

Small birds fly big trip



Three Canadian Challenger ultralights and their owners fly big cross-country trip to the U.S. and back. See story on page B-1

Photo courtesy Claude Roy

Happy 60th! COPA celebrates 60 years in 2012

This year the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association turns 60 years old, so we will be doing some special celebrating in 2012.

The idea to form COPA was born in April, 1952. Laurentian Air Services pilot John Bogie was having lunch in the Ottawa Flying Club lounge with Spartan Air Services pilot Bill Pepler and Paul Saunders when Ottawa pilot Margaret Carson came storming in and declared that something had to be done about the way small aircraft owners and operators were being mistreated by the government.

At the time no one was looking after the small operators and individual aircraft owners in Canada.

One of the issues that sparked Carson's initiative was the application of highway tax on aviation gas.

As a result of that informal discussion, interested local Ottawa pilots chipped in \$5 each to pay for printing and mailing of notices. An organization meeting was held on Friday, Dec. 12, 1952, at 1:30 p.m. in the Ottawa Flying Club lounge. Bogie acted as chairman of the meeting and Carson acted as secretary.

From those humble beginnings COPA grew to be the largest aviation association in Canada. To mark this 60th milestone we will publish a feature on the history of COPA in the April *COPA Flight*, celebrate the 60th anniversary at the COPA National Fly-in/AGM in June, offer special commemorative items from the COPA Collection and we will be asking you, the members, what you think about COPA in a 2012 survey.

Happy New Year and Happy Birthday!

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COPA 2012 survey We want to know what you think

COPA will be conducting a survey of its members in January 2012.

The survey is to make sure that the association serves its members as best as possible. This is done by asking members for their opinions about aviation issues, the services COPA provides and also by collecting demographic data which enables COPA to better understand who its members are.

The last COPA membership survey was carried out in 2007 and the plan at that time was to follow up with another one five years later to see what has changed and to get new information on what members think about COPA and aviation issues.

As a result of the feedback we received from our survey in 2007, we have made significant improvements to our services. Here are three of these improvements:

1. Since 95% of COPA members indicated that they had internet access and more than half of those who access COPA's website had indicated the need for the COPA website to be reorganized and improved, the new COPA website went live in June 2009.

2. COPA Flights (local chapters) scored high under the membership benefits question and so we restructured the concept and rekindled the enthusiasm in COPA Flights. Since then, 30 new COPA Flights were formed, over 60 Flights have reactivated their Flight status and local events have grown significantly.

3. COPA members manifested the importance of attracting youth to aviation, so COPA launched its own COPA For Kids Aviation program in February 2010.

The 2012 COPA survey will be conducted by an experienced consultant, Dr. Keith Christopher, from KC Surveys. Once all the completed surveys are returned he will analyze the data received and prepare a report highlighting recommendations for COPA.

The 2012 survey will be done by two methods. A se-

lected sample of COPA members will receive the survey questionnaire by mail with a stamped self-addressed return envelope. Any COPA members who do not receive a paper survey in the mail will be invited to complete the survey on-line on the COPA website.

All COPA members who complete a paper or on-line survey will be automatically entered in a draw for a Sennheiser S1 headset, the Quiet Revolution from Sennheiser Canada. Additional prizes provided courtesy of COPA, VIP Pilot Centre and Aircraft Spruce Canada. If you don't complete the survey, you can't win!

COPA will publish a report of the survey results along with regular updates summarizing our progress in implementing what the survey tells us. This information will be published in *COPA Flight* and posted on the COPA website. All individual responses will be kept confidential and only summary results will be published.

The COPA 2012 survey will be mailed out near the end of January. At about the same time the COPA website will allow members who do not receive a paper survey to complete it on line during first week of February.

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Happy New Year 7th floor inconvenience

The building which is home to COPA HQ in Ottawa is undergoing a complete elevator replacement from now to possibly February of 2012. Any meetings during this time will be held at more easily accessible locations. Our office will be staffed during this major renovation to answer your calls and receive your mail.



CANADIAN OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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COPA protects Personal Aviation and promotes it as a valued, integral and sustainable part of the Canadian Community.

The Big Splash-in



The three flyer friends: Claude Roy, Kevin Brown and Patrick Vinet at the Pittsfield Airport, in central Maine.



Above: Patrick taxiing for takeoff on Lake Ossipee, New Hampshire.

At left: Challengers following the Trans-Canada Highway in northwest New Brunswick.

Flyer friends head south on float-flying adventure

By Kevin Brown, Claude Roy and Patrick Vinet

In 2010, the International Challenger Owners Association (ICOA) organized a wonderful float flying trip to AirVenture in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, home of the biggest fly-in in the world. So how can you surpass that? For a float plane guy, there is such a ticket: going to the biggest seaplane fly-in in the world!

Held every year since 1973 on Moosehead Lake near Greenville, Maine, USA, the International Seaplane Fly-in (www.seaplanefly-in.org) brings in thousands of participants and spectators to the Moosehead Region on the weekend after Labour Day.

This flying adventure was dubbed "The Big Splash-in."

Our original idea was to enter the U.S. via New Brunswick and fly to the 38th running of this four-day event to be held on Sept. 8-11, 2011. Following our visit to Moosehead Lake, a round-about return trip would bring us through Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts to New York State and the beautiful Hudson River Valley.

The trip project was publicly announced at the Annual Challenger Winter Weekend Rendezvous, held on the first weekend of February at the beautiful Chateau Montebello in Montebello, Que.

This year, three people answered the

initial call: Kevin Brown from Port Elgin, Ont., flying a 2005 Challenger II C-IFBL; Claude Roy from Ottawa, Ont., flying his 1992 Challenger II C-IROY; and Patrick Vinet from St-Jovite, Que., flying his 1989 Challenger II C-GMAV.

Having extensive experience in organizing long-range cross-country flights, Claude takes on the task of preparing an initial flight plan and he gets it circulated amongst the partners for discussion and approval. There will be no ground support this year, but three American friends will be visited on the return part of the trip.

As Kevin's aircraft is further west than the rest of the trio, it makes sense that he gets airborne first and fly eastbound to Ottawa to pick up Claude. From there, the two will fly to the Mont Tremblant St-Jovite Airport where Patrick is situated. From there, the group of three Challengers will fly east towards New Brunswick.

The original invitation had been made to entice the contingent of ICOA members from the Maritimes to participate. The official trip destination would be achieved by going to New Brunswick first and then by entering the U.S. via the Houlton International Airport, in Northern Maine. Unfortunately the dates of the event were too close to East Coast Challenger rendezvous in Nova Scotia, so no one from the east coast took advantage of the group's expertise to go flying into U.S. airspace.



Claude's plane docked on beautiful Lake Ossipee, New Hampshire.

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Kevin and Patrick ready to mix at the Rivière-du-Loup, Airport, Quebec.



Above: Kevin's Challenger C-IFBL in the mountains of central Maine. Do you trust your engine?



At left: Destination at last! Kevin has just landed at the Greenville Airport, Maine.

The Big Splash-in

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The trip was not without its own peculiar challenges. Nevertheless, the group safely covered over 1,280 air miles (2,060 kms) in 11 days, landing on about 20 occasions while visiting wonderful places, meeting with great people and making many new friends. Here is our account of each one of these 11 days of adventure.

Day 1, Monday, Sept 5.

Mostly cloudy, 17 degrees C, winds northwest, 20 km/hr.

Kevin indeed is the first one to get airborne eastbound (from his own personal field in Keady, Ontario). Kevin leaves home a couple of days early in advance of a cold front that is bringing rain for the next few days. He arrives at Carleton Place, situated south west of Ottawa, to meet with Claude so they can make the original Monday morning departure on Labour Day.

When the time comes, there is no way the group can make its original plan of flying to Montmagny, Que. for the night. The weak cold front Kevin managed to get ahead of is sweeping through and rain is expected here and there until tomorrow sometime.

The best the group can do is for Claude and Kevin to hook up with Patrick in Mont-Tremblant and wait for the weather to improve. So Kevin and Claude spend Monday morning preparing for an early afternoon departure from Carleton Place at 2 p.m.

It is tough going. Due to low clouds, the maximum altitude possible is 2,500 ASL. As you know, the St-Jovite Airport is situated in inhospitable terrain with mountains all around. Fully loaded and with detours to make in the valleys, the initial flight path is stretched too much. Claude's aircraft runs out of gas at circuit altitude, with the St-Jovite Airport in sight on the other side of town.

Fortunately, The St-Jovite area is surrounded with lakes, so Claude makes a dead-stick approach onto Lac Maskinongé, just south of town. Floats become very handy and the silent landing is done along the shore with nobody around noticing. Once in the water, Claude paddles his way to a nearby empty dock next to the Base Plein Air Mont-Tremblant.

In the meantime, Claude's situation makes Kevin very uncomfortable. "If Claude runs out of gas now, what about me?" he thinks. Claude urges him to continue flying direct to the airport, so to tell Patrick of what is happening.

Praying all the way across town, Kevin finally gets over the St-Jovite Airport without a sputter from his engine. From the overhead position and without any

traffic in the circuit, he times his approach very well with minimum use of power.

In the meantime, Claude is at the dock transferring fuel from the back seat to the main tank. Then, with his cell phone, he calls Patrick who is already in his car and on the way with Kevin. Ten minutes later, the three lads are together, laughing.

Claude can now get into his Challenger and fly off Lac Maskinongé towards the airport. He does so and, minutes later, all three Challengers are reunited on firm ground.

That's enough excitement for one day. Patrick invites his friends to a great evening at the family cottage within walking distance from the airport. Tomorrow's weather looks better and plans are drawn accordingly during the evening.

Day 2, Tuesday, Sept 6.

Mostly cloudy, 19 degrees C, winds northeast 20 km/hr.

Patrick is up early to prepare breakfast and get the many wheels in motion. Once the logistics are all done, the three planes can depart from St-Jovite at 10:30 a.m. The flight brings them straight to the Trois-Rivières (Que.) Airport where lunch and refuelling are accomplished.

Before departing from Trois-Rivières, Kevin notices that his voltmeter is not working. This is not a big issue for the moment, so the group decides to continue towards Montmagny (Que).

All goes well and the next flight towards Montmagny is made over the St. Lawrence River at 1,500 ASL. Unfortunately, Quebec Terminal does not allow the flight to go right through the Quebec

City area to destination. The flight is then diverted south to the St. Lambert (Que.) Airport, which gives the group the opportunity to revisit their old friend Jacques Gagné.

After transferring gas from the back seats, the take off from St. Lambert is uneventful. About an hour later, all airplanes land gracefully in Montmagny. Once everything is packed up for the night, a taxi picks up the group to some fine sleeping accommodations downtown.

Tomorrow's activities are discussed for a while and everybody goes to bed at 11 p.m.

Day 3, Wednesday, Sept. 7.

Cloudy, 20 degrees, winds northeast 10 km/hr.

The first thing we do this morning is to go to the Canadian Tire "Aviation Department" to buy batteries for Claude and Kevin's SPOT. Then we go to the airport to work on solving Kevin's electrical problem.

Unfortunately, the problem is more difficult to locate than expected. It seems that the voltmeter itself is the culprit. So it gets bypassed and the guys get airborne soon after lunch and have a nice flight along the St. Lawrence River to Rivière-du-Loup (Que).

With main power restored, Kevin follows the group from Rivière-du-Loup southbound towards St. Leonard (New Brunswick). Once there, the local reception committee is out there to greet the travelers. Serge and Pierre do all they possibly can for the guys. That includes a ride to the Daigle Motel, the best overnight

accommodation in town.

Kevin, at this time, is reminded to the fact Francophones, when they are together, are very talkative, and always using lots of expression in their tone of voices and with their hands. He does his best to listen and try to comprehend what is said around him.

After a good meal at the Motel's dining room, the eAPIS (electronic Advance Passenger Information System) work gets done on Claude's portable computer. Tomorrow will be a big day.

Day 4, Thursday, Sept. 8.

Sunny, 21 degrees C, winds northwest 10 km/hr.

The group has no problem following a routine of getting up at 7 a.m., going to breakfast by 8 a.m. and being at the airport by 9 a.m. The first thing they do is to advise the U.S. Customs of their arrival later that day. They also file an international VFR flight plan with the Houlton (ME) International Airport.

The flight to enter the U.S. goes exactly as planned. They land within two minutes of the planned landing time. The U.S. Customs, as always, are easy going and curious about these unusual travelers, asking lots of questions about these special "air vehicles." They laugh, shake their heads, mostly in the "no" direction, and vanish away.

The next flight from Houlton to Millinocket (ME) goes well, except for Patrick. He is concentrating so much on his RPM gauge reading too low that he forgets to lower his main gear down. He pays a heavy price for it: a lot of laughter and ribbing from his two companions.

The trip continues and the fibreglass repair will wait. The last flight of the day from Millinocket to Greenville (ME) is over rough terrain, forcing the group to climb to 3,800 ASL to clear some of the mountains ahead.

But what a nice view they have on the other side! Moosehead Lake, the biggest lake in the State of Maine, is just beautiful. The arrival at the airport is just in time to be able to park the airplanes, rush downtown, register quickly and climb aboard the "Katahdin," the biggest cruise ship on the lake, for an open-bar evening supper and a moonlight cruise on Moosehead Lake.



Challengers going downstream over the St. Lawrence River.

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Big Splash-in

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However, there is a price to pay, as all three men have to set up their own tent under the wing in pitch black conditions, an occasion for more laughter, indeed. Finally, exhaustion takes over and all three rest until morning sunlight or the avgas alarm clock as it became known to be called.

Day 5, Friday, Sept. 9.

Mostly sunny, 20 degrees C, winds northwest 20 gusting 30 km/hr.

Today is a lazy day and the guys need it. They get up and hop into a shuttle bus to town with their toilet kits to be able to wash and shave downtown at the Town Hall. Curiously enough, there is no shower or washing facilities at the airport. In 38 years of organizing this event, the only concession to comfort and hygiene provided to the campers under the wing are portable toilets.

After a solid breakfast, the flyers find the registration desk at the downtown docks, get their "Welcome kit" from the organizers and get back to the airport via the shuttle bus, a road distance of about five kilometres.

That's where they stay for the rest of the day. They work on their machines, have lunch on site and have a great siesta in the afternoon. Come supper time, a big hangar is suddenly transformed into a giant open-bar Meet-and-Greet, followed by the most succulent lobster supper one can imagine.

At supper time, they meet with long-time friends Yvonne and Henry McKinley from Honey Harbour, Ont. They also meet Ben and Linda Brown, local residents from Pittsfield, Maine. Ben is the region's Just Aircraft dealer and has bought some PuddleJumper floats from Patrick before. It is a pleasure to spend the evening in such great company.

Day 6, Saturday, Sept. 10.

Mostly sunny, 22 degrees C, winds northwest 25 gusting 35 km/hr.

Having had a great time last night, the group is a bit slow getting to town to wash and have breakfast. Today is contest day, where seaplane pilots demonstrate their skills in a series of competitions. At mid-morning, the winds are strong and white caps are everywhere on the surface of the water.

With these marginal and very difficult conditions Patrick is uncertain about competing, but he registers to a few competitions nevertheless before heading back to the airport to decide if he will have a go at it. Kevin and Claude will be the dock hands, if required.

Later, Patrick's name is heard on the speaker system. And there he is, flying around with the big boys, trying his luck at the spot landing contest. In front of a crowd of thousands all around the lake, Patrick places second.

Patrick then gets to shore. Wheels are put down in the water, the aircraft powers



Kevin's Challenger over the vast expanse of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Quebec.

up the ramp, Kevin and Claude watching the wing tips and clearing the crowd. It goes very well and Patrick is immediately swamped with people and questions about his amphibious Challenger.

One hour or so later, Patrick is called over the speaker system to participate in the shortest take off contest, where again, he places second. The same thing again: Patrick comes onto dry land and gets swamped with curious people, most of them confessing that they had never seen an amphibious Challenger before. Patrick is clearly the show centre and star attraction. He even gets interviewed by the *Bangor Daily News* (<http://bangordailynews.com/2011/09/11/news/piscataquis/pilots-show-skills-at-international-seaplane-fly-in-in-greenville/?ref=videos>)

Around 4 p.m., Patrick gets back into the water and flies back to the Greenville Airport. Kevin and Claude catch the next shuttle bus and meet again with a tired Patrick who is happy that everything went so well.

Some general maintenance is done on all three Challengers, leading up to supper time and another great feast for 300 guests in the same big hangar as last night. It starts with an open-bar session with appetizers of all sorts, followed by a giant all-you-can-eat buffet.

At awards presentation time, Patrick gets his two trophies for placing second in the spot landing and the short takeoff contests. On top of that, the contest organizers see fit to present Patrick with the "Sportsman of the Year" Award, crowning the pilot who most impressed the judges with his/her overall performance this year. In front of a crowd of hundreds of seaplane friends and colleagues, Patrick was justifiably beaming with pride!

Day 7, Sunday, Sept. 11.

Sunny, 23 degrees C, winds southwest 10 km/hr.

The International Seaplane Fly-in was a great experience, but it is time to get moving. After waking to the avgas alarm the group take down their tents and pack up their planes. Rather than lose time going into town for breakfast, the flyers decide to leave early knowing that breakfast will not be hard to find at the next airport.

So they get airborne by 8 a.m., on their way due south to Pittsfield (Maine). Ben Brown, the Just Aircraft dealer, is based in Pittsfield and is on site when the guys land. Eh, here is our ride for breakfast in town!

Ben is the most gracious host and even joins the group for a bite. He brings the guys back to the airport, salutes everyone and soon disappears. A few moments later, as the engines are set in motion, Ben comes back with another special character and old flying friend of Patrick, Wayne Ouellette, better known as the famous "Wayne from Maine."

Patrick takes pleasure in seeing Wayne, but keeps it short as to not delay his two flying companions. From there, it is a quick flight to the Atlantic coast and Rockland (Maine) appears in view. The view is spectacular. A picturesque coastal shoreline broken up by islands and dotted with towns, their marinas filled with boats.

After a good landing and a quick refuelling exercise, the trio gets airborne again. This time, they bypass their intended point of landing at Wiscasset (Maine) to stretch their flight all the way to Limington Harmon (Maine) Airport. This is a quaint little airport nestled in the surrounding hills, trees all around, a row of hangers lining one side of the runway.

Again, they refuel quickly to get airborne towards the day's final destination, Ossipee Lake (New Hampshire). Patrick is well connected and knows this couple, Anne and Barry Huston, who live right on the lake. They would love to be "invaded" by three float-equipped Challengers and they have the front beach property for this to be done.

So the three Challengers land and water taxi to this natural beach and docking area where their Challengers will be safe for the night. You just can't ask for more. Lake Ossipee is New Hampshire's sixth largest lake with a beautiful view of the surrounding mountains.

Once each flyer is assigned a sleeping area, they all have a chance to freshen up and look civilized once more. Then it is a departure to a local restaurant for a great feast and plenty of stories to be told.

Anne and Barry are wonderful hosts, but the flyers are fading fast from the day's full dose of excitement. So they retire early.

Day 8, Monday, Sept. 12.

Sunny, 24 degrees C, winds southwest 10 km/hr.

Another beautiful day greets the flyers. A refuelling run is performed at the nearest gas station and Barry watches the guys get ready for the next flight.

The day's destination, Keene (New Hampshire), is only one flight away, so the group enjoys Anne and Barry's hospitality until early afternoon and even go for a swim in the cold water of the lake while looking at the majestic Mount Washington in the distance. Then, the Challenger flight gets airborne, heading southwest into a light breeze.

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Patrick's Challenger C-GMAV over north central Maine.



Competition is over: Patrick is proudly talking to the locals about his Challenger and his floats.



Kevin and Patrick trying to find the right tool at the Montmagny Airport, Quebec.

Big Splash-in

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The reason to go to Keene is to meet another of Patrick's friends, Clark and Joanne Dexter. Clark is a retired optometrist, who is also a commercial pilot and flight instructor. As a retirement project, Clark just completed building an amphibious Challenger, registered N8711N.

Upon arrival, the three Challengers are parked quickly and the group is shown Clark's aircraft called the "Geeza-soarus."

Of course, three sharp sets of Challenger-trained eyes pick up a few things in the way the airplane is set up. The next two hours are spent adjusting this and that to Clark's delight. Then Claude offers to take it up and offer his assessment on how the machine behaves. Clark is interested to know how his plane compares with other Challengers.

It takes only one circuit for Claude to "certify" Clark's airplane as a perfectly normal amphibious Challenger to fly. Claude even proposes a few circuits with Clark, but time flies and Claude's offer is accepted for tomorrow morning.

A short drive in the surrounding hills brings everyone to a beautiful house with a terrace view that spans the whole valley. Clark immediately gets going on the barbecue, cooking steaks for everyone. In the meantime, Joanne makes sure the three flyers get comfortable with their assigned sleeping quarters.

The casual evening is Clark's occasion to get so many of his questions answered. The guys are only too happy to provide all the Challenger expertise Clark is looking for.

Day 9, Tuesday, Sept. 13.

Mostly sunny, 24 degrees, winds southwest 20 gusting 30 km/hr.

The valley is completely fogged in but Clarke says it always clears by midmorning, and sure enough he is right. Once replenished, they get a ride with their host to the airport for a morning of local flying. Keene airport is busy with several jet aircraft landing and departing during the morning.

Clark is especially happy with his local flying with Claude. It is the first time he flies his Challenger with anyone in the back. As for Kevin and Patrick, they are given a golden opportunity to go flying



The Katahdin cruise ship clearing the area for the competitions to start.

with Adrian Wood, just three doors away from Clark's hangar; aboard Adrian's nice Lake LA250 Amphibian aircraft registered N8408T. The boys had met Adrian who was camping next to them at the Greenville Airport, not realizing that they would meet again so soon!

It is time to get going to the next destination, another of Patrick's friends to visit in nearby New York State. Kevin runs into a little bit of trouble when he attempts to start his engine: his throttle cable has slipped. With Clark's help and tools, the problem is fixed in 15 minutes. All climb aboard for a second time and systems are now "GO" on all machines.

The flight is a direct one through the mountains, across a narrow part of Vermont to the famous Hudson River Valley. The mountains are lush green with vegetation and provide a perfect backdrop for pictures. In the middle of the Hudson River is a private island with an airstrip on it. August Field, owned by August Ferenczi, is a pure walk down Memory Lane: Old Ford Model T truck, old tractors lying around, old Piper Cubs sitting in a barn without any radios in them, etc.

One exception is Bill Scheidegger. He flies a brand-new, day-glow red SkyRanger that he and his son built, mounted on PuddleJumper amphibious floats. Having heard that the guys would be around the region, Bill and Trudy had invited Patrick and his two friends over to their place. Their hospitality is legendary.

As the guys all have their own bed supplies, Bill simply opens the door to the

family's large camper trailer, which offers three queen-size beds, one for each of the travelers. This is like paradise again!

For some reason, the guys don't stay very long in the trailer. A full case of icy cold Molson's Canadian beer and a whole pile of barbecue burgers waiting for them must be the reason.

Later, the guys gather around Claude's portable computer to enter their individual eAPIS details into the DHS (Director of Homeland Security) System. About one hour later, all receive their authorization to proceed out of the country tomorrow.

Day 10, Wednesday, Sept. 14

Mainly sunny, 23 degrees, winds northeast 15 to 20 km/hr.

No alarm clock is necessary. Following a heartfelt 'Au revoir,' the Canadian friends are airborne at 10:30 a.m. It is a wonderful flight over the whole length of Lake George and the whole length of Lake Champlain.

The flight lands on the 10,000 foot runway at the Plattsburg International Airport (an alternate landing site for the space shuttle) for refuelling and then continues towards Massena (New York) International Airport.

At 3:11 p.m., they are turned away by the Canadian Customs Officer who "needs" a minimum two-hour notice for international flight arrivals, stating that they close at 5 p.m.

The boys take that as an opportunity to have an evening "on the town" and a

proper celebration at the hotel's pub for what is a very successful adventure together.

Tomorrow will be a big day, as everyone will try to make it home. So the eAPIS timings are revised and lights are out at 10.

Day 11, Thursday, Sept. 15.

Rain in a.m., clearing in p.m., 20 degrees C, winds northwest 20 gusting 40 km/hr.

The day starts with rain and low 800-foot ceilings. The conditions improve enough to be able to go, but Claude has some air breather issues. His air filter is clogged with water, so the group waits for Claude to take his air filter off the carburetors.

By 08:30 a.m., the three Challengers are airborne and on their way across the St. Lawrence River to the Cornwall (Ont.) Airport, just minutes away on the Canadian side of the river.

Once on the ground, no Customs Officer shows up, so the guys call back and each receives a clearance confirmation number to be inscribed in their logbook.

The ceiling is still low, so the guys are given a ride to the nearest Tim Hortons, a sure sign that they are on Canadian soil. Soon past lunch time, they perform their last three-ship takeoff from Cornwall. From that point on, Patrick goes northeast towards Mont-Tremblant while Kevin and Claude go northwest towards Smiths Falls (Ont.).

Westward progress is slow and Kevin wonders if he will be able to make it home today. Claude invites him to stay with him one more day in Carleton Place, as tomorrow's weather will improve and winds will decrease. Kevin still decides to forge ahead. After a quick refuelling at the Smiths Falls Airport, the last two take to the air, Kevin westbound and Claude northbound towards their home fields.

Later that day, Claude and Patrick make it home safely, but not yet Kevin.

Two and a half hours east of Smiths Falls, with the Peterborough airport in view Kevin runs into a line of clouds with precipitation and fine ice crystals. Although the Peterborough airport is in view, a couple of miles of corn fields, bean fields, a river and some power lines separate Kevin from the airport and the engine is starting to run rough. Fortunately, right beneath him is a smooth, clear field and Kevin decides to make a precautionary landing and notifies Peterborough UNICOM.

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Patrick flying over mountainous Maine



At right: Kevin and Patrick at the Trois-Rivières Airport, Quebec.

The blind leading the blind? Patrick threading the VFR needle through loaded skies over central Maine with Kevin following.



Big Splash-in

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After landing the engine is checked, run-up with no problems and as the sun is back shining Kevin decides to continue his flight. Unfortunately, Kevin has landed in a freshly plowed field and the plane will not move.

After a few minutes hike, the farmer and his tractor are hired to flatten a runway and in no time Kevin is back in the air and 20 minutes later on the runway in Peterborough where an official looking vehicle escorts Kevin to the terminal building.

Kevin is advised that Peterborough UNICOM only received part of his radio transmission, hearing only that he was going down in a field east of the airport. They had then contacted Trenton and started their own search in a vehicle.

After a few minutes of explanation and a phone call to Trenton, Kevin ties up his plane and is offered a ride into Peterborough for a well deserved rest at a local hotel. The following day Kevin continues his trip without incident and three hours later his plane is tucked safely inside his hangar.

Conclusion

Except for Kevin who had to fly two extra days (an extra 500 miles and 11.3 hours) to and from home, the trip covered a total of 1,280 miles (2,060 kms) in 11 days for a total of 31.3 hours of engine time, for an average speed of 41 miles/hour (66 km/hour). All participants made it home safely.

What can we conclude from this adventure? We certainly can say that long-range group travel with airplanes, no matter the size of the airplanes, presents a lot of adventure. From one day to the next, you have to remain flexible and open-minded because you really don't know what will happen to you and your companions during the very next flight.



Patrick is inches and seconds away from a second-place result at the spot landing contest on Moosehead Lake.

And that is part of the attraction. A big advantage of travelling with a group is that you can draw on each other's experience and expertise. You help each other, which is what makes the trip successful. You share in the conversation at the end of the day and fall asleep content, looking forward to tomorrow and the challenges it will bring.

For more than 20 years now, the International Challenger Owners Association has organized yearly ultralight group adventures like the one above. By now, we hope you realize that the amount of fun and thrill you derive from adventure flying has nothing to do with the size of your airplane. In fact, we dare say it is inversely proportional: the smaller your airplane, the bigger your fun and thrill of flying it.

Experience is a great teacher. If you feel you don't have enough experience to do long trips like this one, start small. For example, you could easily tag along with your friends

and fly on some local daytime trip to a new – to you – place. After a while, new airports look just like any of your old familiar airports: they are a predictable combination of runways, taxiways and hangars.

By the way, if this story has piqued your interest and made you curious about where next year's Challenger float flying adventure may lead, imagine this: not east, not west, but waaaay down deep, south. Think Alabama in October... Yep, the continent is hardly big enough for Challenger ultralights.

Finally, we shall leave you with one last thought: if you are one of the many pilots who rarely flies more than a few miles from your home airport we challenge you to explore your country, gain new experiences and friends that will last a lifetime.

What is stopping you?



Adrian (left) and Kevin (right) taxiing aboard the



Above: Clark Dexter welcoming Patrick and Kevin at the Keene Airport, New Hampshire.

At left: Claude activating the SPOT Messenger after arrival to a daily destination.

Below: Clark invites Claude to a test flight in the Geeza-Soarus Squadron's Challenger.



Lake Renegade at the Keene Airport, New Hampshire.