



The Step

*The Official News letter of the BC Floatplane Association
April 2006 Issued quarterly Volume 2 Edition 21*

Message from The President

For us northerners, float flying season is still a month away but a good time to give your bird all the TLC you can muster. We are always looking for good maintenance or operating tips so if any member has information or tips on general maintenance (engine, airframe, floats, props, upholstery, avionics etc) please send them to Matthew McBride (E-mail Address matthew@mcmi.ca) and he will include them in future issues of 'The Step'. We are also interested in flying adventures so if you or someone you know has a good story to tell, please pass this along to Matthew as well.

Our Annual General Meeting is on July 15th this year at our usual venue at Nimpo Lake. We are putting together an interesting program with details to follow soon. We are on the look out for interesting items for the program so if you have any thoughts on what you would like to see, please let us know.

As usual there will be a turnover of directors and we are actively seeking people willing to let their name stand to help carry on the necessary work of our association. Directors Don Wightman (E-mail Address 'donw@professional-mechanical.bc.ca') and Paul Collard (E-mail Address 'collardp@telus.net') are heading up a nominating committee so contact either of them if you are interested getting involved or want more information.

We hope all members received the BCFA calendar this year. The pictures on the calendar were provided by John Baker and feature two lakes in Tatlatui Park (lower photo is Tatlatui Lake and the upper photo is Trygve lake). The upper inset is of Fenton Lake in Tweedsmuir park, the site of a stewardship project (garbage cleanup) we did last summer. We have received very favourable response from BC Parks officials on both the cleanup project and the calendars. We have provided calendars to key BC Parks officials and other dignitaries (MLA's etc)

I hope everyone has a very safe and rewarding flying season this year and I look forward to seeing you at Nimpo Lake on July 15th.

Keith Monroe
President, BCFA

Where to Find Fuel

By Matthew McBride

Monty Exton called me earlier this month with a great idea, and we need your help. Every float pilot, over time, develops an inventory of places to find fuel, supplies and the ongoing essentials of adventure flight. Perhaps you have a favourite lake, hideaway etc., where you can get fuel, oil, and other items.

We would like to compile such a list, and make it available to BCFA members. If you have any such information, please send it in to me and I will work with Monty to create a guide for the float pilot. Please include the long/lat, location name, and any attributes of the site that a pilot might find valuable, such as deadheads, take-off and landing dynamics, etc.

Editor's Remarks

By Matthew McBride

Greetings from Montreal! My business activities have seen me on the road constantly since the beginning of the year, and I have had only three weeks in my own bed! I have been to Belgium, Switzerland, Calgary, Toronto and Montreal (4 times), and in between won a new radio station licence from the CRTC and filed for another! I now operate radio stations CHMZ in Tofino, and soon, CIMM in Ucluelet. Whew....apologies for the tardy arrival of The Step.

One of my trips in February took me to Belgium, and I took a few days to visit the Western Front at Ypres, and rode a bicycle from Ypres to Flanders along the Salient, to Passchendaele and the Tyne Cot Military Cemetery, the largest one on earth with 12,000 permanent residents, and through to Col. John McCrae's farm where he wrote In Flanders Fields.

As I rode through this bit of history, where my grandfather, an Old Contemptible, fought for four years straight, I imagined what it would be like flying over the countryside like the pilots of the Great War, with open cockpits, leather helmets, and a wild and finicky assortment of flying machines. Life expectancy was short, and the flying units of all sides experienced up to 70% casualty rates. Courage, indeed.

Two things arose from my visit to Flanders...one, an overwhelming urge to fly in an open cockpit aircraft, and two, how a flying service taking guests up in such an aircraft might perform in the area.

I have much to consider this summer. Hope your flights and dreams all end up happy and safely.

Your continued feedback, suggestions and input are greatly appreciated. Our next edition is July 1, 2006 and there's no time like the present to make your submission, send your letter, photo etc. Send it all to spazz900@shaw.ca or matthew@mcmi.ca so I can get to work on it!

Landing the 'big one'

"Just looked out the window...."



Steve Nunn's letter to Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency regarding the Banff & Jasper airstrips

*Ms. Debra Myles
Project Officer
Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency,
160 Elgin Street, 22nd Floor
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0H3*

*Re: Decommissioning of Banff and Jasper Airstrips
CEAA Reference Numbers 24540 and 24541*

Dear Ms. Myles:

As a director of the B.C. Floatplane Association I would like to respond on behalf of our members regarding the discussion of decommissioning the Banff and Jasper Airstrips. Our association represents non-commercial floatplane pilots with representation from all over the world. The B.C. Floatplane Association was formed to promote the use of floatplanes and to ensure that those special interests and uses are properly considered in

any public arena. Many of our members, myself included, convert their planes to wheels in the winter or have amphibious floats and regularly fly the Banff and Jasper corridors. We consider these two airstrips an integral part of our contingency plan for a safe flight.

Specifically I would like to address some of the comments of the February 20th letter from CPAWS (Canadian Park and Wilderness Society). Private pilots go through a significant amount of training so that we can assess and minimize our risk. BCFA also hosts recurrent training seminars to keep our pilots up to date and as safe as possible. CPAWS comment of “inherently risky activity of flying in the mountains” is both inaccurate and unqualified. I personally feel at much less risk flying above a highway than driving on it. Statistics show that general aviation is getting safer thanks to better training, more accurate weather forecasting, and GPS navigation showing the nearest airport. Currently, because of the closure of Banff and Jasper, this vital safety feature does not display these airstrips.

I do agree with Mr. Poulton’s comment that we are a smaller group and because of this we unfortunately don’t have the political clout that some other special interest groups may have. I believe our national parks should accommodate all types of Canadians, not just the largest or most vocal. As far as environmental concerns go, more cars drive by the Banff strip in an hour than planes would land in a year!

CPAWS comment of “a scofflaw attitude from a small group” is the exact opposite of what BCFA has achieved with our own provincial park organization. We worked together to reach a mutually beneficial agreement and have partnered with them to promote the parks and be “their eyes” where they cannot be. We help track usage of lake access via our website and we have a joint Stewardship program where we fly in erect outhouses and camp facilities. Furthermore, last fall our association flew out 600 lbs of garbage from one site alone. This is the kind of partnership and common goal of bettering the park is one, which every Canadian can be proud of. I would be happy to coordinate a meeting for you to discuss this with our provincial park authorities.

Lastly CPAWS mentions the “historical effort to restore a key part of the ecological dynamics...” I might remind you that the airstrips have long been a part of the parks, significantly longer than any campaign to try and remove these important airstrips. The private airplane largely discovered Western Canada and it would be a shame to loose that bit of heritage.

BCFA strongly opposes the decommissioning of the Banff and Jasper Airstrip. We feel that this is a vital safety issue when flying these corridors and do not see any environmental justification to increase our risk.

*Yours truly,
Steve Nunn*

*cc: The Hon. Rona Ambrose, Minister of Environment
Don Bell, North Vancouver, B.C. MP
Myron Thompson, Wild Rose, Alberta MP*

An Airline Of Your Own?

By Matthew McBride

I have recently been made aware of a retiring air taxi owner with two fabulous float-equipped aircraft as part of the deal. The operating certificate is good, and if you are as interested in this venture as I am, do not hesitate to get in touch with me at 604-220-8393 or spazz900@shaw.ca.

A Cautionary Tale

By Keith Monroe

Its often been said that flying can be described as hours of great pleasure interspersed with moments of sheer terror. I'm sure all pilots have experienced both feelings. One of my adventures began on the morning of June 10th, 1984. I had purchased a Cessna 180 (C-FSGP) about a month earlier and had about 10 hours on it. This airplane had been sitting in Quesnel for about 3 years and hadn't flown during that period. I was a bit concerned about that when I purchased the airplane so I took my AME with me when we went to pick it up. We did a very thorough check on everything but found everything to be working fine. Engine leak down tests were within acceptable range and there was no problems with all the vital signs. I flew the aircraft back to Fort St John where we were living at the time and within a few weeks put it on floats. By early June all the northern lakes had opened up so my wife and I decided to go to one of our favourite fishing lakes about 100 miles northwest of Fort St John. We were cruising along at 6500 ft and all was well. It was a beautiful day and the air was smooth. We were about ½ way to our destination when the engine started running a bit rough. I immediately did all the usual checks and observations. Oil pressure was normal and I checked both mags. On one mag it didn't run any better so I switched to the other mag. It still didn't run any better so I switched back to both. By this time I had turned around and was heading back towards Charlie Lake. After about a minute of this rough engine trauma, I noticed the oil temperature had risen significantly. My wife of course was showing signs of considerable uneasiness. I again went through all the checks, switched fuel tanks, mags again and continued to monitor the vital signs, particularly the oil temp. I had reduced power and put the aircraft in a shallow decent to increase airspeed and hopefully cool the oil some. We were also over gently rolling terrain with a few farm fields below but no water where I could land. I looked at all my landing options - in a field or swamp and none of these looked very good but by this time I was resigned to the fact that we would have to make a forced landing. About 5 minutes went by and the oil temp remained high but seemed to stabilize so I kept on a shallow, reduced power decent and on course to the nearest water which was a small man made lake called Inga Lake near the community of Wonowon. This lake was still about 15 miles away and I wasn't sure whether we could make it so I carefully observed every clearing and swamp along our path. I didn't declare an emergency although I did talk to Fort St John Flight service and described my problem and intentions to them. The oil temp remained high but had stabilized. The engine continued to run rough but we were able to

keep about a 300 ft/minute decent with reduced power. What a relief when we finally saw Inga lake on the horizon. This lake is quite small, less than ½ mile in length and had a number of lily pads spotting its surface. We were able to find a spot about 300 yds long that didn't have any weeds and put the 180 on the lake. I heeled the aircraft onto a small beach, removed the cowling to see if there was any reason for the 'moments of sheer terror'. There were no leaks or indication of any obvious failure. I started removing spark plugs and when I got the number 5 plugs, I found the problem. Both plugs were fouled very badly and soaked in an oily sludge.

We walked out to the Alaska Hwy and hitch hiked back to Charlie Lake (home). The next day I took my AME out and we removed the #5 cylinder. There was a hole in the #5 piston that you could put your small finger through. The aircraft had sat unused at Quesnel for those 3 years and the pulp mill corrosion had affected that cylinder enough that after about 10 hrs of running, it blew a hole through the piston. This problem of course didn't show up with leak down tests at the time I took possession of the aircraft. We replaced the #5 cylinder and pulled #1 and #3 as well. There was no problem with the other cyls so with just myself and 5 gals of gas, I took off from Inga Lake and back to Charlie lake. Later that year, I sold the airplane to a fellow in Alaska as I had an opportunity to buy a 185 (the one I still own). As fate would have it, the new owner of FSGP killed himself and passengers when he had a mid air collision with another aircraft near Homer Alaska.

Lesson learned: Be very wary of an aircraft that hasn't run for a long time. In retrospect, we were lucky in a way. When I switched to one mag with the engine running rough, that spark plug fouled. When I switched to the other mag, the second plug fouled. That saved our bacon in that we didn't have hot gasses blowing into the crankcase. With both plugs fouled, the engine ran fine (albeit rough) on 5 cyls and the oil temp stabilized because it quit firing into the crankcase. Of course we didn't know what was happening in the air and our only thought was to get down safely.

PS. My wife does still fly with me.

Aviation Humour....sort of.

"Flight 2341, for noise abatement turn right 45 degrees." "But Center, we are at 35,000 feet. How much noise can we make up here?" "Sir, have you ever heard the noise a 747 makes when it hits a 727?"



When one engine fails on a twin engine airplane you always have enough power left to get you to the scene of the crash.



Blue water Navy truism; There are more planes in the ocean than there are submarines in the sky.



The three most common expressions (or famous last words) in aviation are: "Why is it doing that?", "Where are we?" and " Oh Shit!"



Weather forecasts are horoscopes with numbers.



Aviation Calendar