considerably faster. Looked like we might have a race, so the challenge was offered and accepted.

Over the com I heard Claude (on his way to High Prairie) put his money on the Glasair, much to my disappointment!

I considered climbing higher in search of more speed but decided against it. With a 100 miles to go, I trimmed a little nose down to pick up a little extra speed as I planned a long, long, very long decent into Drayton.

Fast forward to mid downwind at Drayton and Mel was already on final. Close but today he wins.

Drayton Valley Flying Club has rolled out the red carpet with refreshments and a barbeque for the rally aviators, a big thanks to Jerry and Rose for the great welcome.

The turnout was good with about a dozen aircraft on the apron. I did a quick walk of the flightline and I spotted another RV8. My registration is RVU and it is RVW, almost twins.

The last leg of the day and (for me) the last of the rally is home to CEN3. A short 50 minute flight and that's the end of three great days of flying!

**A quick calculation revealed: 25 different airports, 28 takeoff/landings, 13.1 hrs airtime.**

The final event wrap up was on Saturday 29 at Red Deer Regional- CYQF, however the great weather didn't hold up as the ceilings lowered and the air was chilly. In spite of the poor weather, a small but enthusiastic crowd enjoyed the displays and presentations.

A big thank-you to the Harvard Historical Aviation Society for their great effort in putting on this 1st annual Air Rally, and I look forward to a bigger and better event for in the future.

# September Southbound

## Part - Three

By Stu Simpson

### Day 8 cont...

**Annoyingly, it took nearly another half an hour to get through to file a flight plan thanks to the new system punishing those who don't file online.** After about three hours on the ground, we finally taxied out past the derelict MiGs, took off and continued north. The voltage was behaving properly, but I still kept a close watch on it just to make sure we'd actually addressed the problem.

We gassed up at Cedar Rapids, then pressed on to Minneapolis.

MSP approach guided us through the south end of their space and warned us a couple of times of traffic conflicts we already saw on ADS-B. Tina, as she had over the entire trip, proved very adept at spotting other aircraft, especially with help from ADS-B.

Flying Cloud tower cleared us to land on runway 10. Once off the runway, ground directed us to the FBO where we rolled in and shut down. We were tired as we parked the Cav for the night. We had a car waiting for us which the FBO staff brought out to the plane for us. It was an Alfa Romeo SUV, which really impressed Tina.

Being so late into town, we didn't have much time to do more than get supper and take a short drive into the city. I guess it gives us something to come back for.

### Day 9

*"Experimental Bravo Quebec Romeo, Flying Cloud tower. You're clear of my zone, radar service terminates, frequency change approved. Squawk VFR and remain clear of controlled airspace."*

*"Roger that, ma'am, and thanks for your help today,"* I replied, as I switched the transponder to 1200.

It was a beautiful morning leaving Minneapolis. We still had several miles to go to clear the Mode C veil, but we were well below any Class B controlled airspace. I angled the Cav a little to the right to straddle the course line for Jamestown, ND, our first stop 250 NM from Flying Cloud.

Minnesota's crops were still surprisingly green, a marked contrast to the golden colour of Alberta's and Saskatchewan's crops when we started our adventure more than a week prior. We wondered how late in the year harvest begins in this part of the world.

The miles ticked away below us while our ground speed steadily dropped. When we crossed into North Dakota south of Fargo it was showing only 100 to 105 knots. The weather prophecy had foretold this so it wasn't a big surprise, just an irritation.

On the other hand, the fact that the Cav can have a 20 to 25 knot headwind and still cover ground at better than 100 knots is pretty pleasing. We were still flying at a pretty good speed.

The bigger problem was how we were heading back into the smoke and poor visibility. When we landed at Jamestown vis was back down to about four miles. Minot was reporting only three.

We fueled, filed and pottied at Jamestown and lit out for Estevan, SK, where we could land to clear customs. Tina and I both now have CANPASS, which allows pilots and crew to clear at a greater number of CBSA approved airports. Not having CANPASS proved to be troublesome in June because it prevented Bob and Carl and I from clearing at Lethbridge. I recommend getting it since it's only about forty bucks for five years.

The smoke worsened as we continued northwest, so did the daytime turbulence. The wind remained consistent, though, still giving us an average ground speed of 103 knots.

South of Minot, skirting their control zone, we saw a target on ADS-B. It had a different call sign than the typical registration number or airline designation that most US and Canadian aircraft have. Tina was a bit bored and set about trying to find the plane up above in the smoke. It was 3000 feet higher and I told her she'd be lucky to spot it in such poor visibility. Undeterred, she leaned forward, splitting her attention between the display screen and the windscreen while I concentrated on flying.

"There it is!" she announced pointing excitedly. "It's right above us. I think it's a B-52!"

"It might be a KC-135 tanker from Minot Air Force Base," I replied. I peered up to the right and saw it quite clearly.

"Oh, you're right," I exclaimed. "It is a B-52! Is that ever cool!" I've only ever seen flying B-52's three times in my life, and two of those times were that summer. For an airplane nerd, that's pretty cool. I'm also pleased that this airplane nerd's wife recognized a B-52.

The enormous bomber, its flaps deployed, tracked 90 degrees to our course, obviously on a left base for the runway at Minot AFB. Would we get any of its wake turbulence? I wondered. In all the thermal turbulence we had, would we even know the difference?

The Canadian border neared and I was again happy to have gotten a trans-border squawk code before leaving the ground. A few minutes later we landed at Estevan in a gusty west wind, but at least it was straight down runway 26. Good thing Regina has an east-west runway, too, I thought.

As we pulled up to the fuel pumps a couple of CBSA officers appeared from the airport lounge building. Clearing with them was easy and pleasant. The airport attendant, Miles, was also really helpful, loaning me his phone so I could close our flight plan, and helping me fuel the Cav for the last leg to Regina. This is one of the few general aviation airports in Canada I've encountered where, a) service exists at all, and b) service is as good as US FBOs. I recommend stopping at Estevan. We swapped phone cards back to our Canadian ones, filed for Regina and were back in the air. Tina and I were happy to be in Canada and happy, too, that our day would be over soon.

The visibility steadily improved as we flew northwest, easily back up to 10 miles or better. Our ground speed was up a little, too, since the wind had taken a more westerly tack instead of being right on our nose like it had been for most of the day.

I monitored Regina tower from about 20 miles out as the controller landed and departed planes on runway 31. She advised the wind was 260 at 22 gusting 30 knots. Why weren't they using runway 26? Hmmm...

Of course, I dialed up the ATIS and almost wished I hadn't. Runway 26 was closed. I was looking now at landing us with a minimum 20 knot crosswind component. The most I could recall landing with in the past was about 17 knots on a slippery runway at Kirkby Field.

Inside the control zone, tower had us do a pair of 360 turns for spacing with other traffic, then she lined us up for final approach.

*"Bravo Quebec Romeo, cleared to land runway 31. Wind 260, 24 gusting 32."*

*"Cleared to land, Bravo Quebec Romeo."*

Okay, I'm going to just outright brag here. My approach and landing were excellent in that damned wind, easily and ironically, the best one of the whole trip. I had the controls to the stops at touchdown, but I set down with a whisper touch and only a little bit of fish-tailing. It helped that I only used one notch of flaps. It's cool that Tina was impressed, too. I retracted the flaps as soon as the wheels touched and concentrated on keeping the left wing down and the tail straight.

*"Bravo Quebec Romeo, can you expedite clearing the runway for traffic behind?"*  
*"Negative, ma'am," I replied. "I have to keep it a bit slower with this wind."*

She didn't sound surprised as she instructed me to turn right on taxiway Mike and contact ground. The Cav wavered a bit in the wind as we finished with the runway, then I made the turn and switched to ground.

We soon had the Cav tied down and secured outside the Regina Flying Club, then we were on our way to our hotel. One more day to go.

## **Day 10**

I was definitely looking forward to home. We had only a couple more legs to get there. Bob Kirkby texted the previous night, asking for details of our last day. I let him know we planned to be at Swift Current by 11:30 for a bit of gas, then we'd burn for CFX8. Bob promised to join us there for the last leg. I thought that was great.

I told Gary Abel our plans, too, but he didn't commit to meeting us. I hoped he would.

As soon as we cleared Regina's control zone the visibility dropped once more, back down to about 3 to 3½ miles. I was well and truly sick of the smoke by this point. It had curtailed a lot of flying over the entire summer and ruined a lot of the scenery on this adventure.

We slipped past Moose Jaw's control zone, the north side of which is conveniently bounded by the Trans Canada Highway. I remarked to Tina how glad I was we were flying to Calgary instead of driving.

As we pulled up to the fuel pumps at Swift Current, something brilliantly red approached from the airport lounge building. I smiled realizing it was Gary in his redder-than-anything RV-7.

Tina wandered to the lounge because she wasn't able to just head to the back side of the fuel tanks like us boys can.

**Gary Abel at Swift Current with his blazing red RV-7 while Bob Kirkby shuts down his Cherokee 235. By Stu Simpson**



As I fueled the Cav, Gary reported he'd been there an hour already and he wondered when Bob would arrive. Tina and I saw him on ADS-B from about 80 NM away from us as we neared Swift Current, so I expected him any minute. Sure enough, as Tina returned from the lounge, the Cherokee droned over from the west.

What a treat that Gary and Bob came to meet us. It's a pretty good day when your friends come to fly home with you on the last leg of a big flying trip.

Tina and I departed ahead of Bob on runway 31, easing into a left turn and climbing for home. Gary planned to depart a few minutes later. With his speed he could leave a half hour after us and still easily beat us home.

I was happy to be wing to wing with Bob again, just as we've been for so many airborne adventures. We chatted comfortably as we flew on. I'd occasionally relay comments from Tina since her side of the intercom doesn't carry through to the radio. I started wondering where Gary was.

Turns out he had an issue with his throttle cable sticking. He texted that he used a bit of engine oil to lube it and get it sliding smoothly again. A very creative solution, I thought. He was about an hour delayed leaving Swift.



**Bob's Cherokee 235 off the Cavalier's wing on the last leg to home.**

**By Stu Simpson**

Just east of the Alberta border something strange caught my eye. The railroad track southwest of a little hamlet called Golden Prairie was filled for nearly ten miles with stationary rail cars. They looked like potash cars, but I don't know for sure. There were no engines involved, just the cars stored there for miles on end. A very unusual sight.

We gladly crossed back into Alberta, bumping and jostling in the midday thermals. Tina appreciated sitting on the shaded side of the Cav's cockpit, but the sun didn't bother me any on my side. She marveled at the barren and desolate land between Medicine Hat and Brooks. There's nothing there but oil wells and gopher holes, and I suspect even the gophers have to pack a lunch.

By the time we reached Lake Newell, Gary texted that he was back in the air and making straight for his home base at High River. I asked him to please let me know when he landed. We all like to look out for each other like that.

Eagle Lake, Strathmore, Langdon – all the familiar landmarks of home eased into view as Bob and I switched over to 123.4. My landing was pretty good and I felt relieved as we rolled off the runway and spun around to stop in front of my hangar. We'd had an awesome trip, but it was equally awesome to be home.

## Conclusion

Here's the route we followed, in case you'd like to plug it into your favorite flight planner:

**CFX8 500933N1111455W 500942N1103535W CYYN KXWA S25 KBIS KMDS KDSM KVIH KOLV 1H0 395717N0910407W KUIN KALO KFCM KJMS 480808N1012603W CYEN CYQR 502731N1054732W CYYN 501149N1103747W 501437N111919W CFX8**

The trip totaled 3025 NM, 3481 SM, or 5602 km, and about 28 flying hours.

We visited 17 different airports, and flew into or over two provinces and ten states. I never totaled the fuel used, but we made the most of every litre we burned.

I can't really find the words to express what it means to me to have shared this epic journey with my wife. Tina's a wonderful copilot.

She helped with things like radio frequencies, accommodations, ground transport, snacks and water en route, and even took the stick briefly once or twice.

She's tremendously adept at spotting other aircraft, even if they're smaller than a B-52. She doesn't get airsick and she's also pretty funny, both of which add a lot to these trips.

I love her deeply and I'd happily fly anywhere in the Cav with her again.



**Tina and the Cav at Kirkby Field. Where are we going next? By Stu Simpson**



## Calendar of coming Aviation events

### April 6 & 7, Saturday & Sunday –

#### “THAT NIGHT IN THE WOODS”, Aviation Survival Exercise.

Facilitated by **Jim Thoreson**: 6 years RCAF stationed across Canada including the arctic, 23 years RCMP including 6 years on the Emergency Response Team, CASARA for 30 plus years, 22 of which as a pilot, trained as Military Search Master and search coordinator.

**THAT  
NIGHT  
IN THE  
WOODS**

AVIATION SURVIVAL EXERCISE

**APRIL 6 & 7, 2024**  
**BRIEFING: SUNDRE (CFN7)**  
**CAMP: RED DEER FORESTRY (CFR7)**

An interactive exercise designed to demonstrate what it would be like to rely on your survival kit, overnight in a remote area.

**Registration limited to 20 people**  
**\$100 Early Bird before March 16**

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OR VISIT  
[bit.ly/TNITW24](https://bit.ly/TNITW24)

INNISFAIL FLYING CLUB (COPA FLIGHT 130) | SUNDRE FLYING CLUB

If you have any future events, please feel free to forward the details to me so I may share them here with the members. [crufcnews@gmail.com](mailto:crufcnews@gmail.com)

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EAA Vintage Aircraft, EAA Sport Aviation and AOPA magazines to give away. 35+ years, too many to show. I don't want to throw them away.

**Brian Byl**

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