Issue 36 November 2026



SKYWRITER

Calgary Recreational Flying Club

COPA Flight 114

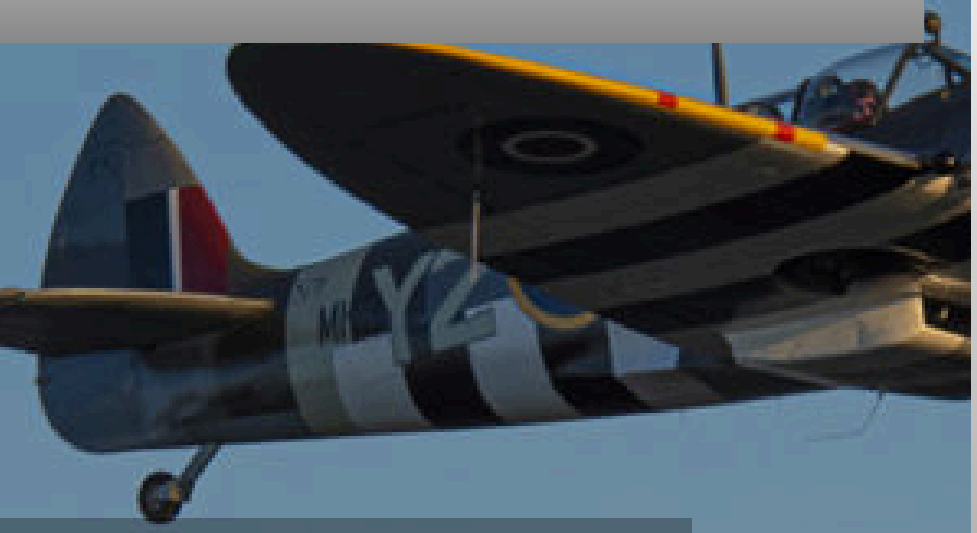
CALGARY RECREATIONAL FLYING CLUB

COPA

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

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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On the Cover:

In honor of Remembrance Day

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

November 2026 ***BRIAN VASSUER***



Welcome to the beginning of Winter

The number of flying days without having to warm up the plane are now few and far between. I am fortunate that this winter I have my plane in a heated hangar so I'm waiting to see if I get a lot more flying in now that it's easier to get the plane ready.

This month started with a very bad weather related crash of a plane that should have been able to avoid dangerous weather and get safely to their destination. There will be many conversations about whether the pilots had the right training or skills but it's easy to second guess people after the fact.



I've been fortunate to do a lot of flights in actual IFR conditions in planes without an autopilot and it really requires you to be focused.

Having the luxury to stop for a minute and get your thoughts together just isn't an option. When you're faced with something you've never experienced you have to use every skill you have to fly safely and sometimes you just don't have that extra time you need to understand what is happening around you.

One of my most difficult flights was down to 300' minimums on a windy day.

◀ ***Heated windshield that cant keep up to slushy snow freezing on impact.***

There was no autopilot or large glass screens, just a basic 6 pack and needle indicators. Trying to fly that, follow the approach plate, take action on all the required steps, and do everything safely is really difficult. I was fortunate on that day to have an IFR pilot in the right seat who took over radio calls and was able to verify my approach briefing. Having an extra set of eyes to make sure nothing gets missed makes flying in difficult conditions a lot easier. With winter weather coming its more important to ensure that you are making choices that will let you do your flight safely.

It's easy to say I will just be over this cloud layer for a few minutes or I can just descend through this quickly when I get there. It may turn out to be a lot more difficult than you expected.

Something else I've seen with a few pilots I've flown with recently is a heavy reliance on a GPS for navigation. I was asking one pilot which towns we were flying by and he had to pull out his phone to launch Google Maps as their GPS was only showing airports.



▲ ***Ice building up on the leading edge which stuck to the front of the deice boot.***

Knowing how long it should take to get to your destination and what heading you should be flying on this leg is basic required navigation.

In the mountains it's very easy to select the wrong valley which may be parallel to the one you want, and which ends in a climbing dead end that you can't climb out of. If you practice navigation on the good days it makes it easier to do it for real when you need it.



On final with, no runway in sight, relying on the needles and a stopwatch.

I'm planning for a few more months of really warm weather and plan to get a lot of flights in before it's too cold to play outside anymore. I'm looking forward to some group flights to interesting places.

The membership fees for September 2026 to August 2027 are now due. Please pay $40 to Carl Forman at the meeting, thanks.

Brian Vasseur

Skywriter Update

Newsletter Editor ***GREG LABINE***



Lest we forget

This month I dedicated the cover to **Remembrance Day**. Of course our club has an interest in aviation, hence why I depicted several different Canadian military aircraft, but of course we should take a moment to honor all who served in all branches and of all generations.

This month from Brian Vasseur, we feature an article on the "Six Pack" Instruments. This is an older article Brian wrote and sent me back in September, but this article is quite timely and relatable.

Weather can effect ALL aircraft large or small, fast or slow, on short hops or longer trips. Adequate and properly functioning instruments become quite critical in poor conditions and can be an important factor in decision making when considering your options. Good article Brian.

Brian has provided us another great article following his training on a Lancair high performance aircraft. It is in 3 parts, see the first installment below.

I just want to thank Brian Vasseur for everything he writes. Again, he is my sole contributor of content this month. Very high quality stories and pictures.

Remember, the Final Snowbird performance ever will be during the Greycup game here in Calgary, over McMahon Stadium, Sunday November 15, 2026. **End of an era for sure. Don't miss it!**

If possible, can somebody take a few pictures and send them in? I will be away on that date and will sadly miss it myself.

Next club meeting is **Remembrance Day, Wednesday November 11, 2026 at 19:00 at the Museum.**

Greg.

YOUR SIX PACK
By Brian Vasseur



Your Six Pack...it's Not Just For The Gym!

Earlier this summer I had plans to fly to Cold Lake for the airshow at the airforce base on the weekend of July 18th & 19th . My family was already camping at the lake and we had a B&B for the week. I stayed home to get some work done on my RV-6 while everyone else hung out at the beach.

I'd convinced Stu to fly me up to Cold Lake Regional in his Cavalier on the Thursday preceding the show. I intended to drive back with my wife Jackie after the weekend.

The weather had been pretty good all week so I wasn't expecting any problems, but as our departure day drew nearer, the forecast began to deteriorate. When I got to Kirkby Field on Thursday morning things didn't look very good to the northeast at all. What Stu and I could see were some pretty low clouds about 10 miles north, and were both pretty apprehensive about what we might find if we headed that way.

Stu and I have flown together for many years and I have complete confidence in his abilities and his judgment. I had just completed my 6 month IFR currency check and I'm fairly comfortable in pretty much any weather now including IFR and VFR over the top (OTT).

Since the weather in the immediate vicinity was still VFR we decided to takeoff about 9:00 AM to check things out. Was this going to be just a local weather situation, or it was going to be solid clouds the whole way? We'd already been scouring various weather sites, both aviation and non-aviation, none of which suggested any imminent improvement, so while we were hopeful, we weren't optimistic.

We had good VFR at Chestermere, and things were clear to the southwest, which was our back-door escape hatch should we need it. We knew we could safely depart and see what things were like in the air.

If it didn't work out we had lots of safe options to get us back on the ground. It didn't hurt that this was our own back yard and territory we'd been flying over for forty years. That familiarity can be really helpful in a jam.

We took off and within a few miles the clouds were beginning to crowd our upward ambitions, limiting us to about six or seven hundred feet AGL. We'd soon be scud running if we continued, and things looked lower toward the northeast along our intended path.

As we neared Kathryn we diverted about 40 degrees more easterly along the edge of what had become a broken undercast with a much higher broken to overcast layer across the northern horizon. We skirted the edge of the lower layer, still in good VFR, and still with our back door open behind us. Since we were clear of Calgary's Class C airspace, we climbed up to 5,500' to see what lay beyond. Could we spot any openings, or maybe an end to the undercast? If so, we might be able to proceed VFR over the top.

But no, it wasn't looking good at all. While Stu flew the Cavalier ever more eastward from our intended course, I checked the weather camera at Drumheller, and various highway cameras in that direction. Sadly, there were no breaks in the clouds that we could find.

I have full confidence in Stu's ability to fly in pretty much any weather, and I've done enough IFR flying that going VFR OTT is not a concern. But that wasn't going to happen today.



The CARS there are very specific about requirements for IFR, Night and VFR OTT flying, and which instruments you need in order to fly in those circumstances legally. This is where the 6 pack comes in (in either steam gauge or EFIS form) and why so many planes have those instruments on the panel.



The attitude indicator is your primary instrument and it gives you both pitch and roll information. The airspeed, altimeter and VSI combine to tell you if you're in level flight, climbing or descending, and if you have enough energy to maintain proper flight. The attitude indicator just indicates pitch and roll, and not whether the airplane is capable of flying.

On some panels in the bottom left of the six-pack set-up is the turn-and-bank, aka the turn coordinator, which is the airplane wings with the floating ball.

The turn coordinator is a neat instrument because the gyro is mounted at an angle so it displays turning information. This is important because you can turn with the wings level and go straight with the wings at an angle. Keeping the ball in the centre with the rudder ensures coordinated turns and helps ensure the plane stays in control.

While the attitude indicator is your primary instrument when you have no outside references, the turn coordinator is your go to instrument if the AI fails. Keeping the wings level and the ball centered helps ensure that airspeed, altitude and VSI give you useful information and can help you keep the plane under control. An instrument check ride always includes failed instruments to see if you can manage a partial panel.

This leads to why Stu and I chose to turn back that day. While the Cavalier has a Dynon glass screen, it doesn't have any other redundancy except analog altitude and airspeed. If that screen were to fail while we were above the clouds, our ability to get the plane back to where we could see the ground again from a safe height would have been severely challenged. You cannot rely on your inner ear balance to keep a plane from entering a spin and recovering close to the ground can be very hard to do.



Which instrument failed, the Attitude Indicator or the Turn Coordinator? The Directional Gyro will have the answer.

I missed a good airshow because of the weather. Stu missed a good cross-country out and back flight. I also probably missed my last chance to see the Snowbirds perform. But, we both lived to fly another day, and we'll both be able to have a lot more flying adventures in the future.

Brian

LANCAIR TRAINING–PART 1
By Brian Vasseur



One of the benefits of a commercial license and additional ratings has been that people will loan me their planes without too many questions. I've enjoyed everything from Citabria's, RV6's, Mooney's, Seneca's, and most recently a Lancair ES owned by Frank Faria.

I flew with him a few times and when I mentioned I really liked the plane he offered to let me use it. These are rare, there are only 6 in Canada. This is one of 3 planes made with dual gullwing doors, and they cost about the same as a new Ferrari 296. Nobody has ever let me drive their Ferrari, so Frank letting me use his plane is definitely very generous.

The ES is a 4 seat homebuilt designed to go fast. It is comparable to the Cessna 400 or Cirrus certified's, but each ES has the owners personal touches. Everything is very high end including pressurized doors for a draft free experience. It seats 4 adults comfortably and with 109 gallons of fuel it can fly farther than I can last without needing a break. You could easily do Calgary to Toronto in 8 or 9 hours with a stop in Winnipeg for gas and a coffee. Plan $1000 for gas before you leave.

One challenge with the Lancair is that the stall speed is 65 KTS and the wing loading is 23 lbs so it requires a type rating to fly it. That means finding an instructor who also has a Lancair ES type rating and is approved by Transport to provide training in this plane. I lucked out when an Encore pilot I frequently have breakfast with, Chris, let me know he had the ratings, a course designed for the ES, approval from TC, and was willing to train me. All I needed now was a wallet full of cash to get started.

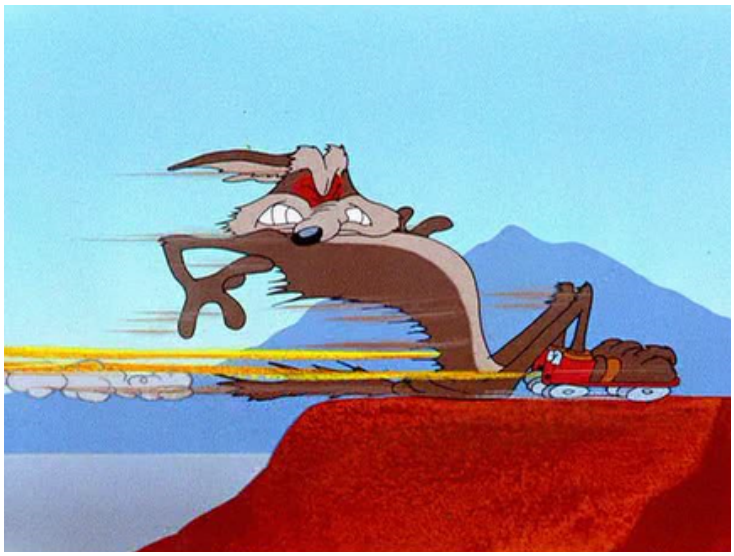
The panel has a 7" portrait Primary Flight Display for each seat and a 10" landscape Multi Function Display for all the extra things such as engine instruments, maps, flight plans, etc. There are two IFR GPS's in the panel which can be controlled from the radios or the PFD/MFD. There is an overwhelming amount of information displayed and it can be hard to hand fly the plane and even notice all the data streaming across the glass. The typical mission for a Lancair is an autopilot driven IFR flight to a destination, not a low level flight for lunch.





First was groundschool which is one step required for a type rating in Canada. This is a mix of home study and some face to face discussions of how to fly this plane and is intermixed between flight training. Chris explained that using a side stick takes a firm but gentle touch to fly smoothly, and this plane requires precise speeds on approach. Chris described how the plane has an aggressive stall and would be challenging to recover at low altitudes. Initially we planned 110 KTS on downwind with 90 KTS on final. Eventually we will work down to 85 but that will take some skill and consistency and I need to develop the muscle memory to fly smooth approaches.

Next was the first flight we chose Drumheller which has a decent length strip and ice cream. It would also give me some time to just get a feel for the plane. I planned to show Chris that I had lots of experience and I was probably ready for my flight test already. Getting the plane started and out to the hold short line was pretty straightforward. I casually adjust my sunglasses for the perfect Joe Pilot look.



I line up, and with a clearanceto depart I flipped on the lights and advanced the throttle. Reality set in as 310 HP came to life. Picture Wile E. Coyote on rocket roller skates. That's the feeling.

For the first second or so I needed a touch of right brake to counteract the torque from the engine but with a bit of speed I could use rudder alone. I glanced down to see the airspeed at 40 which came pretty quick and by my second glance the airspeed tape numbers were scrolling too fast to read. I had a bit of back pressure on the sidestick and the nose lifted gently at about 75. The Angle Of Attack indicator dipped briefly into the amber as the main wheels lifted off but within about a second it was back in the green at 95 KTS. I got somewhere near a climb speed of 105 KTS pulling way back but it was a challenge to keep that speed from going higher even after reducing power.

By this time I should have switched frequencies, had flaps up, and set final climb power but things were happening pretty quickly. Chris told me what I needed to do and soon enough we were climbing out at about 1500 FPM and about 130 KTS. I'm not sure exactly, I was still in sensory overload for the moment.

Once we levelled off at cruise power I got the plane trimmed and could start to take in my surroundings. With a short sidestick the plane was very responsive but still light on the controls. It rolled into 45 degree banks easily and handled well in slow flight. These are not approved for aerobatics but it felt like flying a fighter. Before long we were close to Drum so I setup on a downwind for runway 35 based on other traffic in the circuit and started to slow down. This plane is very slippery and even with power off it wants to fly 150 KTS.



By midfield I had slowed to 120 with flaps 10 and started to setup for a pattern. I went to the south of the river for my base leg to have lots of time to get setup, and planned for an approach at 90. I selected full flaps and trimmed full nose up but there's still some back pressure to deal with.

Turning final I struggled to stay within 5 KTS of 90 while using small power adjustments to hold the right approach angle. Chris told me when to flare and I used most of the runway to slow down in time to turn off. Time for a break before we went for more circuits. This first flight felt like I was way out of my league in this plane. A cookie dough ice cream cone calmed my nerves and then I was ready to try again.

Back in the circuit the biggest challenge was getting the speed under control and under the 120 KTS flap speed. This plane wants to go fast and it gets to circuit altitude in well under a minute. Chris says that if you aren't thinking 5 minutes ahead then you're already behind the plane. I'm ready for my base leg but still have takeoff flaps down. Definitely playing catch-up.

Landing this plane successfully requires full flaps, trim full up, power adjustments to match the desired descent profile, and tiny precise pitch adjustments to hold 90. Flaring is difficult because this plane is big and judging your height is a new experience. The eye level to ground distance is about 6 or 7 feet. If you flare low it's a hard bounce on the nose wheel. If you flare high you can use up 1000 feet of runway in 5 seconds. Chris made it clear that 90 was the number, not 88 and not 93. In the flare, it takes a lot of strength to get the nose all the way up. Actually that's not true. I had to pull firmly but definitely with a lot more force than other planes I'm used to. I thought I had the stick all the way back but Chris asked me to pull harder and I found a bit more up before it hit the stops.

I had expected this plane to fly like a Seneca but it is much more responsive and much more demanding. I am now realizing that this plane is way more challenging than I expected and it will be a few more flights before my flight test. After a day off to let the experience set in I was ready for my second flight.

Brian



(Ed.-Part two will follow in next months issue.)



Calendar of coming Aviation events

First Saturday each month-
CEN3 Three Hills, AB. Fly- Coffee 9:00 to 12:00 noon.

Second Saturday each month-
CYXH Medicine Hat, AB. Fly-in Breakfast 8:00 to 12:00.

Third Saturday each month-
CEK6 Flagstaff - Killam/Sedgewick, AB. Coffee and Treats by Shelly.

Third Saturday each month-
CEG4 Drumheller, AB. Coffee.

Fourth Saturday each month-
CEX3 Wetaskiwin, AB. Coffee 9:00 to 12:00

Fourth Saturday each month-
CFX6 Vulcan AB. Coffee

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

CLASSIFIED

Buy and Sell

All things related to Aviation

2006 Blue Yonder EZFlyer — $15,000 OBO





2006 build Blue Yonder EZFlyer
Rotax 912UL 80 hp approx 150 hrs
New wing fabric 2025, Polyfiber medium weight
Asking $15,000.00 or make me a good offer!

Doug Eaglesham eaglesham.de@gmail.com

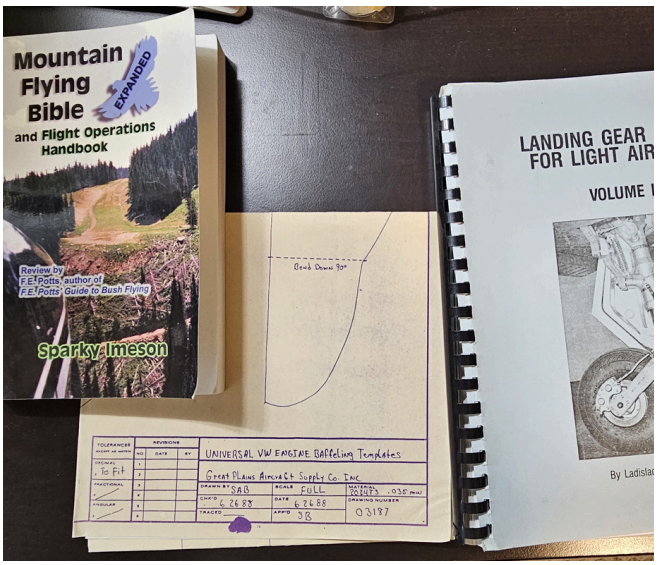
WANTED: Dual Comm VHF Transceiver Radio

Must be a panel mount installation type, Not Handheld.

Dirkjan Kiewiet 403-978-6481 kiewiet@shaw.ca

Cleaning out garage items

I've been cleaning out the garage and found these items. If anyone in the Club is interested, the books and baffle plans are free. I'd like to get $100 for the tail wheel (plus shipping). Cheers.





A couple of Books and Baffle Plans for a VW Engine, Free.

6" Matco tailwheel $100, plus shipping.

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