

**The untold story of what happened on the flight home on October 21, 2009. Little did I realize that my passion for aviation would be questioned, the after effects and lessons would be life long and my trust towards the aviation industry would be broken... I hope a lesson can be learned and no one goes through what I have experienced.**

After my father passed away there was little money left from the estate for me. Owning a Cessna 150 on skis for over three years and accumulating over 300 hours, I wanted to add to my small fleet and grow towards my dream of owning floats. My friend, a retired engineer that was teaching me aircraft mechanics at the time, strongly recommended a Tri Pacer or Pacer. A few of the big reasons were because they are the best bang for your dollar, make a true three seater, work okay on floats and of course great on skis and wheels. He also wanted me to take on the art of working with fabric and spread my horizons in learning aviation maintenance. After doing some research I totally agreed and the hunt was on!!

After a short time I stumbled over a PA-22 that was recently recovered in Saskatoon and it was only a three hour drive from La Ronge, where I lived at the time. Everything in the ad was what I was looking for and it was within my budget. I contacted the seller and he was eager to show me pictures and answer any questions I had about the aircraft. One week later I went down to look at it with my engineer and besides a few cosmetic issues we couldn't see anything seriously wrong. The plane was recovered and its annual completed in a "*respectable*" shop, which kind of blinded us from looking deeper. I questioned the seller why he was selling the Piper PA-22 Tri-Pacer and his answer was that he had shares in the local flying school and was just using there aircraft to fly. The story seemed legit but found out later it was a complete lie. The deal was made on October 12, 2009. Johnny my engineer, told me just fly it home and we will do the annual as it's running out at the end of the month. I decided to switch the plane into OM (Owner Maintenance) category which would allow me to be the signing authority (play engineer) for this beautiful vintage plane. I phoned my friend in Saskatoon at Transport Canada to get the application rolling for OM Category. Fred at TC told me he was going on holidays but would return October 26, then we could accomplish the new airworthiness for CF-KIS. I decided I wanted full hull insurance and I would require a 5 hour check ride by an instructor. This was probably the best decision of my life, *because of the 5 hours!!*

A week later the nasty fall weather turned into a nice Indian summer and I was able to leave for Saskatoon where I started my instruction with the local flight school. I did my walk around eagerly waiting for the instructor but soon realized the trim system was jammed. After a closer look the cable was frayed. Having no tools I turned to the shop that recovered the plane and they said they could repair it that day for \$1,100.00. I was stuck in a bind, time was running out, and the weather wasn't going to hold out, so I said okay fix it. I clearly remember there was a guy in the shop that was constantly yelling at his employees. This was the first time I started wondering what did I get myself into, but I was reassured by the flying school that was going to instruct me they knew the owner and the shop and everything would be okay. Meanwhile I had never paid a dollar for aircraft maintenance in my life except for parts, now came the harsh reality of what plane owners pay.

The next day, I got a phone call in my hotel room saying the plane was ready. Without a minute to spare I called the local flying school and booked the instructor and took a taxi down to the airport. I paid the shop for fixing the plane as they wheeled it out. The instructor showed up and we jumped in the plane. I went to start the trusty PA-22 and the battery was dead!! We yelled from the cockpit at one of the mechanics and told him we needed a boost. Ten minutes later, eleven hundred dollars poorer and the plane stumbled to life and the training started. The first couple hours went well and even though I

had a bumpy start, this plane could really perform for what it was! Keeping in mind I owned a Cessna 150 but had also flown some other planes such as 185, Cherokee 140, Super Cub and a few others. Anyhow I was in my glory and I owned a “four-seater” plane!!

The next day the weather turned for the worst, but was still VFR and we could do circuits. While doing circuits the instructor kept telling me, try holding it off a little longer to make the landings a little smoother. Finally he tried one and couldn't do it either. We blamed ourselves for flying Cessnas because the short wing Pipers drop when you pull the power off. They were not bad landings but you think we could grease them on a little better without having to add much power. Anyhow that afternoon I accumulated just over 4 hours dual. The instructor said why don't we do a night flight in your plane for the last hour and work towards a night rating? At the end of the day without notice the instructor's son arrived that flew for WestJet, and told his dad, my instructor, that they needed to renew his IFR. So my night flight lesson got canceled and without knowing, probably saved our lives. The next day I woke up to similar crappy weather and returned to the school where we went up for another fifty minutes and that was close enough to five hours. The weather for the remaining day was too crappy to attempt a flight home. I did refuel the plane and check it over for the flight home. I returned to the hotel that night watching TV and studying the journey log more closely and realized some of my friends had signed the work on that plane years ago.

The next morning the weather appeared good from Saskatoon to Prince Albert but not to La Ronge. I decided to fly the plane to Prince Albert where a friend was in meetings that day and could pick me up and drive me home. It would be a lot easier to get a ride back to PA when the weather improved and the plane would be half way home. Near noon the light fogged lifted and I checked the weather one last time for Prince Albert and it was perfectly fine. It was snowing already in La Ronge and moving slowly southward. I got a ride to the airport from a good friend, Gerry, that lived in La Ronge and was staying in Saskatoon. He almost wanted to go home with me but due to the poor weather and not being able to make it all the way he decided to stay at his condo. I did my last walk around and shook my friend's hand and strapped myself inside the plane. I started the engine and let it warm up for a few minutes as it was cooler that day. I listened to ATIS on 128.40 and got my clearances with ground control on 121.90. I taxied via Alpha and held short on Foxtrot off runway 27 where I switched over to 118.3. I requested takeoff with immediate right turn to head north bound. I was cleared for takeoff and right turn granted. I aligned to the runway numbers and verified all controls operational, fuel on Left tank, DG set and I applied full power. The Lycoming O320 150Hp engine roared up to 2500 RPM and the airspeed was immediately alive. At 55 Mph I rotated and climbed out to a few hundred feet very quickly before executing my right turn. Few minutes later climbing through 3000 feet I was requested by tower to switch to Saskatoon Terminal on 119.90. Due to me only climbing to 3500ft because of overcast skies in the distance, Saskatoon Terminal terminated radar services and I could switch to enroute 126.70.

Twenty minutes into the flight towards Prince Albert, I couldn't believe I was cruising at 125 mph with only 22 minutes to Prince Albert remaining. I took a photo of my airspeed and was going to show Johnny that night. Soon after with the smoothness of the engine I heard a **bang!!** At first I thought I was hearing things then followed by another **bang!!** This wasn't engine backfire or a miss. Then there was another **bang!!** that appeared to be somewhere around the nose of the plane. I looked ahead thinking I forgot to lock the cowlings. Don't ask why I thought that, it was just my thought at the moment. Another loud **bang!!** and the whole air frame shook and the left wing dropped 10 degrees with a lot of loss of altitude. Looking at my instruments I was still cruising at around 115 MPH, good engine

power at 2450 RPM but I was descending at a nose level attitude very quickly, and the cockpit sounded very noisy. Realizing something was not right I saw a road that ran east and west and turned towards it, reduced power, pulled flaps and radioed a **“Mayday, Mayday, Mayday”**. Winnipeg Centre picked up the call but it was too late to explain my nature of the emergency. I landed the plane rather rough and bounced it good 3 feet and came to a stop on a road no wider than my gear. After shutdown I jumped out and contacted Edmonton Flight Services where I filed my flight plan. I explained the situation and they transferred me to the controller that took my emergency call. He called the TSB for me and I told him I would look around and see what the hell happened. I called Johnny, explained to him what was happening and he told me to do a walk around and report back. I walked around the plane in circles and I couldn't find a damn thing wrong. I spent the next twenty-five minutes looking and the only thing I could see was the back door had come open. I somehow foolishly convinced myself that was the problem and I had felt at the time I had made a total fool of myself because the door came open and the noise it created caused me to panic. I think I had *“get-home-it is”*. After telling Johnny, TSB and FSS that I felt the plane was airworthy and due to me being in the middle of nowhere the RCMP had no interest going to the plane and granted me a takeoff from the road at the pilot's discretion. The sun had gotten behind the clouds and you could see the weather was turning for the worse. I refilled a flight plan but due to power lines ahead I taxied the plane back, stopped it and turned it around.

I jumped back in the plane and applied full power wondering if this was a smart idea? I was airborne quickly and climbing out through 2300 feet heading northeast for the last 20 minutes of flight. Suddenly without warning a serious vibration on the air frame started and I looked back at the stabilizer to see it was seriously shaking. I was now in big trouble and looked for another field or road to land on. I crossed Highway 11N near Duck Lake and there was no way I could land there due to the traffic and the field ahead was too rough. Suddenly without warning the nose dropped and I tried to pull back on the controls but they are stiff. I trim full nose up but *the trim handle appeared seized* and whatever was holding it together wasn't going to last long. Looking at the VSI, I was beyond 2000 FPM descending and the airspeed was at 135 MPH.

***As the field was getting much closer, I said screw it!! I gave the engine full power and reached down for the flap lever and yanked full flaps way beyond VFE. The nose came up and I leveled off just as the canola field caught the landing gear. I pulled the power off to idle, the plane got sucked down and I came to stop from 130 MPH to 0 in less than 200 Feet!***

I couldn't believe it the plane was still standing and the engine was still running. I froze. ***I was shaking and crying so bad I had a hard time pulling the mixture control to kill the engine.***

In all my years of seeing deceased children, violent crimes, and being attacked by a mother bear, nothing and I mean NOTHING scared me as much as what had just happened. It's funny how the brain works and some of silliest things we do after a traumatic event. Finally a few minutes later I jumped out and started cleaning the grass off my plane. Why?? I was in shock, learned about it in crisis intervention.

I finally got my act together and called everyone. Johnny dropped everything and was heading to the plane. I texted my buddy Gerry, that took me to the airport earlier. He didn't believe my texts and asked me how was my flight, but after I repeated my text he dropped everything and started heading north to find me. I had another problem now, my phone battery was less than 5% and I was not even 100% sure where the hell I was. Clever me, being in IT, grabbed my Dell laptop and plugged in my phone to start charging it. Finally checked my ELT, shut off the fuel and the master switch. I grabbed

my laptop and phone and walked to the highway to see if I could wave anyone down. It was about a 200 yard walk to the highway. Of course you think anyone would stop for a crazy guy with his face all red, holding a laptop in one hand and a Blackberry in another?? Drivers probably thought I was some sort of bomber with an aircraft in the field!! Finally Gerry arrived and we sat on the side of the road waiting to see if any farmers would come along and of course waiting for my engineer Ed. A couple hours later we met up with the farmers who were super friendly and Johnny showed up shortly after. We ended up having supper at their place and afterwards Johnny took a look at the plane but due to nightfall and weather he couldn't see anything so we returned that night to La Ronge.

The next couple days I was on the phone to the Transportation Safety Board, the insurance company and of course the owner and the shop that originally recovered the airplane. I was very polite through the course of all this and I believe that was another mistake of mine. All I was asking was for help to get my precious plane flying again. I was outright told by the Saskatoon shop, "You are on your own. You are a small guy and you don't count." The owner's comment was, "I'm glad I wasn't flying it." Sadly it was becoming a reality that I was truly alone in this purchase and was basically laughed at by all parties concerned except for my engineer and non-pilot friends. Again I was becoming disheartened in the industry after my horrible experience of being used and over trained so the flying club south of Saskatoon could make more profit, draining whatever funds I had and killing my commercial dream. It made me wonder why I even bothered to fly? Damn, it's an addiction that only real pilots would understand.

Monday morning of October 26, Johnny and I went to the plane on the field to see what was wrong, in great hopes we could fix it and fly it to Prince Albert. After closely investigating the plane all we could find was the stabilizer jack screw was worn with an inch of play if you rocked the horizontal stabilizer hard. He made a cut in the fabric and seen there were no washers and the top nut was loose. Interesting observation as the trim cable was just repaired. Since he didn't have the proper washers on hand I made a quick call to the local AME in Prince Albert, which did have them. My friend Gerry was coming back from La Ronge to Saskatoon and with a quick phone call he was able to pick up the washers in PA and meet us where the plane had "landed". In the meantime, while waiting for Gerry the silence of uncertainty grew that daunted both of us. I still clearly remember Johnny and I walking around the plane knowing damn well a worn jack screw doesn't cause an airplane to fall out of the sky. This cannot be the problem! Finally just to change the pace while still waiting for our washers, we drove around looking for a takeoff spot on the field. As we finished driving Johnny pulled the van about 30 feet ahead of the plane. was looking at it and *something didn't look right above the windshield* from that angle. Johnny took one look and you swore the poor guy was going to have a heart attack. He backed up his van and asked me to jump up and look, as his knees were bad that day and he had no way of doing it himself. At first glance I didn't see anything till I saw the silicone had lifted. I was then able to pick up the fabric and lift it a good twelve inches or more. The first words that came out of Johnny's mouth was, "*How the fuck did the fabric let go?* It's tucked under the windshield!" I replied, "Nothing is tucked under Johnny, it's clearly glued to the top of the windshield and that's it." At first I don't think he believed me and I knew he felt really bad he hadn't spotted it but in his defense there was no way to tell as there was a white silicone bead used to seal between the fabric and the windshield. Johnny did mention prior to the sale he didn't care for them being cheap with using silicone as a sealant but surely it wasn't airworthy issue. Gerry showed up with the washers and we repaired the jack screw accordingly. There was no way we could repair the fabric even temporarily due to the colder fall temperatures and would have to transport the plane back by semi. We headed home.

On Tuesday, Johnny was on the phone with TSB and they were discussing my story and our findings. TSB is all about facts and science but the inspector said to Johnny,

*“I’m not religious guy by a far cry, but you know Jared didn’t land that plane - God did. He was very lucky.”*

He continued on telling Johnny he knew of a half dozen cases of the above happening with very few walking away. That same day I contacted Transport Canada as promised to switch the plane to the Owner Maintenance Program and told him my story and there was long silence before Fred said, “I have to make a few phone calls.”

Transport Canada did go inspect the plane themselves prior to it leaving the field and I was able to still put the tri-pacer into OM category as first promised. The last time I heard from the Saskatoon department concerning all this was, “I was the smoking gun” they were looking for towards this so-called respectable shop. On November 13, 2009 a semi-truck was arranged with a wide load permit to haul the aircraft as is on a 45 degree angle back to La Ronge. That night the aircraft finally made it back to the airport where it would spend the winter as I had no means of using a heated hangar. I tried legal action but I didn’t have the financial sources to take it further. On November 17, I finally had the courage to fly my Cessna 150 but on the first takeoff I was as nervous as my first solo flight. It would take me nearly a year to feel 100% again.

Spring had arrived in April and it was time to get the old bird back in the air. We actually had a nice warm spell where I could immediately remove the windshield and clean the V channel. I glued on additional fabric following the manufacture’s procedures, the Airworthiness Directive and Service Bulletin for the exact same problem I experienced. We tucked the fabric inside the V Channel and used reinforcement tapes to complete the task. The AD also required us to install a metal channel across the fabric. The problem I had was the fabric was slightly stretched from the incident. The work around was couple techniques that turned out great. The first technique was taking an iron set to 370 degrees with wet cloth, which would be around 350 or so and go gently over the fabric including the new fabric that was installed. For the second technique, I stitched the backbone for about a foot to tighten the fabric up. Doping and painting also helped complete the process where you couldn’t tell what happened. Afterwards I was confident with the repair and so was my engineer. The next couple weeks I spent completing the annual and I ended up replacing the jack screw and repairing so many little problems I can’t recall them all. I found two problems that were simple but could have been serious in the long run.

The first issue was the trim cable fray because the speaker magnets were sucking the cable together and the wrong speaker was installed. Funny enough nose up and nose down trim would actually alter my compass heading for 5 degrees until the magnetism finally died in the cable. The second problem was the reason I couldn’t flare properly in Saskatoon. There is triangle looking plate that hooks to the elevator and the control cable connects to this plate. The plate is held by two bolts between the two elevator halves. The plate on my plane was only held by one bolt and the triangle piece would move forward on full back pressure on the controls and not allow full elevator. That had to be fixed and rigged properly. After one month of working on the aircraft, it was ready for a test flight.

One evening sometime in May, I decided I was ready to attempt a flight again. Johnny came out to watch the event. I started the engine and let it warm up while I put my seat belt on and ran through the pre run-up checks. I taxied out and did a run-up for a couple minutes to make sure everything was fully operational. I realized there was no second chance here in La Ronge. If I had to go through the same

experience again due to the terrain I would probably be killed. I radioed La Ronge Flight Services on 122.20 and told them I was going on a test flight on circuits and if things looked good I would continue on northbound on a local flight. I taxied my plane out onto Runway 36 and applied full power and rotated. The plane climbed out normally and that beautiful spring evening I completed 5 takeoffs and landings then headed north to watch the sun set. The plane has flown beautifully ever since and I eventually got skis and did a bunch of upgrades.

The story is not over - there is one more twist...

August 24, 2011 I was having lunch with April at a local restaurant and the phone rang. It was a Winnipeg number and from experience that usually means the Canada Revenue Agency. I answered it carefully and suddenly I was rudely introduced to, "Hello my name is Trevor from Transport Canada ENFORCEMENT!!!" My face must have been pure white as I had done some aerial photography earlier that month requested by tower and the airport manager for an aviation event that was held in La Ronge. Some of the government pilots didn't care for it but that's another story... I introduced myself but quickly realized it was about CF-KIS and the fateful flight on October 21, 2009. They flew up from Winnipeg two weeks later to prepare me for a tribune where I would have to tell my side of the story. In October, I drove down to Saskatoon where I would sit in a tribune hearing. When I was brought to the stand, I was warned by TC enforcement's legal team that the mechanic's lawyer would try to put holes in my story but they would intervene. I went up and told my story as it happened. The lawyer tried many things but failed and Transport Canada's head guy gave me thumbs up as their legal department didn't have to do a single thing. After the case was heard, the rumor was the mechanic got a 14 day suspension and a \$250.00 fine. That's when I came to realize my life is worth \$250.00 in the aviation industry.

The aftermath of all this has left me somewhat bitter. Luckily due to Facebook I have regained my trust in aviation and I realize there are many great folks all around the globe that truly love aviation and will try their hardest to keep it safe and who go out their way to help. I learned a lot from this ordeal. It has made me a better pilot, better mechanic, and taught me it's the small stuff that really can bite you. I have over the years enjoyed working on my planes and at times get the privilege to work on someone's aircraft because there are mechanics out there that trust me to assist them and I'm humbly honored. I enjoy my hobby very much and make every trip fun but I also take aviation seriously. I keep the shop in order, logbooks are documented properly, I follow procedures and even though I'm in the OM (owner maintenance) category I use certified parts and STC's like it should be. Mostly, I never take anything for granted.

I will always do the best work on my aircraft or other's so in the event an unforeseen tragedy does occur, I can look myself in the mirror and say I have done everything possible in my know how to keep that aircraft safe and operational. Sadly I don't think the engineer that signed my plane out could say the same.

I hope you all enjoyed reading this and Fly Safe!!!!

**Jared Chursinoff**