

# Princeton Air Show 2010



## Small town spirit

Some days you witness things that seem too good to be true, but they do bring a real joy to your heart.

In these days when Transport Canada revels in the thoughts of imposing more rigorous and stupefying rules and regulations and local towns and cities are trying to shut down airports, every once in a while a revelation emerges like a ray of sunshine that lights up a ray of hope and ignites a spark that shows that general aviation is not dead but still growing in many unsuspected places.

Ever heard of Vermillion Forks? Neither had I, but that was the original name given to Princeton, B.C. This small town, population 2,610, lies at the junction of the Similkameen and Tulameen Rivers and was renamed Prince Town, later shortened to Princeton.

This town sits on the eastern foothills of the Cascade Mountains and has a paved runway (3,934 feet) situated on a small mesa above the town. What makes this small town so special is that July 17, 2010 marks the third anniversary of the Princeton Air Show.

This town takes great pride in its airport and wants to celebrate the airport and its accomplishments. The air show began three years ago when they had one performer and a CF-18 straggle in. Not so today as 2,610 people, the entire population of Princeton, has pitched in to make this a real grass roots air show.

By grass roots I mean that it has the small town spirit, the esprit d' corps, the glue if you will, that holds residents to the heart of the community. They had quite an array of performers coming from all the way from the USA to Quebec and this is interspersed with static displays where you can actually wander around, touch, smell, and see a variety of wonderful aircraft, just like in the good old days when you were a kid.

Admission was by donation, can you believe? Compare this to large corporate air shows like the Abbotsford International Airshow where I have

attended in the past. Adults pay \$30 each, kids are gouged \$15, and if you have a carload, you can get in for a mere 100 smackaroos, but you must pay 10 loonies extra for "runway" seating about a football field away. Each year the crowd is moved back further and further from the airfield so you need binoculars, are not allowed into the static display area, and the acts appear to be the same year after year while the food and drink gets pricier.

Let's see, wife and two kids, runway seating, makes it about \$120 plus chow and I can watch military aircraft turn dollars into noise. As a writer/reporter, I have to beg to be allowed to attend and last year I was declined to cover the show. The gal at the Abbotsford Air Show office said that they had enough reporters and writers from Canada covering the air show already.

Hellooooo.... the lights may be on but is anybody home in Abbotsford?

COPA Flight happens to be the largest publication for pilots in Canada and

they decline us coverage. There is a reason why the Abbotsford Airshow has declining attendance each year while others grow.

Contrast this to a real air show like the Arlington Airshow (entry \$15) where you sit wherever you please in the static display area or near the runway, where vendors offer the latest and greatest in goods and services, where the aroma of hotdogs and fried onions wafts through the air and friendly people are everywhere.

Unlike the Abbotsford Melee, the Arlington audience was made up of primarily pilots and those families truly interested in aviation. Attendance is up each year. This is what the Princeton Airshow reminds me of; a real home town air show like we used to have in the 1960s and 1970s, a family affair, a friendly place to take your friends and family and enjoy the day.

It started with one aircraft three years ago and continues to grow in popularity. Princeton, elevation 2,298 ft., is truly a town that loves its airport and shows it

## On the step

by  
Jorma Kivilahti



*Princeton is nestled in the Coastal Range of B.C.*

by celebrating it with a vibrant air show.

I was fortunate to be able to fly in to the Princeton Airshow this year. The first thing I noticed was that everyone was happy and smiling. As I taxied

onto the ramp, one of the officials of the air show came out to greet us and shook our hands. An anomaly? No, I saw that he did that with everyone that taxied in.

The air show was great, with Bud and Russ Granly doing their aerobatic routine, the B-25 and P-51 making the passes, Harvards and even old Doc Pickup's Waco AQC-6 and other assorted aircraft.

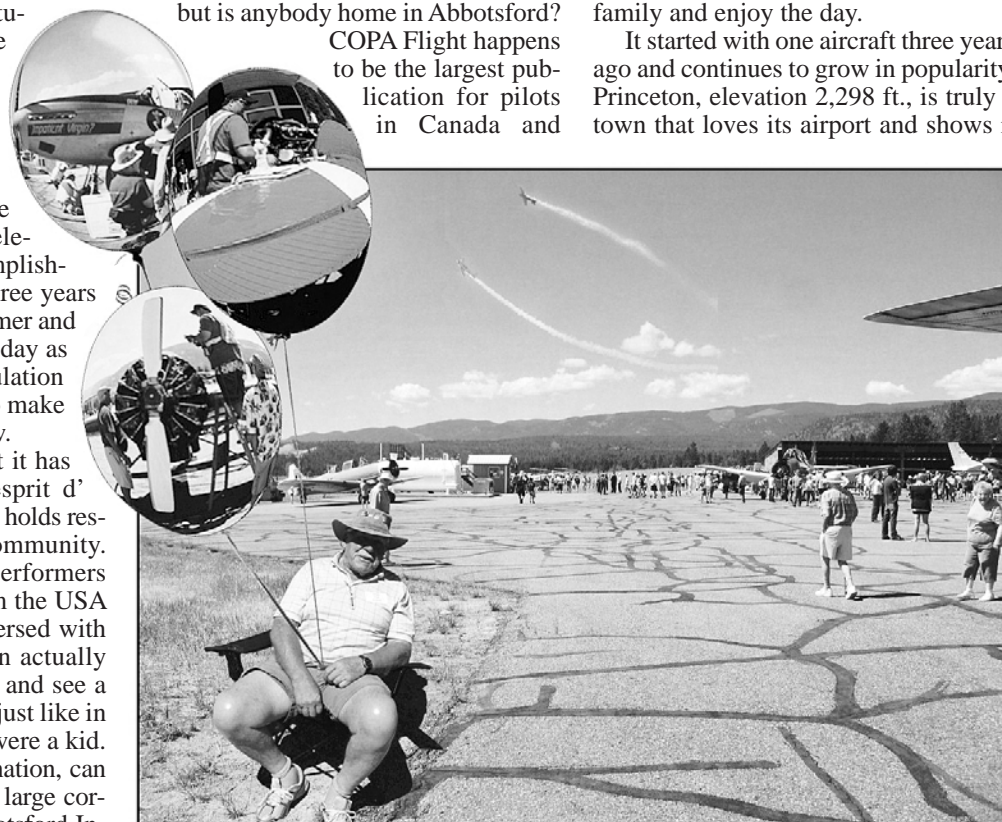
There had to be at least 50 or more private aircraft that flew in for the event from all over B.C. and north-west U.S.A. I must again stress the good work that their airport committee has done in organizing this show, the fine food, the terrific ambience, and even getting the weather to co-operate.

The airport has a courtesy car so that when you fly into Princeton, you can zip into town for a bite to eat or do a little shopping. A rare thing in Western Canada to find a courtesy car but this was the norm not too many years ago.

After the air show, I was one of the first private aircraft to depart. As I lifted into the sky, the same voice that greeted me to the air show, came on the air and thanked us for attending. As I flew, I could hear this person thanking each aircraft as it left Princeton.

I got the feeling that they wanted us to come back next year. I didn't get that feeling from Abbotsford, sad to say. You bet we are coming back. Thanks for a great effort Princeton and keep it up!

*Jorma Kivilahti is a commercially rated pilot, flying since 1963, he received his float rating in 1964. Today he uses his licence in his vocation of marketing recreation property throughout Canada. Visit his Website on the Internet at [www.RecreationProperty.Com](http://www.RecreationProperty.Com).*



*Hot air and balloons filled the air.*