

People on the move...

Glenn Norman combines love of flying, writing

By GEORGE EVASHUK
Herald staff writer

There's nothing Glenn Norman would rather do than soar in the sky above Glen Williams in his own Fokker Triplane, the aircraft made famous by the Red Baron in World War I.

And if all goes well some night in December, the opening night of an original musical he has written, he should have an entire fleet in the air and rival his close friend, author Richard Bach who wrote the best-selling Jonathan Livingston Seagull.

The idea for the musical was born three years ago when Norman and his friend Michelle Goodeve, a dancer, were on a farm and getting involved in all aspects of private flying with tiny aircraft. At first it was to be "a nice 20 minute club review," he told The Herald in an interview. "I wish it had stayed like that."

According to the schedule he carried in his mind, the cast will be rehearsed in November, the musicians in October, the score arranged in September while August and July will be devoted to filming the flying scenes of the musical called, of course, *Flyer*.

The musical, he says, will be a vehicle for Michelle and it was his insistence on this plus the fact that potential backers wanted 95 per cent of the profits that led the pair to raise the money themselves.

Michelle took a job selling cosmetics. Norman took a job photographing children and when they figured they had enough to stage the show, they quit.

Flyer will be a mixed media entertainment and though it started out three years ago as a kind of history of flying, it evolved into showing, Norman hopes, the spirit of flight. He says nothing about the story of *Flyer* other than a young woman learns about flying from an old veteran of the art.

Norman's writing career began in 1967, the year he learned to fly. He wrote a letter to Richard Bach who then was selling stories to aviation magazines. Bach replied and invited him to help set up an airline service in Virgin Islands. It was the first of a number of adventures with Bach but it flopped, leaving Norman to work his way back as a baggage chief when one of the backers absconded with the funds.

Norman realized that there was more to flying than getting from point A to point B and "hoarded" his money to buy his first aircraft, a 1940 Luscombe, for \$2,500. In it he took part in a venture of Bach's to fly two street hippies across the country in "ragwing" aircraft "to see what would happen."

"Everybody was stunned by the changes," he says. They made 69 miles in four days, although that was due to bad weather. The four craft barnstormed across the continent, landing at small towns and offering rides for three dollars. Norman realized there were alternate ways of living. "You didn't need nine to five," he says.

At the same time, "Bach encouraged me to start writing," he says. But Norman was excited about getting his own "ragwing biplane" and finally got one he thinks is unique, a Thruxton Jackaroo.

"I was waiting for Bach to come up with an idea," Norman says, "when suddenly Jonathan Livingston Seagull began taking off." So Norman put together a 3,000 mile air dash from Belleville, Ontario to Vancouver.

He got nine takers who paid the \$1.98 entry fee. The 1972 Trans-Continental Air Dash, in which he came last, got such tremendous response, Norman says, that he quit CFTO-TV and decided to write full time for a living.

The winter of 1972 he



Glenn Norman adjusts a movie camera. In the background is a sculpture of a biplane.

practiced writing while Michelle kept them alive with dancing in shows. In the spring of 1973, however, he broke the market in aviation magazines with the invention of a fictional character he named Harrison Henry Cagle. Then things started taking off.

Bach called to ask him to be

in a movie, *Nothing by Chance*. Norman turned him down because it meant getting a commercial flying licence and he feared "losing sight of the little guy."

The same week the manufacturers of Belvedere cigarettes approached him to pilot a Gypsy moth biplane as

a promotion and upon learning of his experience putting together the air dash the year before, offered to let him be in charge of the Great Belvedere Air Dash in 1973. Although he had only two months to organize it, 22 aircraft took off and got "massive coverage," he says.

By the time the fleet was

underway, Bach called back to say he had rewritten the script. Norman hopped a jet to the American midwest and shortly after his scenes were shot, returned to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan to rescue his own aircraft which was losing its engine.

He lost the third engine over Sydney, Nova Scotia, while he had as a passenger a vice-president of Canadian Pacific Hotels. Pieces of the engine started flying off and Norman vowed there and then not to fly it anymore if it landed safely on the ground. The engine quit completely on the last thousand feet and he glided it down. Soon after, because he was more interested in promoting flying and safety, he and Belvedere came to a parting of the ways.

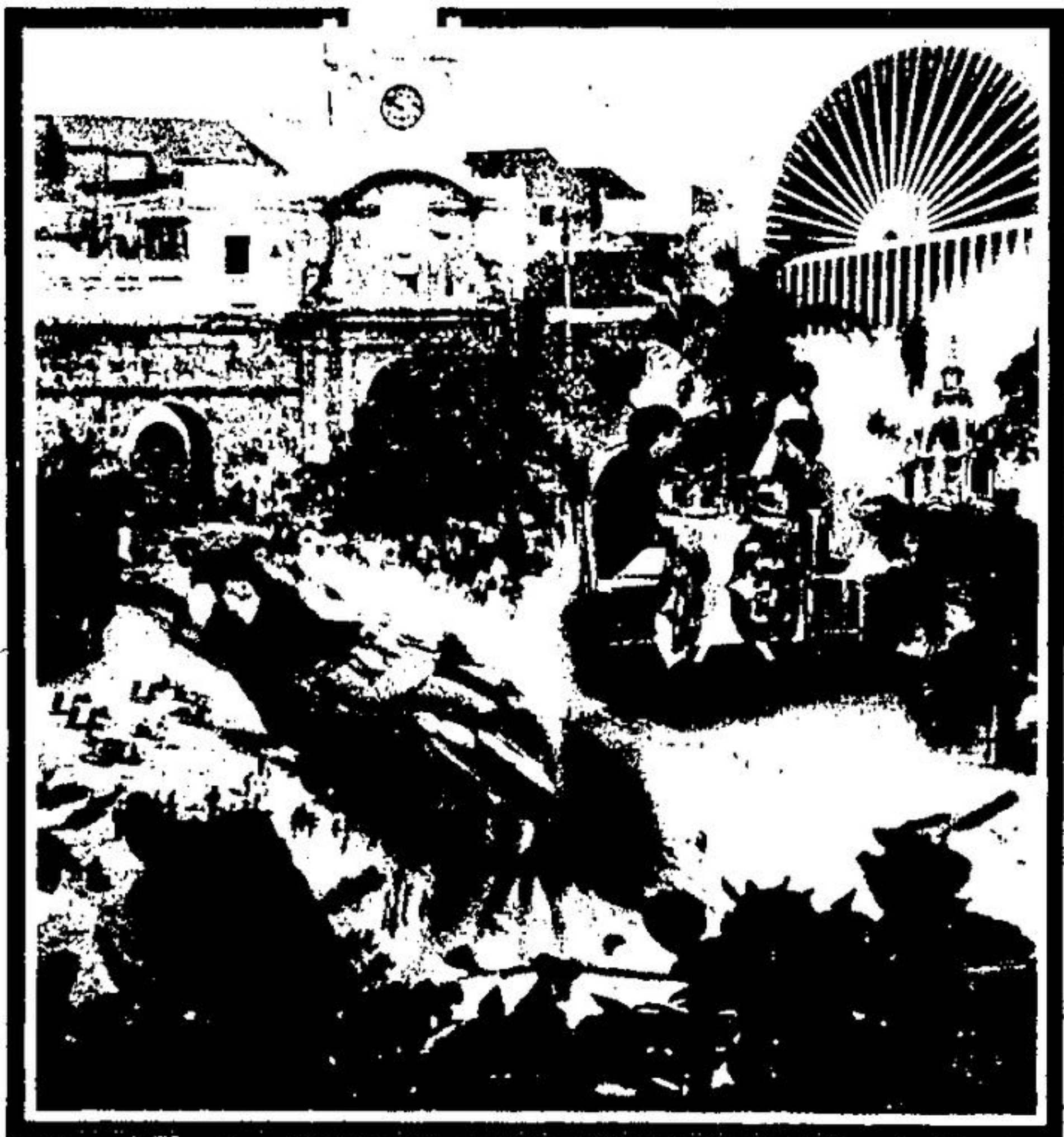
Without an aircraft, Norman decided to buy a hang-glider but the flights were limited to about 30 seconds with a 30 minute climb back up the hill. "It's not good unless you live in B.C." However, he became "obsessed" with the Scarborough Bluffs and one day when the wind was right made the jump. A CITY Television reporter, who was jogging on the beach, saw the flight and persuaded him to jump four more times for the cameras which resulted in the feature *The Incredible Birdman of the Bluffs*.

Norman then moved to a farm near Eden Mills where television actor Paul Soles, another antique aircraft buff, had put in an airstrip. For two years, the group living there taught themselves aerobatics, cleaned and overhauled their aircraft and coached people in the art of flying, and it was there that the idea for the musical was born.

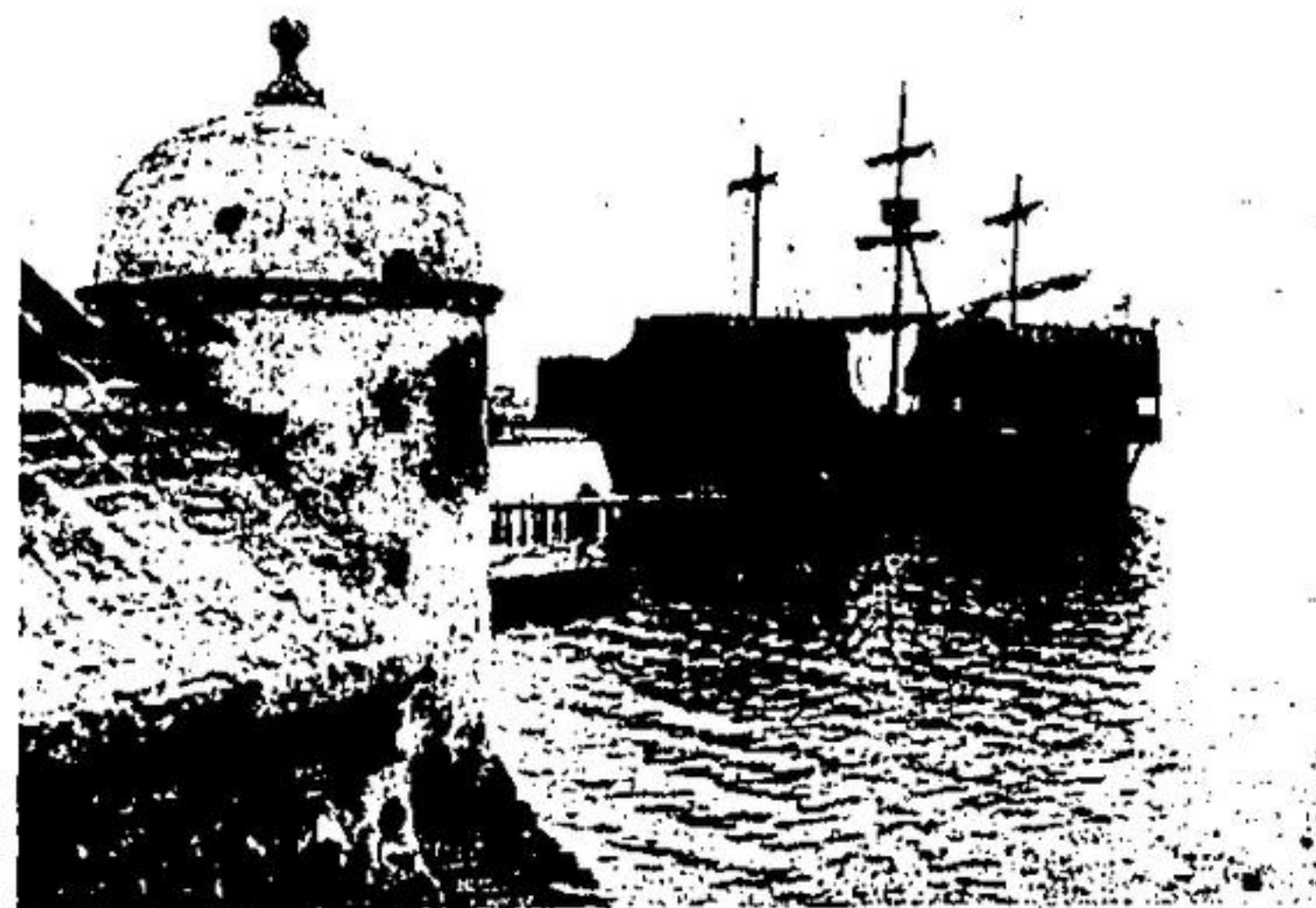
Come what may in December when *Flyer* opens, Norman will at least have proved to himself that getting there is half the fun. But the icing on the cake will be a loop-the-loop in a Fokker Triplane over Glen Williams.

Travel

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Cartagena—the walled city of the Spanish conquistadors, last defence of the treasure routes from the South American interior—now yields treasures of quite a different sort to the traveller in search of a unique vacation experience.

Cartagena is one of the oldest cities in the Western Hemisphere. Founded in 1533 as a treasure storehouse for the gold and emeralds of a conquered Indian empire, Cartagena's long history is marked by battles, sieges and pirate raids.

Not yet a crowded tourist Mecca, Cartagena could well be your vacation discovery.

English is spoken in the most popular areas of the city, but a Spanish-English dictionary might be handy for the more adventurous. The old town maintains the sense of a time past, with its original narrow twisting streets, where history resides in almost every building. The ancient fortifications now invite the visitor's curiosity—a privilege not granted the likes of Francis Drake, who attacked the town in 1586.

Much of Cartagena's tradition is reflected in its citizens' pride and their respect for her past. And you can now share this rich heritage. Explore the walls of the old town, and look out over the harbour from the massive fortress of San Felipe, just as Spanish soldiers did centuries before.

Visit the Palace of the Inquisition, built in 1770, and now a museum. Or the church of St. Pedro Claver, founded in 1603. Or the Popa Convent, built high on a lofty promontory in 1607, still commanding a sweeping 360 degree view of the city and bay.

A pirate's eye view of Cartagena is available to those who take a boat trip around the harbour, where the cannon-studded walls of the fortifications stand, a passive reminder of Cartagena's colourful past.

About a mile to the west of the old town, along the warm Caribbean, modern hotels bring twentieth-century convenience to four centuries of elegance and tradition.

foods from many nations, that makes dining a relaxing treat, and remarkably inexpensive too.

If you had to choose a speciality, it would be the freshly prepared, fresh-caught seafood. But, maybe you would prefer the excellent beef. Whatever your favour, be sure to cap your meal with world-famous Colombian coffee.

Colombia is known for gold and emerald jewelry, leather goods and native arts and crafts—both modern and pre-Columbian. Cartagena, with its open market and many shops, is a bargain-hunter's paradise.

Cartagena lives by the sea. Boats of all types and sizes are available on a rental basis.

Take an excursion and enjoy a day of snorkelling,

scuba diving, even exploring sunken galleons. Or just swim or lie on the beach, right outside your hotel.

The nightlife of Cartagena proceeds at a pace somewhat less hectic than that of more crowded resort areas. But it's a pace that has its own enchantment.

The hotels offer night clubs, a casino and discos featuring the infectious Latin-American beat. For relaxation at a slower clip, there are the horse-drawn carriages to take you through the town in the manner enjoyed by Cartagena's nineteenth-century Spanish residents.

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