

*Apr 30, 2015*

*Source: AVCANADA website  
courtesy of Larry Verbitsky*

Warm, late afternoon spring day. Go to the hangar, open up the big door, listen to the soft breeze.

Take my time doing a good spring cleaning, vacuuming my daughter's errant Cheerios off the floor, clean each window surface, inside and out, wipe down the instrument panel, clean all the bugs off my leading edges.

Taking my time, enjoying the peace and quiet of the small uncontrolled airport in the countryside. Hear a piston engine start up at the other end of the field.

Time for the reward. Pull out, start up, taxi down the narrow taxiway. The liftoff is gentle into the light breeze. Barely a ripple of turbulence. Turn right, climb 2000 for the Hamilton harbour, call up Hamilton to pass through their zone. Cleared, right over top at 2500. Fly right over their field, those 2 big intersecting runways like an artists creation from the air. Aren't all airports like art from the sky?

Clear of YHM, down past York to the lake, 1000 agl. Radio goes quiet, it's just me, the steady sound of that 0-540 turning, and looking down at the farms, houses and windmills that are new to the area. Lake Erie shimmers bright blue ahead, an endless sea.

I turn left to follow, towards Dunnville and the now closed airport there -- invaded by those same windmills, runways marked with that forbidding X. Air is smooth as glass, 3 finger flying. Left again back north, following the river as it twists and turns, back towards York. 10 years a pilot, I'd never flown down here before.

Call up YHM again, they are quiet so their zone is mine. Cross east of the field, over homes, a steel mill or 2, over the harbour, and goodnight Hamilton as the late afternoon sky takes on that soft lighting we all love to see. The escarpment beckons ahead. I fly along the edge, descend slowly towards the pattern. Gear down, flaps 10, carb hot. Do my checks, Main Green and Mirror.

Overhead, the pattern is quiet. Like the whole sky is mine. Left downwind, set up for landing, slow to 80, wow the air is so calm. What a pleasure. Base, down to 70, now on final, still fingertip control, it's so nice. Hold it off, play don't - let - it - land.....that nice soft horn, 1 foot off the ground, touchdown.

Put away. Plugs in, all done. Early evening now. Stare at the escarpment, listen to the bird sounds. Watch the light get softer.

I resolve to myself, to do this kind of flight -- just for me -- more often. It's not gotten old. 40 minutes airtime -- I feel renewed.

The sheer pleasure of flight.