

'IN SITUATIONS LIKE THAT, THEY ARE OFTEN FATAL': NEWMAN

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ATCA Conference in National Harbor, Md.

For Newman, he was happy to be able to help, but admits it was tense.

"It was certainly stressful, knowing how bad it can go for somebody in that situation, wanting to do the best I can do to help him," he said. "Using the radio to talk to him, I made sure I kept my voice as calm as possible; if he hears any stress it would be worse, so I made sure I sounded super calm.

"That's the job. It's an unusual situation for us at work. It's not a routine occurrence."

Nevertheless, his own pilot training certainly made him the perfect man for the job.

VFR are a set of regulations under which a pilot operates an aircraft in weather conditions generally clear enough to allow the pilot to see where the aircraft is going.

In the case of April 6, the

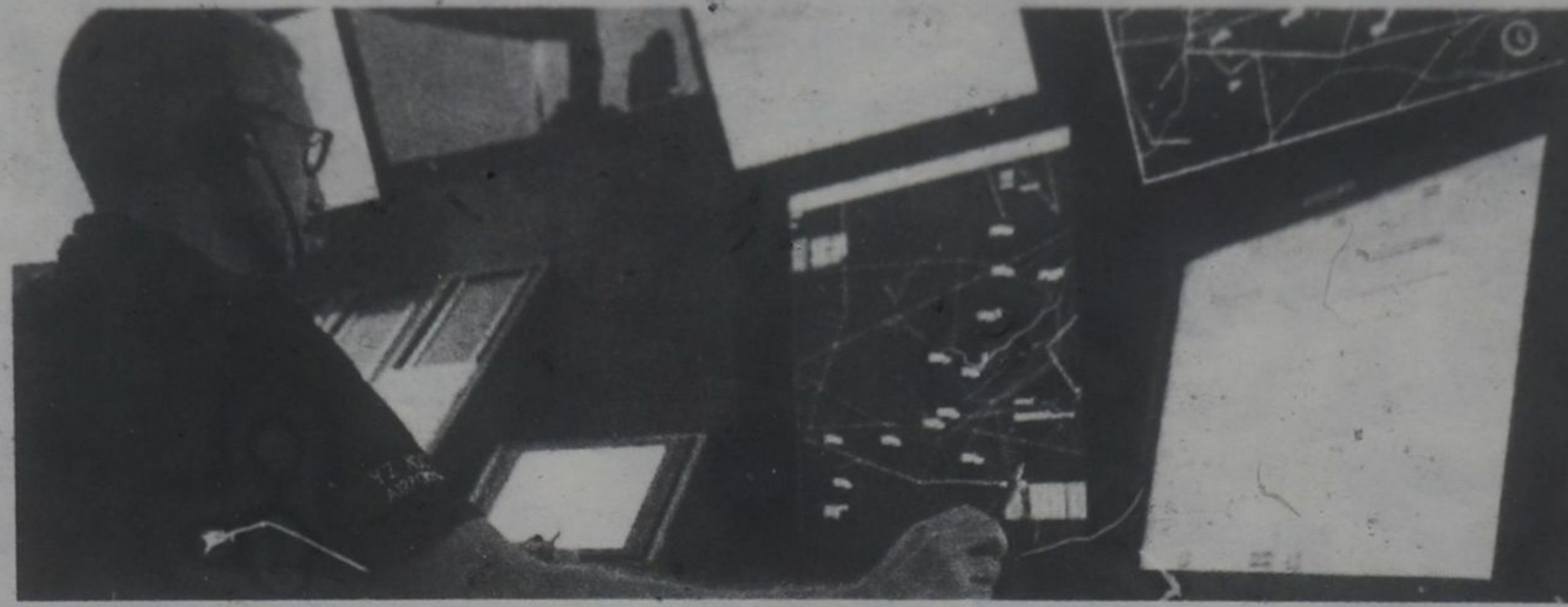
pilot of the plane was flying from the United States, across Lake Erie in a Piper Cherokee, heading toward London airport. He found himself caught in cloud and reported having zero visibility.

The pilot tried to contact the Toronto Area Control Centre (ACC) but due to his low altitude, the ACC had difficulty communicating with the Cherokee. The Toronto ACC controllers enlisted the help of the London Tower to establish communications.

The Tower offered nearby airports as alternative destinations, but with zero visibility, the pilot elected to continue to London.

Newman, a licensed instrument flight rules pilot, finally re-established communication with the lost pilot and began talking him through his descent to the London airport.

Recognizing the consequences of spatial disorientation, Newman provided distance to London, weather



Singer, Ron photo

Milton resident Stephen Newman recently won the Andy Pitas Aircraft Save Award, which is presented to an individual or group who provided flight assistance that resulted in the safe recovery of an emergency aircraft through the application of exceptional air traffic service.

conditions, headings and altitudes and then he put his own flying skills to work. Instrument flying is commonly called flying in the clouds, and without being certified, the Cherokee pilot was in serious trouble.

Newman, who started flying 25 years ago, told the pilot that he would soon break out of the cloud and would be looking right at the runway.

"In situations like that,

they are often fatal," Newman, 46, said. "They did a study and the average pilot lives for 178 seconds.

"One of the reasons they end up dying is they don't know that systematic scan; they don't know what to look for or what to extract from it."

Newman said it took him two years to become instrument-rated.

"My colleague who was working the sector in that

time, he knows I am instrument-rated and he felt I could do more for this guy than he could," he recalled. "I talked to the pilot and told him how to use the instruments in his airplane, when to descend and how to scan his instruments, so that when he broke out of the cloud he could see the runway.

"You could hear the stress in his voice."

Newman said he became

interested in aviation growing up in Ottawa where his neighbour was a pilot. He would often go flying with him, but he didn't pursue it in post secondary; instead, he got a math degree and later relocated to Milton, where he's lived for the last 12 years.

The married man started working in Toronto for Nav Canada, a private, not-for-profit company, established in 1996, providing air traffic control, airport advisory services, weather briefings and aeronautical information services for more than 18 million square kilometres of Canadian domestic and international airspace.

Newman, who flies out of Burlington Airpark around once a week, is in control of the air space in lower altitudes from Oshawa out to Sarnia — a lot of the smaller airports over southwestern Ontario.

He said he often flies to the east coast, Chicago, Florida and many spots in between.

"I like going places," he laughed, adding he flew from Florida to Maryland to accept the award.

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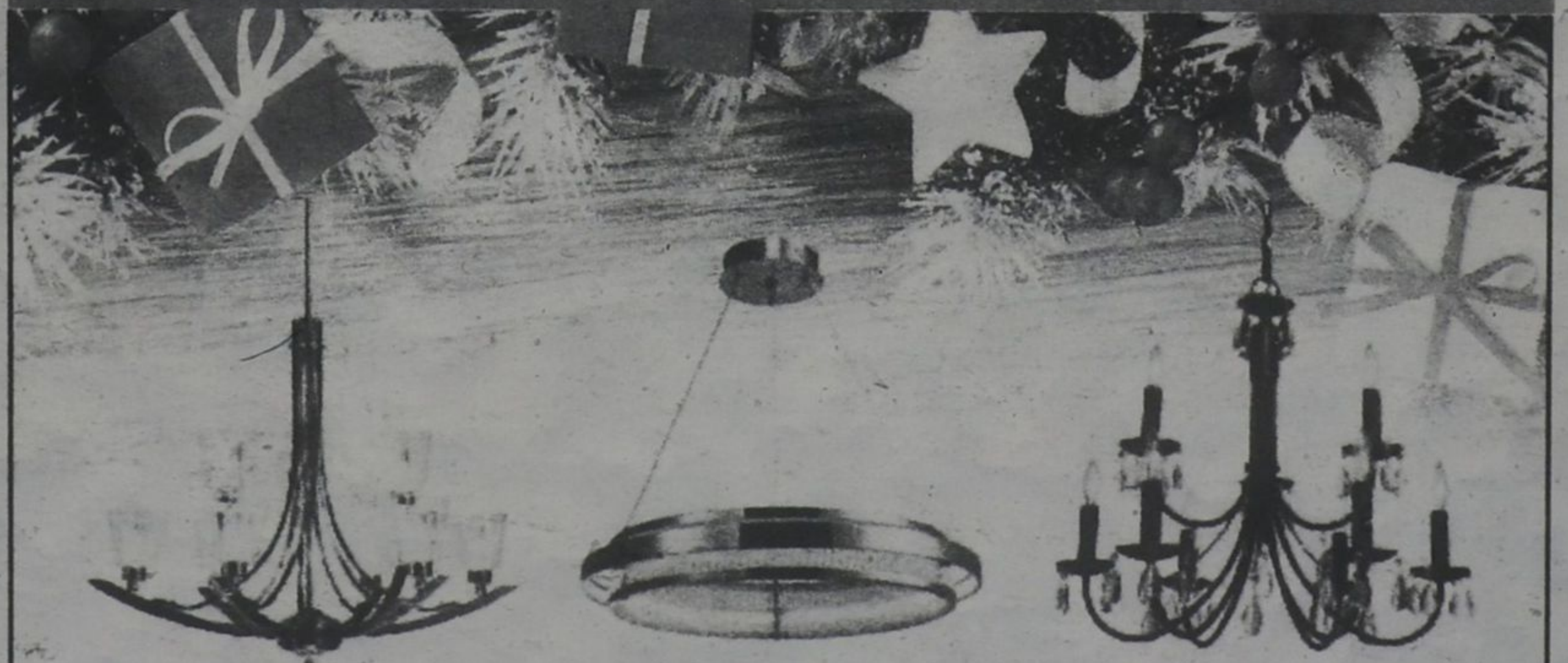
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