

## OUR TRIP TO OTTAWA – JULY 2011

In 2009 my Dad and I purchased C-GFZV, a Cessna 182Q Skylane. The airplane lived most of its life at the RCMP hangar in Winnipeg, doing a bit of surveillance work but generally being pampered. Barry Mason, my uncle in Ottawa, bought FZV from the RCMP in 2008 when they were preparing to trade it in for a new Pilatus. After enjoying the airplane for a year, my uncle sold FZV to us. In late 2009 I obtained my private pilot's license and, having a number of hours in Dad's Champ and various Cessna 152's, I began my transition to FZV.



*Cessna 182Q Skylane C-GFZV*

FZV is a wonderful cross-country traveller. Plenty of room, lots of range, more instruments than I know how to use, and enough speed to get you there in a reasonable time. After our wonderful trip to Oshkosh in 2010, we decided that this summer we would stretch FZV's legs a bit more and fly to

Arnprior, Ontario to visit with my uncle and his family. Joining my Dad and I was my 11 year old nephew Joel.

We were going to start our adventure early on a Friday morning and travel from Lyncrest direct to Marathon, and from Marathon direct into Arnprior. However, when we woke up and got to our hangar at 6:15 a.m., we were met with a very light drizzle, a 200 foot ceiling with a heavy mist, and a forecast that spoke of IMC conditions until nearly noon. We wanted to have plenty of light at the far end of our journey in order to deal with any unexpected issues that might arise, so we decided to pack our gear into FZV and go back home to bed and try it again Saturday morning. It was the right call.

We could not have asked for better conditions on Saturday morning. Sunny skies and a light wind from the west that promised to increase with time and with altitude. We were off runway 09 at 6:55 a.m., straight into the rising sun, and on our way to Marathon (CYSP). Or so we thought.



*Joel in the back seat of C-GFZV, ready to go. Again.*

We had a very pleasant first hour or so. We climbed to 5500 and the winds increased as promised. FZV was cruising along without issue and we watched Manitoba drift away behind us. As we entered Ontario we could see that some of the “scattered cloud” that was forecasted to be in our way might be a little less scattered than promised. As we reached a point south of Dryden, it became fairly clear that the weatherman had lied to us. Unless his definition of “scattered” included thick cloud drifting north off of Lake Superior. Try as we did, we could not get beneath the cloud, and we had no idea just how far around the north side of Lake Superior this solid deck of clouds went. So, discretion being the better part of valour, we decided to divert north to Dryden in order to top up our tanks and wait out the weather to see if it might improve.



*Dad and Joel refuelling FZV*

We landed at Dryden (CYDN) and taxied over to the pumps. It was approaching 9:00 a.m. and it was already hot – the day was going to be

another scorcher. Although we had only been in the air for 90 minutes, we filled up our tanks and, at \$1.81 per litre (after the 12 cent per litre discount for being a COPA member), I was glad that we had plenty of “Lyncrest” gas still in the tanks. This would not be the last time on our trip that I would come to appreciate the cost of 100LL at home.

The forecast now promised us that the cloud would burn off and conditions would generally improve as the day progressed, so we decided to hang around the Dryden airport and have a very early lunch. The airport was quite busy with numerous helicopters and water bombers going in and out for fuel. There were countless forest fires north of Dryden that were creating a brisk business for Esso. We watched as a Sea King helicopter came in for fuel, and the boys at Esso station were not sure whether or not their truck was high enough to reach the fuel tank on the machine. I was quite surprised at just how big an aircraft the Sea King is.

After about two hours, we decided that the forecast looked good enough to give it another try. The weather looked to be improving somewhat along the north side of the lake, and the forecasts got better the further inland from the lake you went. Since we now had full tanks again, we decided to change our travel plans slightly and fly direct to Chapleau instead of Marathon.



*Not sure who was happier to get back in the air!*

We taxied out to the button and set course for Chapleau (CYLD). This time we picked 7500 as our altitude and it was worth the climb. With the increased tailwind we saw ground speeds at times of 155 knots. Being used to the leisurely pace of the Champ, I think Dad got a little nervous at travelling so fast! The 2.6 hour flight drifted by and before we knew it the Chapleau airport came into view off the nose of FZV. We were ready for a little more fuel (\$1.68 per litre – no deal, but certainly better than Dryden), a stretch of the legs, and a snack. The place was fairly deserted except for a couple of tired looking Cessna 337 Skymasters, and a nice Twin Otter on amphibians. As we pulled up to the pumps, a fellow came out of the Chapleau airport “terminal” to greet us. After only a few moments of discussion, we learned that this fellow and Dad had both flown together at Bradley Air Service in Carp, Ontario in 1961. This fellow told a wonderful (albeit from his standpoint harrowing) story about being a very young pilot doing snap rolls in a Piper Colt with some crazy pilot who clearly had little regard for much of anything. Of course, as it turned out, the fellow was in the Colt with him was Dad! I made Dad promise me that his “snap roll” days were over. One spin with Dad in the Champ a couple years ago still keeps me up a night ...



*Chapleau airport*

From Chapleau we set our sights on the last leg of our flight – Chapleau direct to Arnprior (CNP3). We breezed along at 7500 feet with our tailwind decreasing but still helping us along the way – we fully enjoyed it while we could as we knew it would be a different story on the way home. Two years earlier when we purchased FZV and flew it home from Arnprior, we had strong headwinds all the way – around Thunder Bay we were down to a groundspeed of 85 knots at times. So while we expected the worst going home, we savoured the help on the trip east.

As we made our way towards the Ottawa valley, we took care to avoid a few restricted airspaces near Sudbury and Pettawawa. The landscape slowly changed from trees and lakes such that we were able to see the occasional area of flat farmland – a much better option should the IO-470 stop running for any reason. As we passed the massive 150 foot parabolic-dish radio antenna at the Algonquin Radio Observatory (which is still in use for geodetic and deep space network services), then the Laurentians to our left, and on past Dad’s old stomping grounds near Eganville, we knew that we edging closer to Arnprior and the end of our day’s journey.



*North Bay airport*

As we descended to join the circuit at Arnprior for landing on runway 26, the winds let up and we had a beautiful view of the Upper Ottawa Valley, Arnprior airport, and a much needed cold beverage.



*Short final for Runway 26, Arnprior airport*



*Tied down at Mobility Lab, Arnprior Airport*

While we were in Ottawa, we asked Joel if he wanted to go see the Parliament Buildings – “Not really”. My sister’s kid is even smarter than I thought! But there were lots of interesting places to take Joel while we were in Ottawa. We spent a couple of days at my uncle’s cottage in the Laurentians during which a tremendous windstorm blew through the Ottawa valley and tore down the grandstand at the Ottawa Blues Festival. Much of Ottawa and the surrounding area was without power for half a day, and we passed countless trees – some of them quite large – which were torn down along with the power lines they landed on when they fell. We were happy to hear that no one was seriously injured at the Blues Festival – and also that FZV was still securely tied down when we got back to Arnprior the next day.

We also took Joel to the jump base for Mile High Parachuting (on Arnprior airport) where he was able to watch skydivers land, including a fellow who completed his 1500<sup>th</sup> jump – a tandem jump landing in the river next to the seaplane base. We wandered past my uncle’s Aeronca Champ on floats (which Joel referred to as “a real plane” – wonder where he gets that from?), although I have to say that a Champ with electrics is fairly foreign to me. We visited the Canadian War Museum, the “Diefenbunker”, and the Canadian Aviation and Space Museum where we were able to view all sorts of interesting classics like the De Havilland Vampire 3, the McDonnell CF-101B Voodoo, and Dad’s favourite, the Canadair Sabre 6. Joel was even able to see the very type of helicopter that his Grampa learned how to fly in 1961, the Bell HTL-6 (47G).



*Bell HTL-6 (47G)*



*Avro Lancaster X*



*Canadair CT-144 Tutor*

While in Arnprior we also got to do a little flying. Barry showed off his newest toy – his Piper Seneca II – and he also showed me how his “16 foot aluminium flying boat” works. The Lake is tremendous fun to fly. Taking off on wheels, landing on water, going for a quick dip and then back in the air – Barry says he will keep that plane forever. “It is not a great plane, and it is not a great boat, but it is an awful lot of fun”. I was also fortunate enough to have the opportunity to fly our friend Rod Berek’s Citabria for my first (and very likely only) aerobatics lesson. Loops and Chandelles are definitely not for me, although I must admit I enjoyed the ride.



*Barry's PA-34-200T Piper Seneca II C-GDCW*



*Joel ready to test-fly the Seneca*



*Rod Berek's Champion 7GCBC Citabria C-FTSP*



*Barry's LA-4 Lake C-GLAK*

Arnprior airport (formerly South Renfrew Municipal) is about an hour's drive west of downtown Ottawa, which makes it just close enough to get to Ottawa when you want to, and just far enough away to be out of the maze of

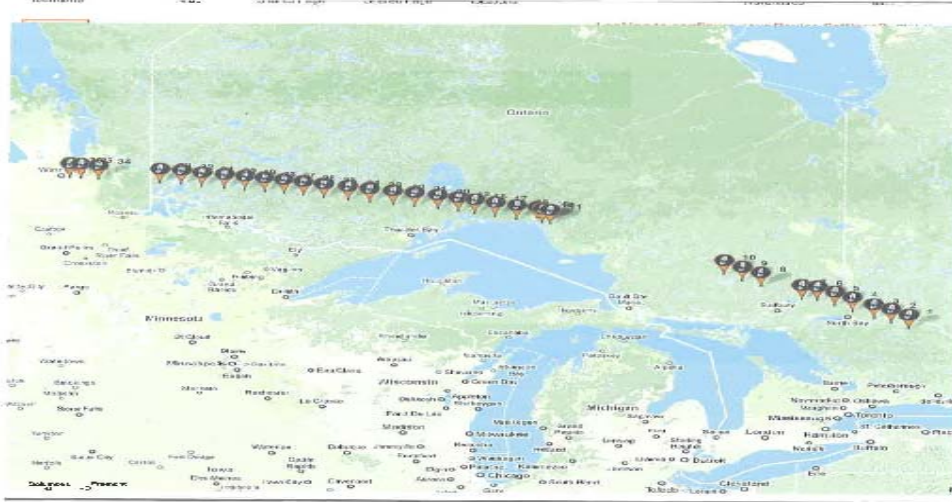
cars and people (and Ottawa's McDonald-Cartier International airspace). It is a wonderful spot for aviation enthusiasts with land and seaplane operations, the Mile High Parachute Club, and various maintenance and charter facilities all on the airport. My uncle's business, Mobility Lab, manufactures and designs parachutes and related equipment. Ontario Hydro was operating one of their helicopters out of Arnprior every day that we were there. There was never a shortage of things to see and do at and around the airport.



*Arnprior airport. Mobility Lab is the hangar with the red roof on the right of the picture.*

All too soon it was time to go home. We again planned to go direct to Marathon, and again the weatherman promised us good weather with surprisingly light winds, at least until we got closer to Thunder Bay. This time we put the sun to our backs and took off for home at 7:00 a.m. We climbed to 4500 and the ride into Marathon was smooth as silk and the winds were relatively light as forecasted. We managed 115 to 120 knots most of the way. Like every flight, you learn something. On this particular leg, the lesson was "Don't just turn SPOT on and ensure that it is

transmitting - check every once in a while to see if the ‘low battery light’ is flashing”. Once we realized that our batteries were dead, we were able to apply a lesson learned from previous trips past – carry lots of extra batteries...



*A quick battery change made all the difference ...*

Four hours later, we arrived at Marathon airport, which was completely deserted, but a very nice spot to stop nonetheless. Marathon has a nice facility with clean washrooms, eating and rest areas, an easy-to-use card lock system for fuel (even for technology-challenged pilots), and plenty of cell service available so we could use our iPad to check the weather & winds ahead. With a sandwich and water in us, and FZV fuelled up (at a trip-high cost of \$2.03 per litre - ouch), we were off on our final leg home.



*Climbing away from Marathon en route to CJL5*

One thing that was driven home for me during our trip is what a vast, expansive country we live in. Hours would go by without seeing much more than the odd seemingly-endless train crossing the lonely Canadian shield. But along with the limited evidence of civilization came the rugged and beautiful scenery that so many Canadians do not get the opportunity to see. I was also reminded of just how extensive and important the logging and mining industries still are in Canada.



*The north end of Lake Superior*



*Open pit mine 20 miles west of Graham, Ontario*

As we approached the south end of Kenora, we saw a myriad of boats, yachts, canoes, Seadoos --- almost anything that could float on water. It was Harbourfest weekend in Kenora. On a hot sunny afternoon, I think every person who owns a cottage in the Kenora area was not only at the lake, but

in a vessel of some sort. I don't think I have ever seen so many boats in the water at one time.



*Kenora, Ontario*

The winds picked up as we flew past Dryden and Kenora into Manitoba. Our ground speed slowly bled down to 100 knots and the ride became somewhat bumpy for the last hour or so. We touched down on runway 27 at Lyncrest just before 3:00 pm – 3.8 hours after leaving Marathon. The winds were 18 knots gusting to 24, but they were out of 310 so it was manageable in the 182. FZV is a nice, strong, sturdy airplane that has helped me learn how to handle crosswinds safely in ways that the Champ won't (or perhaps more accurately, in ways my Dad won't let the Champ).

I feel so fortunate to have had the opportunity to make this trip with my Dad and Joel. Aside from all the fun we had together and the memories I will keep with me forever, I am truly grateful for the chance I was given to enjoy more flying experiences in various different aircraft, to expand my flying experiences by landing and operating out of a number of different airports that were previously foreign to me, and to have explored our wonderful country a little more. For me, it was a dream come true.



*Somewhere over northern Ontario ...*

And just maybe, it was the start of another young aviator's dream as well ...



*Sleeping on the clouds ...*

Flight times:

Lyncrest divert Dryden – 1.2 hours, 164 NM, average 130 KTS

Dryden > Chapleau – 2.6 hours, 390 NM, average 150 KTS

Chapleau > Arnprior – 2.4 hours, 322 NM, average 134 KTS

Arnprior > Marathon – 4.0 hours, 455 NM, average 114 KTS

Marathon > Lyncrest – 3.8 hours, 421 NM, average 111 KTS

TOTAL TRIP – 14 hours, 1752 NM, average 125 KTS

Mark Mason

Hangar 24

August 4, 2011