

## Too bad he didn't look like Rene

Over the years, I've been up flying in small planes numerous times, and once was aloft in a hot air balloon. For the most part, I enjoy that airborne feeling. But a couple weeks ago, I had a totally different sensation, while traveling a thousand feet above the ground. I went gliding.

A couple dozen members of the local 756 Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Cadets attended a gliding workshop at Camp Borden, north of Alliston. I was invited to tag along.

In the bargain, I got to go gliding as well. Like I said, I've always enjoyed the freedom one experiences when up in a small plane, but I'll be the first to admit I find it comforting to know there's an engine in good repair pulling that aircraft along, and a live pilot who is in control of it.

Gliding, on the other hand, is a leap of faith. First things first, no motor. I'm required to place my faith in a guy strapped into the seat behind me, hoping he knows what he's doing. Utilizing the laws of physics and aeronautics, this guy is in charge of that 600-plus lb. aircraft (and ultimately my life), allowing a tow plane to haul us up to a safe altitude, then severing ties with that plane, and taking to the wind.

The ascent wasn't a fun feeling. That particular day was quite cold, and windy to boot. Every time we flew over a paved area on the ground below, the thermals would make the glider almost catapult up a hundred feet—in seconds.

Unfortunately, my stomach was a little slow on the uptake for such an ascent. It momentarily remained a hundred feet below, nursing that double double from the base's Tim Horton's....

My pilot, Capt. Randy Shantz, admistration officer of Borden's gliding division, was ecstatic about the strong thermals.

Flying with Shantz was somewhat comforting—he was close to my age, and had thousands of hours of gliding under his belt.

"We should be able to do some really neat

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Ted Brown

things today Ted," he beamed, "These thermals are really powerful today."

At that moment, I was into 'boring calm weather,' not 'really powerful thermals.'

As he released the tow rope, things changed dramatically in that tiny cockpit. Suddenly the only sound heard was the rush of the wind, as Shantz pulled up into the wide blue yonder, giving a running commentary on the scenery below.

Conversation itself was unique. We talked without a need for headphones, it was that quiet.

Thrilling images of the Pierce Brosnan and Rene Russo gliding scene in *The Thomas Crown Affair* raced through my mind, as we swooped up like an eagle over the base, climbing to a couple thousand feet, then gliding back down again, only to repeat it again and again.

About 15 minutes later, Shantz finally ran out of altitude. He advised me we were coming in for a landing, as the ground approached quickly. He leveled out the little aircraft touching down flawlessly on the grass. As the glider's single tire touched the grass, a rumbling sound culminated the flight. The cockpit canopy was flipped up, I unfastened my seat belts, and climbed out of the little cockpit, eager to walk on terra firma again.

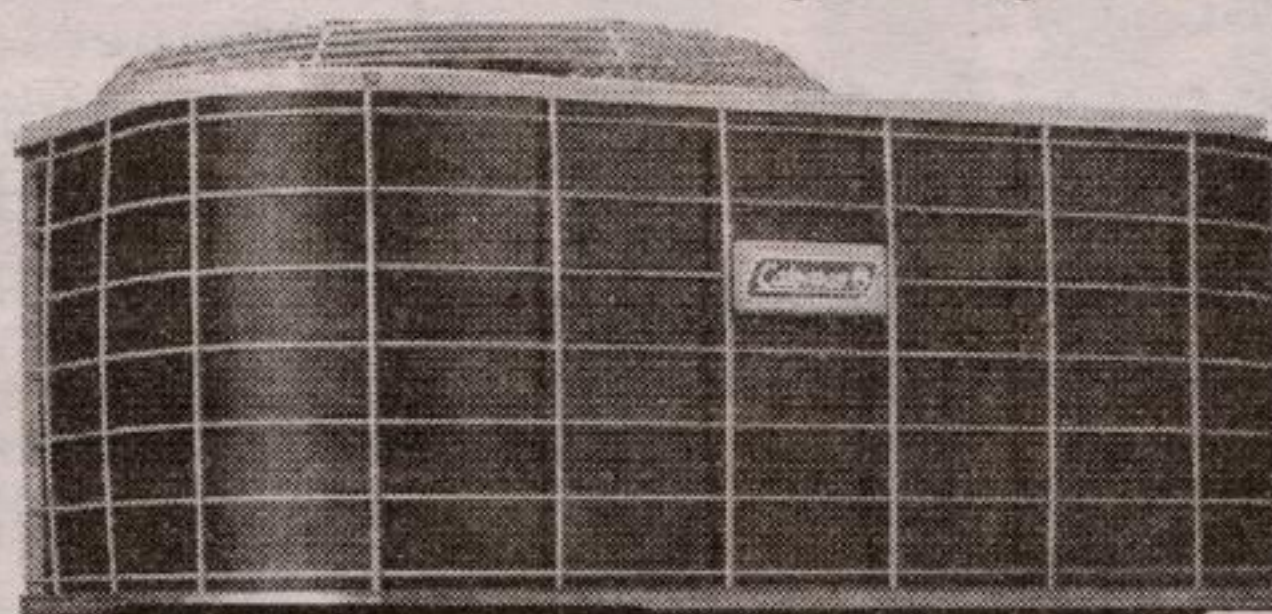
Hey, that was okay...

Thanking Shantz for the flight, and still basking in the romanticism of my *Thomas Crown Affair* fantasy, I glanced over my shoulder.

He didn't look anything at all like Rene Russo.

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7:30 p.m.  
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John Elliott Cultural Centre  
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&

7:30 p.m.  
Wednesday, May 8, 2002

Meeting Room  
Acton Arena, Acton

Live and recorded music, scripture readings selected from all the world's religious traditions including the Bible, the Qur'an and Baha'i Writings will be featured. Join us for a time of prayer, reflection, discussion, and refreshments.

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