



# AV-GASS



The Nanaimo Flying Club  
P.O. Box 6  
Nanaimo, B.C.  
V9R 5K4

Meetings will be held on the **third Sunday** of each month at 09:30.  
Executive meetings will be held one hour before the General Meeting.

President — John Hubbard  
Vice President — Dan LaRose  
Treasurer — Joyce Clarke  
Secretary (temp) — Jim Hannibal

Directors  
Gordon Trites  
Lee Pond  
Joe Mondok  
Doug Tyce  
Ken Griffith

AV-GASS  
John Owen

Club phone number is (250) 245-3620

## Club Events

Annual Fly-in and pancake breakfast — first Sunday in June.  
Poker run — first Saturday in June, lots of great prizes.  
Pig Roast — on the evening of the poker run.



Donna and Frank are cooking breakfast and  
lunch for those fliers that travel on their stomach.  
Weekends!

# The Tobacco Fields

*by Chuck Ellsworth*

**F**or generations the farmers of southern Ontario have planted, cared for, harvested and cured tobacco in a small area on the northern shores of Lake Erie. Our part in this very lucrative cash crop was aerial application of fertilizers and pesticides better known as crop dusting. At the end of the twentieth century this form of farming is slowly dying due to the ever-increasing movement of the anti-smoking segment of society. Although few would argue the health risks of smoking it is interesting that our government actively supports both sides of this social problem. Several times in the past ten or so years I have rented a car and driven back to the tobacco farming area of Southern Ontario, where over forty years ago I was part of that unique group of pilots who earned their living flying the crop dusting planes. The narrow old highways are still there, but like the tobacco farms they are slowly fading into history as newer and more modern freeways are built.

The easiest way of finding tobacco country is to drive highway 3, during the nineteen forties and early fifties this winding narrow road was the main route from Windsor through the heart of tobacco country and on to the Niagara district. Soon after leaving the modern multi lane 401 to highway 3 you will begin to realize that although it was only a short drive you have drifted back a long way in time. Driving through the small villages and towns very little has changed and life seems to be as it was in the boom days of tobacco farming, when transients came from all over the continent for the harvest. They came by the hundreds to towns like Aylmer, Tillsonburg, Delton and Simcoe, these towns that were synonymous with tobacco have changed so little it is like going back in time. Several of the airfields we flew our Cubs, Super Cubs and Stearman out of in the fifties and early sixties are still there. Just outside of Simcoe highway 3 runs right past the airport and even before turning into the driveway to the field I can see that after all these years nothing seems to have changed. I could be in a time warp and can imagine a Stearman or Cub landing and one of my old flying friends getting out of his airplane after another morning killing tobacco horn worms, and saying come on Chuck let's walk down to the restaurant and have breakfast. The tobacco hornworm was a perennial pest and our most important and profitable source of income. Most of my old companion's names have faded from memory as the years have passed and we went our different ways but some of them are easy to recall. Like Lorne Beacroft a really great cropduster and Stearman pilot. Lorne and I shared many exciting adventures in our airplanes working together from the row crop farms in Southern Ontario to conifer release spraying all over Northern Ontario for the big pulp and paper companies. Little did we know then that many years later I would pick up a newspaper thousands of miles away and read about Lorne being Canada's first successful heart transplant. I wonder where he is today and what he is doing? There are others, Tom Martindale whom I talked to just last year after over forty years, now retired having flown a long career with Trans Canada Airlines, now named Air Canada. Then there was Howard Zimmerman who went on to run his own helicopter company and still in the aerial applying business last I heard of him. And who could forget Bud Boughner another character that just disappeared probably still out there somewhere flying for someone.

I have been back to St. Thomas, another tobacco farming town on highway 3 twice in the last several years to pick up airplanes to move for people in my ferry business. The airport has changed very little over the years. The hangar where I first learned to fly cropdusters is still there with the same smell of chemicals that no Ag. Pilot can ever forget. It is now the home of Hicks and Lawrence who were in the business in the fifties and still at it, only the airplanes have changed.

My first flying job started in that hangar, right from a brand new commercial license to the greatest flying job that any pilot could ever want. There were twenty-three of us who started the crop dusting course early that spring, in the end only three were hired and I was fortunate to have been one of them. With the grand total of 252 hours in my log book I started my training with an old duster pilot named

George Walker. Right from the start he let me know that I was either going to fly this damned thing right on its limits and be absolutely perfect in flying crop spraying patterns or the training wouldn't last long. It was fantastic not only to learn how to really fly unusual attitudes but do it right at ground level.

To become a good crop duster pilot required that you accurately fly the airplane to evenly apply the chemicals over the field being treated. We really had to be careful with our flying when applying fertilizers in early spring as any error was there for all to see as the crop started growing. This was achieved by starting on one side of the field maintaining a constant height, airspeed and track over the crop. Just prior to reaching the end of your run full power was applied, and at the last moment the spray booms were shut off and at the same time a forty-five degree climb was initiated. As soon as you were clear of obstructions a turn right or left was made using forty five to sixty degrees of bank. After approximately three seconds a very quick turn in the opposite direction was entered until a complete one hundred and eighty degree change of direction had been completed. If done properly you were now lined up exactly forty-five feet right or left of the track you had just flown down the field. From that point a forty-five degree dive was entered and with the use of power recovery to level flight was made at the exact height above the crop and the exact airspeed required for the next run down the field in the opposite direction to your last pass. Speed was maintained from that point by reducing power.

To finish the course and be one of the three finally hired was really hard to believe. To be paid to do this was beyond belief. When the season began we were each assigned an airplane, a crash helmet, a tent and sleeping bag and sent off to set up what was to be our summer home on some farmer's field. Mine was near Langdon just a few miles from Lake Erie. Last year I tried without success to find the field where my Cub and I spent a lot of that first summer. Time and change linked with my memory of its location being from flying into it rather than driving to it worked against me and I was unable to find it. Remembering it however is easy, how could one forget crawling out of my tent just before sunrise to mix the chemicals? Then pump it into the spray tank and hand start the cub. Then to be in the air just as it was getting light enough to see safely and get in as many acres as possible before the wind came up and shut down our flying until evening. Then with luck the wind would go down enough to allow us to resume work before darkness would shut us down for the day.

The company had a very good method for assuring we would spray the correct field. Each new job was given to us by the salesman who after selling the farmer drew a map for the pilots with the location of the farm and each building and its color plus all the different crops were written on the map drawn to scale. As well as the buildings all trees, fences and power lines were drawn to scale. It was very easy for us to find and positively identify our field to be sprayed and I can not remember us making any errors in that regard. Sadly there were too many flying errors made and during the first three years that I crop-dusted eight pilots died in this very demanding type of flying in our area. Most of the accidents were due to stalling in turns or hitting power lines, fences or trees. One new pilot who had only been with us for two weeks died while doing a low level stall turn and spinning in, he was just too low to recover from the loss of control. He had been on his way back from a spraying mission when he decided to put on an airshow at the farm of his girlfriend of the moment. This particular accident was to be the last for a long time as those of us who were flying for the different companies in that area had by that time figured out what the limits were that we could not go beyond.

Even though there were a lot of accidents in the early years they at least gave the industry the motivation to keep improving on flying safety, which made a great difference in the frequency of pilot error accidents. Agricultural flying has improved in other areas as well especially in the use of toxic chemicals. In 1961 Rachel Carson wrote a book called "The silent spring." This book was the beginning of public awareness to the danger of the wide area spraying of chemicals especially the use of D.D.T. to control Mosquitoes and black flies. For years all over the world we had been using this chemical not really aware that it had a very long-term residual life. When Rachel's book pointed out that D.D.T. had begun to build up in the food chain in nature, she also showed that as a result many of the birds and other species were in danger of being

wiped out due to D.D.T. Her book became a best seller and we in the aerial application business were worried that it would drastically affect our business, and it did. The government agency in Ontario that regulated pesticides and their use called a series of meetings with the industry. From these meetings new laws were passed requiring us to attend Guelph agricultural college and receive a diploma in toxicology and entomology. I attended these classes and in the spring of 1962 passed the exams and received Pest Control License Class 3 - arial Applicator. My license number was 001. Now if nothing else I can say that I may not have been the best but I was the first. Without doubt the knowledge and understanding of the relationship of these chemicals to the environment more than made up for all the work that went into getting the license. From that point on the industry went to great length to find and use chemicals less toxic to our animal life and also to humans.

It would be easy to just keep right on writing about aerial application and all the exciting and sometimes boring experiences we had, however I will sum it all up with the observation that crop dusting was not only my first flying job it was without doubt the best. I flew seven seasons' crop dusting and I often think of someday giving it another go, at least for a short time.

*Chuck Ellsworth*

### **Duncan Flying Club Given Notice**

The Duncan Flying Club members received some bad news recently when they were told that they would probably have to move within a couple of years. It is too bad that this airport is going to become extinct. I am sure that the membership will be lobbying to get a new airport established. It would be a shame that a town of this size would go without one. There will probably be a void between losing the old airport and flying from a new one. We at the Nanaimo Flying Club wish them the best of luck in acquiring something new.

On a lighter note I overheard a DFC member stating that with the loss of their airport it would be fairly easy to show up at the Nanaimo Flying Club elections and form a new executive. Then they could take over the facilities. Upon inspection of our current membership list and the number of members from the Duncan area, I suspect that they have already infiltrated our ranks and truly intend to proceed with this plan.

### **They can't undermine this baby!**

The DFC members are probably looking at this airport with the thought that it can not be undermined in their lifetime anyway. Think again because it happened years ago. I talked to a resident in the Spruston Road area and he stated that a local mine, (Granby I believe he said) has a tunnel that runs from the main site on Spruston road right under the runway halfway between the button of 16 and the Buffalo Hangars. I can not verify that but perhaps someone else may have more knowledge of this tunnel. With a little imagination you can see evidence of this tunnel while driving on the highway, just before Haslam Road just inside the tree line. The other end lies just south of Spruston Road on Granby Road, which is just a large depression in the ground where the tunnel collapsed.

I was told that during the war the runway had trenches dug on each side and they were loaded with high explosives. If the Japanese invaded, then the airport could be *decommissioned in a hurry!*

#### **Good News Bad News**

Constant speed props 10 years to overhaul probably within two years.—**good news**  
AD re: Lycoming oil impeller. Replacement by July 2001 mandatory  
affects 0-320 0-360 **bad news**  
Outside parking fees to be increased. Being looked at by executive. **bad news**  
Inside parking fees to be increased **bad news**  
Doors to be installed closing off inside parking **good news ???**

### ***New Aircraft on the field!***

Randy Galusha has purchased a Pietenpol (homebuilt aircraft). It is powered by an A-65 Continental. It is in need of rebuilding and will be accomplished before the good weather sets in (if good weather ever arrives.).

### **Hell**

An explosion last week killed a wild-living navy boilerman and he found himself in hell. Being used to stoking fires and extremely hot temperatures, he found hell actually quite comfortable. When Satan went to check out the new arrival, he found him sitting in his room smiling.

"You like this?", Satan asked.

"Yes, sir", said the sailor, "this feels like a spring day to me." Not wanting the new guy to be too comfortable, Satan turned up the heat a bit. When he went back the next day to see how his new arrival was doing, the sailor was still happy; he hadn't even broken a sweat.

"I like this kind of weather", he told Satan.

For the next few days in a row, Satan again turned up the heat, but each day the Sailor looked as comfortable as ever. By last Sunday, Satan decided to try something different. Rather than turn up the heat even more, he turned it off. Icicles formed in the sailor's room! When he checked on the guy, the room was icy and he was shivering, but he had a grin from ear to ear, bigger than ever. Satan was exasperated!

"Why are YOU so happy?" he demanded from the sailor. "It's FREEZING in here!"

"Well, I'm from Vancouver," said the sailor. "and evidently the Canucks just won the Stanley Cup."



### **Fuel Committee**

Derek Carter is the fuel committee. Any problems with the pumps please contact Derek.

### **Buffalo Hangars being built at Cassidy**

A number of flying club members will be taking up residence in the new hangars on the south end of the field. They are the green hangars. They are a very spacious and quality built hangar. Grant Connolly is the builder. He owns Swan Windows in Chemainus. At the time of this writing there are three vacant spaces. I believe Grant is interested in erecting another row in the near future if there is any demand. His telephone number is on the sign down by the new hangars.

Actual maintenance complaints submitted by US Air Force pilots and the replies from the maintenance crews.

Problem: "Left inside main tire almost needs replacement."

Solution: "Almost replaced left inside main tire."

Problem: "Test flight OK, except autoland very rough."

Solution: "Autoland not installed on this aircraft."

Problem: "The autopilot doesn't."

Signed off: "IT DOES NOW."

Problem: "Something loose in cockpit."

Solution: "Something tightened in cockpit."

Problem: "Evidence of hydraulic leak on right main landing gear."

Solution: "Evidence removed."

Problem: "DME volume unbelievably loud."

Solution: "Volume set to more believable level."

Problem: "Dead bugs on windshield."

Solution: "Live bugs on order."

Problem: "Autopilot in altitude hold mode produces a 200 fpm descent."

Solution: "Cannot reproduce problem on ground."

Problem: "IFF inoperative."

Solution: "IFF inoperative in OFF mode."

Problem: "Friction locks cause throttle levers to stick."

Solution: "That's what they're there for."

Problem: "Number three engine missing."

Solution: "Engine found on right wing after brief search."

