

"Markham" Airport a busy place

Its official name is Markham Airport, even though it's only a few hundred metres south of the Whitchurch-Stouffville town line, and even though the Buttonville Airport, which is also in Markham, is many times bigger.



AIRMAN - Markham Airport owner Al Ruben and some of the many vintage aircraft scattered on the facility's 200 acres.

But our airport came sooner, founded in 1965 by Jan Lewindowski, an expatriate flyer from the Polish Air Force, and his wife Irene. And even though it's still privately owned and almost invisible from Highway 48, the Markham Airport is in its own way every bit as busy as Buttonville.

In fact, it's five businesses in one:

- the landing strip itself, which is 2,000 feet long and can accommodate a wide variety of small aircraft. It is home to over 30 private planes, including a couple of ultra-lights.
- an aviation museum, which includes not only a number of vintage aircraft scattered over the site, but collections of artifacts ranging from flight suits to ejection seats to air cameras (current owner Al Ruben is a professional photographer as well as an aviation aficionado).
- a year-round flight school called Canadian Flyers International, which has 50 students of all ages.

The Air Cadets also operate a gliding school here in the summer.

• an educational foundation called "Wings of Flight". Al Ruben regularly hosts school classes or scout troops, as well as high school co-op students. The airport is also licensed to offer training in 12 aviation-related trades.

• an organic farm! Al thinks the wasted land at most airports is a crime, so he has 125 of his 200 acres in soybeans, and is currently undertaking some agricultural experiments on a strip near the highway.

"We have to have a diversity of activities here

to keep in business," Al says. "We do aircraft restoration in connection with the museum, and we've even had a number of movie shoots here, using the strip and the buildings. It all makes life around here very interesting."

Al stresses that the airport, despite its name, is very much connected to Stouffville, hosting local students and pilots, and even playing a part in the town's politics.

"Once the province wanted to put a big landfill, a dump, on part of the Spring Lakes golf course. But they couldn't put it that close to an airport, if we hadn't been here, they

would have ruined Spring Lakes."

Of all the airport's different personalities, its role as teacher is the one that Al values most.

"I was fascinated by flying as I grew up," he recalls, "and so many kids are. Once I got a letter from a boy who'd been a co-op student here; he said the experience had changed his life, given him a goal and a purpose. That alone makes this place worthwhile."

The Markham Airport is 30 seconds south of 19th Avenue on Hwy. 48, on the east side of the road. Drop in for a fascinating look at aviation history.

Rural Reflections

A laker's life for me



by Ruth LeBlanc

Life in the country is the only way to go. It is hard to believe but we have called Musselman's Lake home for twenty years this fall, and the love affair continues to grow as each year passes. Just the other cool windy autumn night, I sat on the deck bundled in a sweater savoring the sound of falling leaves and the peace and serenity which the quiet brings.

When my mom came to visit the other day from the bustling metropolis of Uxbridge, she commented that she couldn't live with the quietness and a street where the silence is broken with either a passing car or the odd bark of a dog.

What my mom finds isolating and remote, the big guy and I find heaven. Lake lovers choose the lake life because of the peace and quiet. In the year 2004 it is refreshing to have this special spot with its little lake and country lifestyle that to many Lakers is a stroke of luck and a blessing.

Twenty years ago the lake was a far cry from what you see today. Little

seasonal cottages lined the streets and the influx of year round residents was just beginning. Little cottages either transformed themselves or were removed and replaced by some beautiful homes dotting the lakeside.

In some ways I feel like a pioneer at the lake arriving back in the early eighties when there wasn't even cable TV. Being a city girl, the monstrous antenna standing by our house brought in only two or three fuzzy stations, and that was on a good day.

Calling the cable company serving Stouffville, I was told there was no demand from the area and not enough people. Prove, they said, that it was wanted.

Pen and paper in hand I collected lake residents' names, addresses and phone numbers and presented the paperwork to the cable company. It was one happy day when, converter in hand I flicked through multiple stations with a clear picture and a big grin.

Both the lake and I have come a

long way. I have learnt not to scream at the sight of ugly bugs and to welcome the nightly chorus of bullfrogs in the spring. I have felt the wrath of an exploding sump pump hose as it twirled uncontrollably in my hands squirting me repeatedly in the face. I have removed a large dark snake from the living room floor when our cat Tiny brought home a slippery surprise. I have watched as Christmas ornaments have floated across the basement floor when our sump pump stopped during a storm and the flooding began. I have watched blue herons, ducks and geese and muskrats and raccoons and rabbits pass through the back yard. I have been treated for rabies after a drunken skunk decided to visit one sunny spring day as I painted the gate. I have watched the handyman from hell do things like make taps fly across large rooms and other jobs that would make Bob Villa weep. I have watched roads being paved, and new faces become the norm.

And you know what? I wouldn't change one single thing.

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