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FEATURING:

414 CANADIAN FISHING ADVENTURE

OPTIMAL ENGINE PREHEATING - PT III

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# 414 CANADIAN FISHING ADVENTURE

By Doug Thompson, TTCF Member



It all started back in June when I got a call from my buddy, Harvey, asking if I wanted to go on a fishing trip to Queen Charlotte Islands (QCI). Harvey and I go back a fair bit; I use to sell him Case Construction equipment. Lately the tables have turned and I've been paying Harvey for earthwork around the acreage I'm developing. I much preferred it when he gave me cheques! Anyway, I said "Let me know how many guys, when and where." In late July, Harvey got back to me. The trip was on. There would be five guys plus me- a full load for my 414. Our final destination would be the Queen Charlotte Lodge in Masset, British Columbia.

Before I go further, let me tell you about my 414. It's a 1976 that just turned over 2000 hrs TT. I purchased it in the U.S. in Sept of 2011 and imported it into Canada. I wasn't planning on buying the first plane I looked at but that's what happened!



I was fortunate enough to find a 414 that had been completely upgraded: new paint, interior and instrument panel. Plus it has a RAM VII conversion and a Robertson STOL kit. It was a perfect airplane for this trip.



Our three leg trip from Medicine Hat to Masset took us over the Canadian Rockies to our destination: the Queen Charlotte Islands. The first two legs were flown before sunup.

This bird was all it was advertised as and more. The engines were RAM VII's with 900 hrs on them. It had Scimitar props and the paint and interior had recently been redone at a cost of over \$100,000. The avionics were top notch with a G600, 530W, 430W, GMA347 intercom, 327 transponder, JPI 960 engine monitoring (the big screen version) and an STEC 55X auto-pilot. It also had the Robertson STOL kit installed which at the time wasn't a big deal, but now has proven invaluable. The factory air conditioning worked well and while the plane was originally non-deiced, all of the known-ice components had been installed recently to make it legal FIKI (*Editors Note: look for an upcoming article on this topic*). After a full day inspection and a short negotiation I left a deposit cheque. I now have over 140 hrs on my 414 and I couldn't be happier.

Back to the trip. I started to "run the numbers" and it became clear this would be my most challenging trip yet. Being based in

Medicine Hat, Alberta I have lots of hours flying cross country over mountains and large bodies of water in uncontrolled airspace- but not at the maximum gross weight as I would have on this trip. My 414 has a rough useful load of 2000 lbs, (thanks to the Ram VII) so 6 guys is conservatively 1,200 lbs, luggage is another 100 lbs which leaves only 700 lbs – just under 120 US gallons, for fuel. This gives me around 3 hrs of fuel which runs down to around 2 hour legs when alternates and reserves are added. I spent several hours on my favorite flight planning site, [www.flightplan.com](http://www.flightplan.com), looking at different options.

I like to plan ahead, but because the booking was out of my hands it wasn't until August 10 that I got the itinerary and contact info. The trip was only one week away. I had to get busy. After lots of calls to confirm details, this was the plan:

- 3:00am - depart Medicine Hat (CYXH) with 5 guys and 4 hrs of fuel - 1 hr flight
- 4:00am - arrive Calgary (CYBW) pick up 6th guy
- 4:15 - depart Calgary with 3 hours

(continued on page 8)



*Turbocharging and pressurization are much appreciated features when flying a planeload of guys over the Rockies.*

- of fuel – 2 hr flight
- 5:15 – arrive Williams Lake, BC (CYWL - changed time zones), add self serve fuel back to just over 120 USG
- 5:45 - depart William Lake – for just over 2 hr flight to Masset, BC (CZMT)
- 8:00 – arrive Masset

Day 1: We got away exactly one hour late as one of my construction buddies missed his alarm! I was glad that I had built in a buffer as we used it all. I still made two night landings before the sun came up. Williams Lake airport's self serve fuel worked well and was reasonably priced at \$1.84/L or around \$7/US. It was nice and cool so the heavy weights were barely noticeable; the RAM VII power and Robertson STOL kits also helped a lot. I have no need to check the performance charts if the runway is over 3000 ft.

It was a nice trip on to Masset- no towers were open and the traffic was very light. We were mainly VFR at 18,000 ft until we got close to West Coast; there was fog on the coastline! Before we got "feet wet" I called and got another weather check at Masset and it was reporting 700 broken. No problem then, as the approach is good down to 500 ft. I requested a descent from Center as I didn't want to be hot coming into Masset. It is a smaller airport in uncontrolled airspace which would make a missed approach awkward. Center informed us we were four minutes ahead of a

737 also coming into Masset so we did our best to keep our speed up. As we got closer, Center cleared me for the approach and then immediately did the same for the 737. We were to figure out among ourselves who would be number one! I made a quick call on 126.7 to announce my intentions and then switched over to Masset Unicom while still monitoring Center. I let Masset know what I was doing as we continued inbound. Thanks to 530 VNAV planning feature the descent turned out perfect. I was able to tell that I could land VFR as the cloud bank was about two miles offshore. I made a quick call to Center to cancel IFR and then announced my intentions to join LH downwind for 13. The 737 let me know that he was still five minutes out and would appreciate a weather PIREP when I landed. After a decent landing, we taxied in and asked to park at far end. The 737 landed shortly after us.

We tucked the 414 away and walked the group of buildings referred to as "the terminal" where we waited for our turn for the helicopter to the lodge. I confirmed that 2 barrels of 100LL would be waiting at the airplane on our return as would a hand pump. For \$3/Litre, almost \$12/US gallon, you would think they could get us an electric pump! To be fair though, the Masset airport treated us well.

As we found some coffee and waited for our copter I realized that I had been up for over 8 hours, travelled almost 900 miles and it was not quite 9:30 AM yet! The BAC (big a-- copter)



*The helo to the lodge was the final leg of our flight - the only one I didn't fly!*

took us and 6 others to the Lodge where we are treated to a great breakfast before heading out fishing. The Queen Charlotte Lodge had our 6 people plus the 95 more that came on the 737 for the weekend and they handled it very well. After all, it is 4 star lodge, albeit in the middle of nowhere.

Time for fishing! This is the first time that I had ever had a fishing license so I was working hard to not show how little I knew about the activity. Harvey and I fished together and each pair got a guide for one day only so we decided to take him on the first day. His name was Leath and he made everything



*The object of our trip - fishing! A 20-lb Chinook and a 40-lb Halibut. We caught our limit each day.*

easy: he baited, drove, untangled, and most importantly, he knew where the fish were. Harvey and I both caught our Chinook limit that day, and got a needed nap in as well! We pointed the boats back toward the lodge for supper and beverages at 8 PM.

Day 2: Harvey and I were on our own and got off to a bad start. It was foggy when we left and somehow we (I wasn't steering) breached the boat in silt and kelp! After a bit of paddling, (we only had one paddle) and retracing our route, only our pride was hurt. We missed Leath. But things improved and once again we maxed out on Chinooks and both of us landed nice Halibuts. That night we had another great supper and I gave up a couple bucks playing some card game that I'd never heard of.

Day 3: This was our final day and everyone wanted to get out early. Why I don't know, as we didn't catch anything for the first two hours. It was our poorest day of fishing but our boat still maxed out again. I caught a 20 lb Chinook that fought like a 40 lb'r for over ½ hr. We also went 10 miles off-shore looking for some big Hali's. We reeled out over 300 ft of line and caught some decent ones, but nothing extraordinary. We had a special treat when several whales came by and put on a show for us. After another great supper, I went to bed early in anticipation a busy day flying.

Day 4: Left the lodge at 9 AM for the airport where the fuel drums, hand pump and bung tool were all waiting as were our luggage and fish. I put a crew on refuelling and started to load the plane. I was able to put all the fish (over 200 lbs) in the front nose area but had to leave behind my 60 lb nose ballast sandbag to make it work. Some baggage juggling was required to manage the CG. We paid our airport bill, got our IFR clearance and departed. The 414 was airborne in about half the 5,000 ft runway length.

The flight home was uneventful except for some heat related turbulence. We climbed to FL190 to better navigate thunderstorms over the Rockies and were able to plan a smooth arrival into Calgary. I dropped off one guy, topped off the mains and departed for Medicine Hat. We landed just after 6:00pm, sorted fish and headed home. I'm still amazed by the capability of my RAM VII RSTOL 414. We were at full gross many times this trip and had completely uneventful departures. We flew in great comfort; the heater and air conditioning both worked well and the writing table was a wonderful place for cabin pax to play cards and enjoy a beverage. We flew just over 2,000 nm in a capable, safe pressurized cabin class twin to the far NW edge of Canada and back.

If you're looking for a great fishing adventure, I can recommend the Queen Charlotte Lodge. The service, food and accommodations were excellent. The only complaint that I

had was, for the price they charge, I was disappointed to be "nickelled and dimed" for some items like extra tackle and special packaging. If anyone would like to know more about this trip or my airplane, feel free to contact me. Just look me up on the TTCF online Member Forum.



After a long day of fishing, we are tired but happy. The service, accommodations and food at the Queen Charlotte Lodge were first class.



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