

## Int Air Rally 2003 Part 2

### Happy Landings column

#### International Air Rally 2003 – Part 2

By Garth Wallace

Twenty-three general aviation aircraft, 60 adventurous people, eight exciting days and 2,500 miles of challenging fun: this was the International Air Rally 2003. From July 19 to 26, the IAR entrants flew from Quebec and Southern Ontario north to James Bay, east to the edge of continental Canada and back.

The challenges included:

- 1/ Heads-up group flying over long distances through a variety of weather;
- 2/ Navigating by quiz and by guess; and in some aircraft, by vote;
- 3/ Enduring potential passenger revolts with each day's spot landing contest;
- 4/ Sticking to a schedule;
- 5/ Waiting for those who failed challenge number 4; and
- 6/ Competing in local events organized by the hosting cities.

The fun was:

- 1/ All of the above;
- 2/ Flying over a less traveled part of Canada;
- 3/ Being hosted by communities that planned for our arrival and were happy that we came;
- 4/ Experiencing the regions' tourist highlights;
- 5/ Enjoying the best restaurants and accommodations at each overnight; and
- 6/ Spending time with like-minded people.

Last month, Part 1 described the first four days of the rally. It started in Ottawa and followed a series of waypoints determined in the air by the pilot and crew answering sheets of rally questions. Overnight stops included Markham, Ontario; and in Quebec: Amos, Radisson (on La Grande Riviere), and Chibougamau. Each host city went overboard with generous arrangements for transportation, tours, activities, meals and accommodations.

To this point, the trip had been flown VFR. The group encountered marginal weather north of Toronto but had stayed together except for two teams. They had encountered minor mechanical problems but caught up with us at Chibougamau. This miracle of planning, skill, perseverance and luck was about to fall apart.

#### **DAY 5: CHIBOUGAMAU TO BAIE COMEAU, QUEBEC**

The rally route to Baie Comeau was literally downhill all the way. It followed a valley southeast to Roberval on Lac St. Jean and continued down the Riviere Saguenay to the St. Lawrence River. There it turned left along the north shore of the St. Lawrence to the destination. Chibougamau's altitude is 1,300 feet above sea level, Roberval is 600 feet and Baie Comeau, 100. But there are hills on both sides giving high minimum sector altitudes on the charts. This, along with forecasted low cloud and an overworked contract weatherman, created no-go decisions by the VFR pilots who stayed in Chibougamau.

Seven IFR aircraft departed starting at eleven o'clock. They flew VFR with the idea of filing IFR en route if the weather became a problem. It didn't. The pilots reported the better conditions through Roberval Flight Service but this was not passed back in time for the other teams to follow. It was unfortunate. The weather was better than we had flown through north of Toronto.

I was on board the Team Pouille Beechcraft Baron once more. Following the Saugenay River at 2,000 feet, with 3,000-foot peaks on either side, was an awesome sight for the Pouilles who are "flatlanders" from Florida. We saw whale pods on the last leg along the St. Lawrence. They were easy to locate being ringed with tourist boats.

The complaints about hard-to-see spot landing lines at previous airports must have made it to Baie Comeau. The lines were well marked by orange traffic cones *on the runway*. We still missed the mark.

All seven aircraft completed the leg. It was a good thing. The City of Baie Comeau had great plans for the rallyists. Transportation was waiting for us at the airport. We were bussed to the hotel and then given a tour of the city guided by local tourism staff.

Baie Comeau is a centre for water and wilderness sports, as well as biking and lighthouse touring. It is also a jumping off point for tours north to Manic 5, the world's largest multiple-arched dam.

The ground competition for the rally was a test of first aid knowledge. We were taken to a city park and told that a fictional airplane had reportedly crashed nearby. The assignment was to find the injured pilot and administer the appropriate first aid. Three teams at a time were sent into a treed area with a rescue kit. There, three "injured" pilots were sprawled on the ground and covered with "blood."

This scene was set by the City Parks and Recreation department. The injured "pilots" were lifeguards from Baie Comeau swimming pools. They were trained in first aid by an ex-Armed Forces instructor who oversaw the competition. The "victims" were briefed to display the symptoms of a broken leg, burns and head lacerations. Other lifeguards scored the actions taken by the teams.

None of the rally members had a good knowledge of first aid. There was lots of action but little saving as indicated by the realistic screams of the "victims." The lifeguards and their instructor joined us for dinner that evening and de-briefed the group on what they had done wrong. On top of the long list was pushing down on a victim's chest; unnecessary if she is already breathing.

Team Roger Belanger had the best score thanks to the common sense of Lise Deschambault. The same team came first in the results for the whole day.

#### **DAY 6: TO PAKUA SHIPU, QUEBEC**

This is where the rally organizers pulled a rabbit out of a hat.

There were seven teams in Baie Comeau and twelve still in Chibougamau. The weather was below VFR in between. All participants were expected in Pakua Shipu that afternoon as the first tourists to partake in an Innu elder reunion.

It had already been arranged that Bombardier Aerospace would supply a Dash 8 and crew to fly the VFR teams the 400 nm from Baie Comeau to Pakua Shipu. A few phone calls later and the company agreed to have the Montreal-based airplane stop in Chibougamau, Baie Comeau and Pakua Shipu.

The airplane assignments for the journalists were juggled. I flew on the Dash 8 from Baie Comeau. The airplane was Bombardier's corporate shuttle usually flown between Montreal and the company's de Havilland Works at the Toronto Downsview Airport. It was available because the end of July is a heavy holiday time in Quebec.

Once the Dash 8 was underway, the rally organizers handed envelopes to each team on board. They contained the questions for that leg. Similar quizzes had been given to the pilots of the IFR aircraft.

The Innu settlement of Pakua Shipu is on the St. Augustin River near where it flows into the Strait of Belle Isle. Newfoundland is not far away. Across the river is the village of St. Augustin, Quebec.

Neither place was our destination. We landed at the Pakua Shipu Airport, (listed in the Canada Flight Supplement as St. Augustin); walked a kilometre or so to the beach and were transported upstream in native boats.

We were headed for a sandspit in the middle of the river a few miles away. Here a camp had been set up for the annual reunion of Innu elders that the air rally participants had been invited to join.

The festivities included demonstrations of the Innu customs, rituals, order of respect and food preparation. This was for the benefit of the Innu youngsters.

The elders had set up small tents using pine pole frames covered with lightweight canvas. Pine boughs had been laid on the sand for the floors. A double-wide teepee had been erected for the fly-in visitors; one huge tent for 60 people. Nearby a temporary long house (not an Innu term) had been built with a plywood dance floor.

Our visit started with a guided tour of the elder demonstrations. At the cooking tents, we were invited to have fresh donuts. They looked like bear claws and tasted like dutchies.

Dinner for over 100 people included vegetable soup, bannick (bread), caribou, trout, salmon, goose, white beans and vegetables. It was served buffet style. The visitors went first, the elders next and so on by age.

That evening, the rallyists watched demonstrations of traditional Innu dances in the long house. Some joined in.

#### **DAY 7: TO BAIE COMEAU AND CHIBOUGAMAU**

The plan had been to stay at the Innu camp for another day and night. The Innu were going to take us fishing for salmon, lobster and sea trout.

We woke up to rain; the kind that comes straight down in sheets and looks like it will never stop. The decision was made to leave as soon as possible. We did. The VFRs boarded the Dash 8 and the IFRs filed.

Dave Fitzpatrick of the Wings Over Canada film crew and I flew with Jean-Guy Michaud, Christian Michaud and Pierre Grosleau in their Team Michaud pressurized Navajo back to Baie Comeau. The organizers had declared this a non-rally leg so the only pressure was to beat the bad weather. It cleared by the time we arrived at our destination. That evening, the teams who stayed in Baie Comeau expanded their friendships over dinner together.

#### **DAY 8: TO DRUMMONDVILLE, QUEBEC**

For this last leg, Dave Fitzpatrick and I flew with Paul Clark in his Beechcraft Bonanza. Clark filed IFR to top the low cloud of an approaching cold front. At 6,000 feet, the 50-knot headwind proved the value of a high performance aircraft. The Drummondville arrival times were spread through the whole afternoon. This leg was also declared non-rally en route but there was still a spot landing contest. Then the group gathered at the seaplane base on the Saint Francois River across the street from the Drummondville Airport where a special “run, row, spin and run” contest was staged for the final ground competition. This was followed by dinner in a huge marquee with music by Les Musique des Cadets, the same cadet band that gave us a send off in Ottawa. And finally the winners were announced.

#### **VFR**

First Prize: \$10,000 – It was a tie between Team Sennheiser, in a Cessna 172 flown by Jean-Charles Rey and Louis Marmet from the Ottawa area; and Team Propane Express, also in a Cessna 172, flown by Pierre Gariepy and Simon Pelletier from near Montreal, Quebec.

Second Prize: \$4,000 – Andre Turgeon from Toronto, Ontario with Don Wilson and Jim Mills in a Cessna 185 on amphibious floats.

Third Prize: \$2,000 – The father and son team of Warren and Trevor Staples from London, Ontario in a Mooney M20J.

#### **IFR**

First Prize: \$3,000 – The father and son team of Marc and Luc Charron from North Bay, Ontario flying a Piper Cherokee 140.

Second Prize: \$2,000 – Family Team Pouille; Thierry, Sophie, Anais and Alex from Palm Beach Florida in a Beechcraft Baron.

Third Prize: \$1,000 – Paul Clarke and Mike Puiu of Toronto, Ontario in a Beechcraft Bonanza.

#### **PRECISION LANDINGS**

Prize for First: \$1,000 – Warren and Trevor Staples.

#### **PARTICIPATION AWARDS**

\$1,000 – Paula and Don Lounsbury. Paula was newly IFR rated but they made it all the way around in their Cessna 182 including to Pakua Shipu.

\$ 500 – Paul Clark, for his humour. “I’m sorry, we don’t serve beer to Americans unless they sign a waiver. The alcohol content is too high.”

\$500 – Georges Hetu and his son Simon for maintaining their good attitude despite being separated from their luggage on the first night.

There were no losers.

Full details of the day-to-day standings are available on the International Air Rally Web site along with the plans for next year: [www.airrally.com](http://www.airrally.com).

(Sidebar 1 - with photo)

#### **The Innu**

Innu is the name for the 16,000 original people who inhabit Nitassinan. This is the eastern part of mainland Canada that includes eastern Quebec and all of Labrador. The Innu are based in 13 different communities. They were the first natives in Canada to have contact with explorers “from across the sea” and are the last to integrate into modern culture. Many Innu families still spend much of the year “in the country” hunting caribou and relying on the land for most of their needs.

Traditionally, the Innu lead an orderly life. At the camp the IAR visited, the kids played while the teens helped the adults work under their elders' gaze. Compared to our culture, the Innu value respect more and time less. Relationships are very important; things are not. They are a quiet people but are quick to laugh. The Innu territory is one of the largest roadless areas remaining on Earth and one of the least developed in North America. This is changing. Innu lands are under pressure from mineral exploration, forestry, hydro-electrical development, creation of national parks and the infrastructure to support all of the above. The Innu are discovering the political realities of a small, isolated population dealing with two provincial governments and one federal. It is the Labrador Innu who are taking issue with low-level military jet training over their traditional lands. Negotiations are presently underway to settle rights to lands and self-government, two things that the Innu had without "white men" for 2,000 years. For more information, see: [www.innu.ca](http://www.innu.ca).

(photo for Sidebar 1)

60 PS – Innu with camera

Where curiosity and culture cross. Here an Innu woman takes a picture with a digital camera. The Innu cultures, ways of life and languages differ from the better known Inuit further north.

(Sidebar 2)

### **So you want to be in an air rally?**

Entrant Roger Belanger summed it up best, "The rally is good for timid pilots only if they do not want to stay timid."

Not every general aviation pilot would enjoy flying long distances over rugged terrain in small aircraft, navigating by answering tricky questions while looking out for 20 other aircraft doing the same thing at the same time.

The participants in IAR 2003 were generally aviation keeners. When they were not flying they talked about flying. They also talked about the rally, the places visited, the people met and the cultures and activities sampled.

To enjoy the rally to the fullest, the entrants had to make friends easily, be able to "go with the flow," and be interested in everything but themselves.

To succeed in the rally, the winners needed a competitive spirit while remaining considerate of the other entrants. As pilots, they had to be good but it was more important that they were adaptable to the variety of situations.

The IAR participants would be interesting people to sit with at a cocktail party but they would be difficult to find there. They are more likely to be out doing something rather than talking about it.

### **The cost of participating in IAR 2003**

The entry fees for IAR 2003 were \$1,500 per aircraft plus \$1,000 per person with a minimum of two people in each aircraft. This covered the costs of transportation, meals, activities and accommodations. It did not cover the flying expenses such as the aircraft, fuel and landing fees.

A minimum entrant would be a four-place, single-engine aircraft with two people in it. The VFR category of the rally was won by two teams of two people flying in Cessna 172s. The IFR category winner was a father and son team flying a Piper Cherokee 140.

(photos)

All photos by Garth Wallace

50 – Baie Co 1<sup>st</sup> aid

"We found her and stopped the bleeding, now what?" Team Pouille ponders while the "victim" moans during the first aid ground competition at Baie Comeau.

60 – PS Dash 8

Bombardier saves the day. When the VFR air rally pilots were stranded in Chibougamau by weather, the Bombardier corporate Dash 8 ferried them to Pakua Shipu.

60 – PS camp dinner

“What is this madam?” It’s caribou knuckle, an Innu delicacy. They call it “Caribou Butter.” The lady on the left is one of the Innu cooks.

60 PS – teepee inside

This was not everyone’s idea of the best sleeping accommodations for 60. Too much strange food combined with communal snoring kept many campers awake.

80 DV – Yvon and Michel Neveu do the “spin” part of the “Run, row, spin and run” ground competition at Drummondville.

90 – VFR winners

Wings Over Canada interviewer Dianne Roy (left) presents the VFR trophy to the two teams tied for first place. (L. to R. - Louis Marmet and Jean-Charles Rey, and Simon Pelletier and Pierre Gariepy.)

90 – IFR winners

Rally dispatcher Robert Dewar (left) and Dianne Roy present the Bombardier Trophy to Team Charron, first place winners in the IFR category. IAR president Catherine Tobenas is on the right.

*Garth Wallace is a freelance writer who lives near Ottawa. He has written seven aviation books published by Happy Landings ([www.happylandings.com](http://www.happylandings.com)). These include a series of five volumes of aviation humour based on his experiences as a 12,000-hour flying instructor. Wallace is available to speak to aviation groups. He can be contacted via e-mail: [garth@happylandings.com](mailto:garth@happylandings.com).*

(Sidebar 3 – with logo for Tourisme Quebec)

### **International Air Rally 2003**

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